

15 READS

Pertaining to
Humour:
irreverent
black
iconoclastic
slapstick
laughter
absurd
satirical
playful

SUMMER EDITION 2019
CAMPLE LINE

1 | David Grossman, trans. Jessica Cohen, *A Horse Walked into a Bar*, 2016 (Vintage)

Washed up comedian Dovaleh G walks onto the stage in a small town in Israel. He tells bad jokes, harangues the audience, and as he reveals his life story, he falls apart on stage. This is comedy close to the bone, exposing the damage of malfunctioning societies.

2 | Bohil Hrabl, trans. Edith Pargeter, *Closely Watched Trains*, (1965) 2017 (Penguin Classics)

It is the winter of 1945 at a rural railway station in Nazi occupied Czechoslovakia. Love, suicide, bureaucracy in all its ridiculousness, a mock trial, a train carrying ammunition, pigeons, a ticking bomb and then there is Masha's bounteous backside, inky with German railway stamps – photographed as evidence of a criminal offence!

3 | Fazil Iskander, trans. Helen Burlingame, *The Goatibex Constellation*, (1966) 1975 (Ardis)

A young journalist returns to his native Abkhazia seeking the story of a newly created farm animal – a cross between a goat and an ibex. Disparaged on publication in the USSR, this satire is a critique of the regime's approach to agriculture and use of propaganda.

4 | Daniil Kharmis, trans. Neil Cornwell, *Incidences*, 2006 (Serpent's Tail)

'Kharmis' things were never written down but transmitted orally, taking on a mythic status. They exploded the boring minutiae of ordinary life into vast incomprehensible flashes of the eternal. People told them to each other as jokes for laughter. As parables for grasping the absurdity of their lives. They told them for comfort. They told them as prophecies. They told them as signs of mutual understanding that nothing written should be believed, and that language itself should not be trusted, except as music that can provoke laughter and offer consolation.' Simon McBurney, 2006

5 | Vladimir Lorchenkov, trans. Ross Ufberg, *The Good Life Elsewhere*, (2008) 2014 (New Vessel Press)

The inhabitants of a small Moldavian village dream of emigrating to Italy but never manage to make it further than the border. Various attempts to make a new home in this promised land include employing traffickers,

a tractor converted into an airplane and then a submarine and a mass crusade led by the village priest, but all fail.

6 | Flann O'Brien, *Best of Myles*, 2007 (Harper Perennial)

In particular the chapter The Myles Na gCopaleen Catechism of Cliché for its depiction of the effectiveness of call and response to satirise religion, the state, politics and society through everyday speech and colloquialisms.

7 | Iraj Pezeshkzad, Trans. Dick Davies, *My Uncle Napoleon*, (1973) 2006 (Random House)

A family feud takes place in a large garden lodging various members of one family ruled over by 'Dear Uncle Napoleon'. The various factions and the resulting farcical twists and turns are observed by the adolescent grandson who has had the misfortune to fall in love with Uncle Napoleon's daughter.

8 | Raymond Queneau, trans, Barbara Wright, *Exercise in Style*, Illus. Stefan Themerson, (1947) 2013 (Alma Classics)

The same mundane incident on a bus in Paris is told in ninety-nine different ways and illustrated with Themerson's witty word/image drawings: as an ode, as a comedy, in an abusive manner, as a cross examination, as if told by a cockney ...

9 | François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, (1693) 2006 (Penguin Classics)

This book has it all: moral transgression, bodily humour, society, and above all the innovative use of lists to develop the picture of a condition to humorous effect.

10 | Laurence Sterne, *The Life & Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentlemen*, (1759) 2009 (Oxford World Classics)

Dazzling in form and range of bawdy humour and satire, this is a book of books that nicely sends up the foibles, formalities and misunderstandings that often occur in human relations.

11 | Kurt Schwitters, trans. Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris, *PPPPPP poems performance pieces proses plays poetics*, 2002 (Exact Change, Cambridge)

Kurt Schwitters' stated goal was to 'erase the boundaries between the arts.' This collection is compiled from the five-volume German edition of Schwitters' writings. The book introduces the total work of art that is Merz through Schwitters' words and includes the complete text for his famous sound poem 'Ursonate' (published 1932).

12 | Karel Teige, *Alphabet*, Redstone Press

Presented as postcards, the black and white photographs of dancer Milča Mayerová, whose poses combine with Teige's strong graphic letters of the alphabet form a rhythm between text and image, body and graphic expression.

For young readers—

13 | Norman Lindsay, *The Magic Pudding: Being The Adventures of Bunyip Bluegum and his friends Bill Barnacle and Sam Sawnoff*, (1918) 1963 (Angus & Robertson)

Well, the puddin' is called Albert and is protected from two Pudding Thieves, a possum named Patrick and Watkin the wombat, who are determined to steal it. Why? Because no matter how many slices are cut, the puddin' always reforms. Set in Australia, Lindsay's illustrations of the animals and the mischievous puddin' are as much a part of the story as the tale itself.

14 | Spike Milligan, *Puckoon*, 1973 (Penguin)

For its satire on authority and convention - I read this at 13 years old and it still enters my head. The book that Beckett could never have written, but some nice parallels. (David Osbaldeston)

15 | Susan Rennie, *Roald Dahl's Rotsome and Repulsive Words*, 2019 (OUP Oxford)

A guide to Dahl's most 'mischievous' language that will teach children how to curse like a giant or insult like Miss Trunchbull.

Selected by Jane McArthur, Chair, CAMPLE LINE Programme group with additions from David Osbaldeston and Charlie Hammond