

WHY CIRCUS WORKS

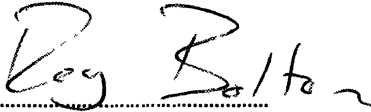
How the values and structures of circus make it a significant developmental experience for young people.

Reginald Bolton, B.A. (hons.), Cert. Ed.

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

Murdoch University, Perth, in 2004

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains, as its main content, work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Reg Bolton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal dotted line underneath the name.

(Reginald Bolton)

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks go to my excellent supervisor, Dr. Jennifer de Reuck, and to the Murdoch University librarian, Grant Stone, both of whom cheerfully and provocatively urged me on throughout this three and a half year project.

My colleagues in corridor TP3, Georgina Wright and Cheryl Miller in the Division of Arts administration and the helpful staff at the Murdoch library and cafeteria have made this a pleasurable experience - not the wearisome journey that is often associated with PhD research. Cherree Innes has been the fearless and efficient interface between me and the computer, and without her, you would not be able to read this now.

Twenty-two institutions and two hundred and nineteen individuals are acknowledged in appendix 1 for their interviews. I wish to thank them and many others who have spared time to help my enquiry.

Ho Wing Wah (Loretta) has been pursuing a course parallel with mine, and besides her kind translating of some Chinese texts, her friendship and encouragement have been inspirational.

Abstract

Why Circus Works

How the values and structures of circus make it a significant developmental experience for young people

Circus is increasingly being used as a developmental and remedial activity for children. However, it is in the paradoxical nature of circus that it operates in a way both mysterious and easily accessible. This thesis proposes that circus as education is more effective when both teacher and student have a better understanding of circus as an art form.

To explain this I first introduce six 'elements' of childhood, whose absence often seems to result in an incomplete personal maturity. I then conduct a wide exploration of both the real and the imagined circus, showing how these elements occur or are evoked there, and I establish a correspondence or 'homology' between the two entities - childhood and circus. The discoveries shed light on the aesthetic code of circus itself, leading to the conclusion that circus works as an artform because its essential composition recalls profound experiences of childhood.

I argue that contemporary Western childhood presents unexpected hazards, mostly involving passivity and over-protection. In other parts of the world, and in some Western populations, childhood has other problems, linked to deprivation, exploitation and physical danger. In either case, a child involved in circus activities has a chance to make good some deficits, by experiencing constructive physical risk, aspiration, trust, fun, self-individuation and hard work. My hope is that this dissertation will contribute some strength to the case for well-designed programmes of circus activities for young people, in both formal and informal settings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

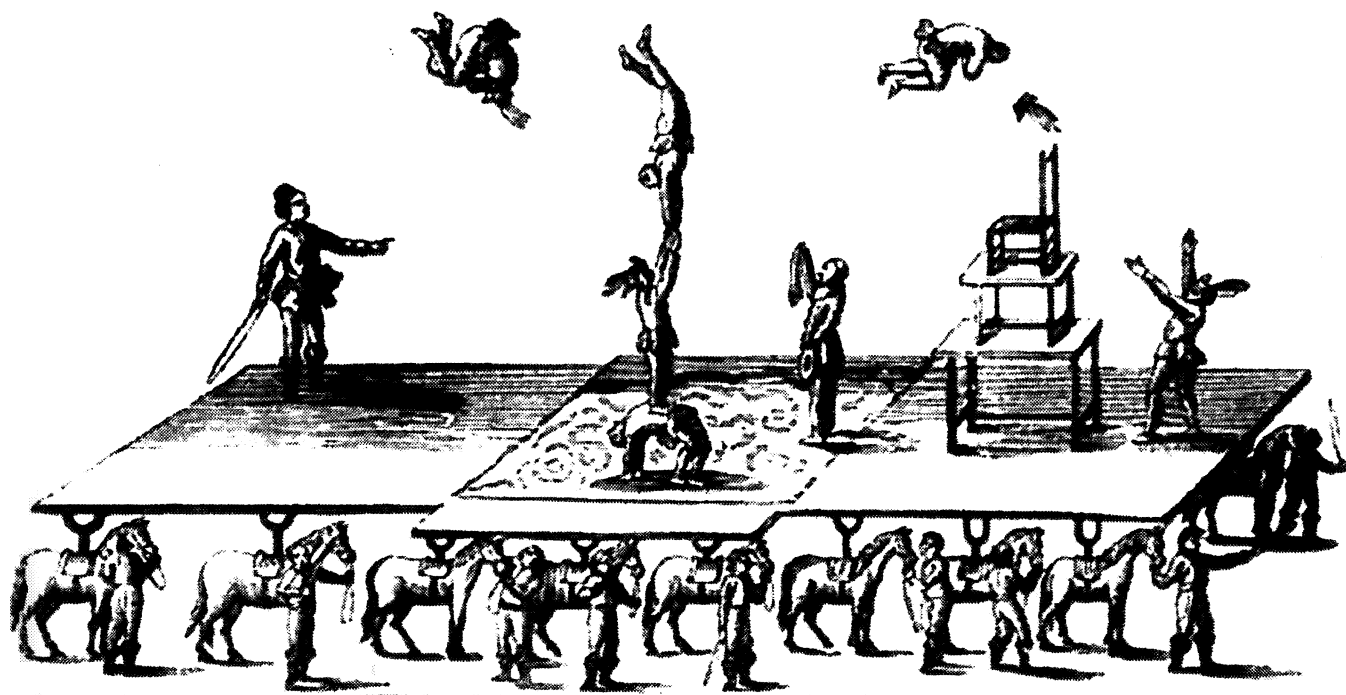
1	Introduction: A Wilderness	1
1.1	Epigraphs, Quotations, Citations and Translations.....	2
1.2	The Shape of the Thesis.....	2
1.3	Voice.....	3
1.4	Theory.....	4
1.5	Literature Review.....	6
2	The Challenges of Childhood	14
2.1	Monday's Child is Fair of Face.....	21
2.2	Tuesday's Child is Full of Grace.....	24
2.3	Wednesday's Child is Full of Woe.....	29
2.4	Thursday's Child Has Far to Go.....	33
2.5	Friday's Child is Loving and Giving.....	37
2.6	Saturday's Child Works Hard For a Living.....	40
2.7	The Challenges of Childhood. Conclusion.....	42
3.	Representations Of Circus Introduction	44
3.1	Representations of Circus in Metaphor.....	49
3.2	Representations of Circus in the Media.....	53
3.3	Representations of Circus in Academic Discourse.....	58
3.4	Representations of Circus in Fiction.....	67
3.5	Representations of Circus in Poetry.....	78
3.6	Representations of Circus in Popular Songs.....	83
3.7	Representations of Circus in Juvenile Literature.....	89
3.8	The Relationship Between Circus and Theatre.....	96
3.9	Representations of Circus In Cinema.....	105
3.10	Artists' Representations of Circus.....	110
3.11	Opposition to the Circus.....	117
3.12	Representations of Circus Conclusion.....	123
4.	Manifestations of Circus Introduction	125
4.1	History.....	127
4.2	Historical Circus Performers.....	130
4.3	Traditional Circus.....	136
4.4	Amateur Circus.....	138
4.5	New Circus.....	144
4.6	Circus Students.....	149
4.7	Circus in School.....	153
4.8	Social Circus.....	160
4.9	Community Circus.....	167
4.10	Circus in the Psyche.....	173
4.11	Manifestations of Circus Conclusion.....	182

5. Six Elements Re-visited Introduction	184
5.1 Self-Invention, Self-Design and Individuation Revisited	185
5.2 Fun, Play, Laughter and Happiness Revisited.....	187
5.3 Risk and Adventure Revisited.....	188
5.4 Dreaming and Aspiration Revisited.....	190
5.5 Trust, Touch and Confidence Revisited	191
5.6 Hard Work, Application and Ingenuity Revisited.....	193
5.7 Summary.....	195
6. Case Study. West Papua (formerly Irian Jaya)	196
7. Conclusion	199
Bibliography 1: Books, Articles and Papers.....	i
Bibliography 2: Film, TV, Video	xiv
Bibliography 3: Miscellaneous.....	xv
Bibliography 4: Juvenile Sources	xxxii
Bibliography 5: Songs Cited in 3.6	xviii
Appendix 1: Interviews.....	xix
Appendix 2: Charter of Social Circus	xxiv
Appendix 3: 50 Works of Juvenile Circus Literature used in the Survey in sect. 3.7.....	xxv
Illustrations:	
Astley in Paris.....	before page 1
Digital Mnemonic.....	before page 21

Par Permission du ROI, & de Monseigneur le Lieutenant-Général de Police.

E X E R C I C E S
S U R P R E N A N S
DES SIEURS
A S T L E Y,
RUE ET FAUXBOURG DU TEMPLE,

Aujourd'hui MERCREDI 27 Décembre 1786.



[To face p. 44.]

3. Astley's handbill, Paris, 1786.

Facsimile from *The Memoirs of J. Decastro, Comedian*, London, 1824, facing p. 44.
Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark M. adds. 123 e.63.