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## ON LAUGHTER

They laughed when I told them I wanted to be a comedian. Well they're not laughing now.

Bob Monkhouse

Laughter is a universal phenomenon, which is not to say a uniform one. In an essay entitled 'The Difficulty of Defining Comedy', Samuel Johnson remarks that though human beings have been wise in many different ways, they have always laughed in the same way, but this is surely doubtful. Laughter is a language with a host of different idioms: cackling, chortling, grunting, chuckling, shrieking, bellowing, screaming, sniggering, gasping, shouting, braying, yelping, snickering, roaring, tittering, hooting, guffawing, snorting, giggling, howling, screeching and so on. It can come in blasts, peals, gales, gusts, ripples or torrents, blaring, trumpeting, trickling, swirling or piercing. There are