

Evelyne Keitel

Humor in Women's Writing

WS 2003

N 006

Mittwoch, 9:15-10:45

Course Description

Traditionally, humor has meant 'male humor.' In American literary history, only regionalism has been associated with female humor, yet women working outside the local color tradition have produced a wide variety of parodies, satires, burlesques, and comedies of manners. This seminar will discuss and analyze texts covering 150 years' of humorous writing by women from Fanny Fern, Dorothy Parker and Erma Brombeck to most recent texts. We will raise questions like: Has women's humor arisen from women's particular social and cultural experiences? Has it developed its own themes and strategies? Can women's comic writing be read for its implicit (or explicit) commentary on power relations between the sexes and the absurdity of patriarchal laws? Is there a 'uniquely female' sense of humor? Is there a tradition of comic writing by women?

Credit requirements (7 ECTS points):

regular attendance, final exam, term paper of 15-20 pages length.

Please note: The last day for handing in your term papers is May 15th, 2004.

Course materials:

You can buy Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle*, and Carolyn Haines, *Them Bones* for ca. 9,50 Euro each at Universitas. The other texts can be obtained in form of a reader at Uni Copy Dietze.

Seminarplan

15.10.03

Introduction

22.10.03

18th Century

Knight, Sarah Kemble. *Journal (1704-1705)*. St. Clair Shores: Scholarly Press, 1970. iii-72.

Morris, Linda A.. "Introduction." *American Women Humorists: Critical Essays*. Ed. Linda A. Morris. New York: Garland 1994. xiii-xxxii.

Thorpe, Peter. "Sarah Kemble Knight and the Picareque Tradition." *American Women Humorists: Critical Essays*. Ed. Linda A. Morris. New York: Garland 1994. 173-182.

29.10.03

19th Century (part 1)

Fern, Fanny. "Newspaper Articles." *Ruth Hall and other Writings*. Ed. Joyce W. Warren. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1986. 213-265.

Wood, Ann Douglas. "The 'Scribbling Women' and Fanny Fern: Why Women Wrote." (1971) *Hidden Hands: An Anthology of American Women Writers, 1790-1870*. Ed. Lucy M. Freibert and Barbara A. White. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994. 362-68.

Warren, Joyce W. "Introduction." Fanny Fern. *Ruth Hall and other Writings*. Ed. Joyce W. Warren. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1986. ix-xxxix.

05.11.03

19th Century (part 2)

Whitcher, Frances Miriam. *The Widow Bedott Papers*. (1856) New York: Mason, Baker & Pratt, 1874. 21-85.

Morris, Linda A.. "Frances Miriam Whitcher: Social Satire in the Age of Gentility." *American Women Humorists: Critical Essays*. Ed. Linda A. Morris. New York: Garland, 1994. 215-237.

O'Donnell, Thomas F. "The Return of the Widow Bedott: Mrs. F. M. Whitcher of Whitesboro and Elmira." *American Women Humorists: Critical Essays*. Ed. Linda A. Morris. New York: Garland, 1994. 183-213.

12.11.03

Turn of the Century

Holley, Marietta. "A Male Magdalene." (1906) *The Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States*. Ed. Linda Wagner-Martin and Cathy Davidson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995. 56-62.

Chopin, Kate. "The Story of an Hour." (1894) *The Awakening and Selected Stories of Kate Chopin*. Ed. Barbara H. Solomon. New York: Signet-Penguin, 1976. 198-200.

Wharton, Edith. "Roman Fever." (1934) *The Collected Short Stories of Edith Wharton*. Ed. R. W. B. Lewis. New York: Scribner's, 1968. 833-843.

Curry, Jane. "Introduction to *Samantha Rastles the Woman Question*." *American Women Humorists: Critical Essays*. Ed. Linda A. Morris. New York: Garland, 1994. 287-309.

19.11.03 Buß und Betttag – no seminar session

26.11.03

Modernism I – Gertrude Stein

Stein, Gertrude. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. (1933) New York: The Modern Library, 1993. 3-37.

Stein, Gertrude. "As a Wife Has a Cow: A Love Story." (1926) "Susie Asado." (1922) "Ladies' Voices." (1922) "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene." (1922) *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein*. Ed. Carl Van Vechten. New York: Vintage-Random, 1990. 543-545; 549; 555-556; 563-568.

Hurm, Gerd. "Stein, Gertrude." *Metzler Lexikon amerikanischer Autoren*. Ed. Bernd Engler und Kurt Müller. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000. 629-631.

03.12.03

Modernism II – Dorothy Parker

Short Stories:

Parker, Dorothy. "The Wonderful Old Gentleman." (192). "Big Blonde." (1929) "You Were Perfectly Fine." (1929) "Horsie." (1932) "The Waltz." (1933) *Complete Stories*. Ed. Colleen Breese. New York: Penguin, 1995. 36-46; 105-24; 125-28; 170-83; 209-212.

Poems:

Parker, Dorothy. "De Profundis." (1926) "Résumé." (1926) "General Review of the Sex Situation." (1926) "Experience." (1926) *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Nina Baym et al. New York: Norton, 1989. 1454.

Bunkers, Suzanne L. "'I am Outraged Womanhood': Dorothy Parker as Feminist and Social Critic." *American Women Humorists: Critical Essays*. Ed. Linda A. Morris. New York: Garland, 1994. 327-340.

10.12.03

Domestic Humor

Bombeck, Erma. *At Wit's End* (1965). New York: Ballantine, 1983. 7-65.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. (1963) London: Gollancz, 1971. 15-32.

17.12.03

Ethnic Humor

Shange, Ntozake. "aw, babe, you so pretty." *Black-Eyed Susans / Midnight Birds: Stories by and about Black Women*. Ed. Mary Helen Washington. New York: Anchor-Doubleday. 1990. 345-49.

Goodman, Allegra. "Oral History." *The Family Markowitz*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1996. 45-71.

Cisneros, Sandra. "Barbie-Q." (1991) *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Ed. X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. New York: HarperCollins, 1999. 1-2.

Lowe, John. "Theories of Ethnic Humor: How to Enter, Laughing." *American Quarterly* 38.3 (1986): 439-460.

07.01.04

60ies and 70ies

Brown, Rita Mae. *The Rubyfruit Jungle*. (1973) Please buy a copy.

Russ, Joanna. "What Can a Heroine Do? Or Why Women Can't Write." *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives*. Ed. Susan Koppelman Cornillon. Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular Press, 1972. 3-20.

14.01.04

Detective Fiction

Carolyn Haines. *Them Bones*. (1999). Please buy a copy.

McCafferty, Taylor. "Even Steven." *Detecting Women: New American Short Stories*. Ed. Evelyne Keitel. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1998. 65-95.

Keitel, Evelyne. „Dem Verbrechen auf der Spur: Kriminalromane von Frauen für Frauen.“ in (ed), *Frauen, Literatur, Geschichte: Schreibende Frauen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*. Ed. Hiltrud Gnüg und Renate Möhrmann. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1998. 177-189.

21.01.04

The Way We Live Today

Godwin, Gail. „My Lover, His Summer Vacation.“ (1976) *The World Treasury of Love Stories*. Ed. Lucy Rosenthal. New York: Oxford UP, 1995. 196-210.

Bank, Melissa. "The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing." *The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing*. New York: Viking-Penguin, 1999. 227-274.

Toth, Emily. "A Laughter of Their Own: Women's Humor in the United States." *American Women Humorists: Critical Essays*. Ed. Linda A. Morris. New York: Garland, 1994. 85-107.

28.01.04

Definitions of Humor

Little, Judy. "Humoring the Sentence: Women's Dialogic Comedy." *Women's Comic Vision*. Ed. June Sochen. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991. 19-32.

Sheppard, Alice. "Social Cognition, Gender Roles, and Women's Humor." *Women's Comic Vision*. Ed. June Sochen. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991. 32-56.

Walker, Nancy. "Toward Solidarity: Women's Humor and Group Identity." *Women's Comic Vision*. Ed. June Sochen. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991. 56-81.

04.02.04

Klausur