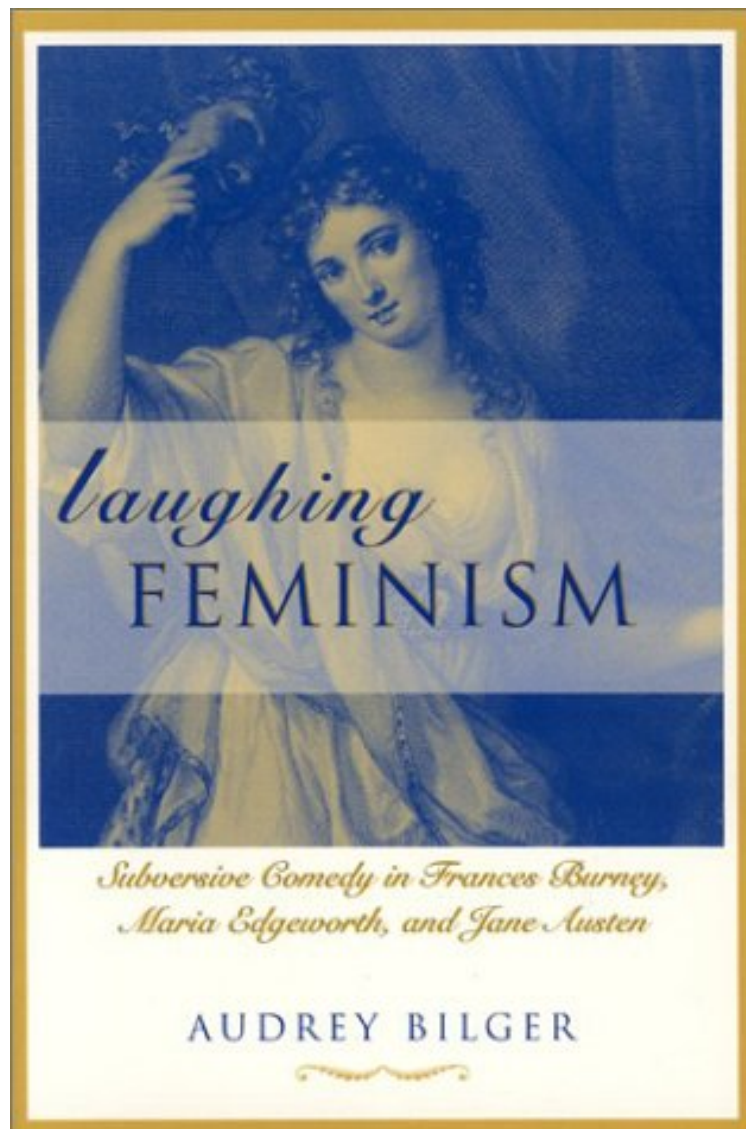


(Download) Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen (Humor in Life and Letters Series)

Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen (Humor in Life and Letters Series)

Audrey Bilger

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Audrey Bilger : Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen (Humor in Life and Letters Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane

Austen (Humor in Life and Letters Series):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. scholarly but accessible feminist look at Austen et al. By Audrey Bilger
I was anxious to read this book because I've always enjoyed 18th and 19th century literature, and believed that the humor found in the works of Austen and Burney were overlooked and undermentioned. Author Bilger examines the works of Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen, and posits that the humor they used was subversive -- laughter at the expense of the overbearing patriarchal culture in which they lived. While this isn't exactly what I'd hoped it would be, it was more accessible than many scholarly works, and after I got into the rhythm and jargon of the academic writing, I found myself entertained as well as informed -- such a lovely combination. Laughter is a commodity too often ignored and a tool too often overlooked, but the author makes her case that these three authors consciously used satire, burlesque and parody to criticize their culture while maintaining the guise of docile co-conspirators. Bilger begins with interesting chapters on women comedy and Mary Shelley's feminism before discussing the lives of her subjects, their beliefs and their use of comedic technique and characters to undermine the dominant paradigm, as it were. Naive observers, female tricksters, competitive women, nimble suitors and ignorant patriarchs are described and then illustrated with short excerpts from the many works by these talented authors -- in particular Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Northanger Abbey*; Burney's *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*; and Edgeworth's *Belinda* and *Helen*. I thought the most interesting chapter was on "goblin humor", dark humor that is still considered distasteful by many and seems shocking when found in these quiet comedies of manners. Here the author displayed a mastery of comic theory as well as the literature, and made her case admirably, without descent into the jargon-laden victimization theory that dominates feminist film theory, for example. Rather, Bilger posits that Austen, Burney and Edgeworth found an outlet for what they could have considered a hopeless situation, and that they consciously and actively did their best to undermine the system in which they lived, reflecting and building upon the work of earlier feminists, and sending out beacons of camaraderie to women living under cultural and personal subjugation. The book concludes with a fine Notes section, a bibliography and a good index.

Laughing Feminism focuses on comedy in the works of Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen, authors who scrutinized the subjected prejudices against women in order to expose their absurdity and encourage readers to laugh at the folly of sexist views. Audrey Bilger shows that these women writers employed a full arsenal of comic weapons such as satire, burlesque, and parody to combat patriarchal nonsense and make comedy out of the discrepancies between the myth and reality of womanhood. Bilger draws on current feminist criticism, comic theory, and the methodologies of literary history to provide a context for re-assessing the novels of these writers. At a time when overt feminist statements could ruin a woman's reputation, comedy enabled these authors to smuggle feminism into their writing.

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