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The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter (Texas Film Studies Series)

Kathleen Rowe

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Kathleen Rowe : The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter (Texas Film Studies Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter (Texas Film Studies Series):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very interesting challenge to the status quo of women and humor By Adelheid Mueller Very much a work for a masters thesis. I was very much impressed with the research. It is an

academic look at women and our still restricted acceptable behavior. Over the centuries it changed little and I am grateful for the women who try to break down the stereotype behavior society imposes on us. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Unruly and UnrulyBy Story Circle Book ReviewsIn this intriguing study of women who deliberately inspire laughter by making spectacles of themselves, Kathleen Rowe shows us how rebellious women--loud, domineering, voluptuous, slyly self-deprecating--employ their performance personas to satirize, parody, and call attention to the cultural norms that shape women's behavior. Using two "unruly" women, the television star Roseanne Arnold and Miss Piggy, the Muppet, Rowe illustrates how comedic women create disorder by refusing to occupy their proper places, engaging in excessive behaviors (body size, language, exaggerated sexuality), and crossing the threshold of acceptable moralities in their relationships with others. In Arnold's case, Rowe says, she has the power to "name her own experience, to create herself": "Perhaps her greatest unruliness lies in the presentation of herself as author rather than actor or comedian, and indeed as author of a self over which she claims control. 'Roseanne' is a persona she has created for and by herself." Rowe also looks at unruly women in Hollywood film: the comic performances of Mae West, Katherine Hepburn, Barbara Stanwyck, Marilyn Monroe, and Cher, each of whom presents a different kind of unruliness--in the most interesting instances, parodies of the motifs that have been conventionalized in romantic comedy. Rowe also examines examples of men as unruly women, for example, in *Some Like It Hot*. "These comedic forms," she says, "hold out the promise of dissolving the barriers between the public and private, work and play, the social and the sexual." They also dissolve the barriers between the conventional and the marginal, and teach us how to laugh at what we often fear the most: the unruliness in ourselves. For me, Rowe's analysis of Miss Piggy ("Pig Ladies, Big Ladies, and Ladies with Big Mouths") was the most interesting and illuminating, and I learned from her discussion of the carnivalesque. But for Rowe herself, Roseanne remains the most important figure, a "compelling example of the disruptive potential of the unruly woman" whose career and persona illustrate the "political power of women's laughter to 'bring down the house.'" In an afterword that explores the comedian's shifting presentations of body, style, language, and substance, she argues that it is these "metamorphoses" that reinforce Roseanne's "transgressive power." It is Roseanne and women like her who, by making unruly spectacles of themselves, allow us to see ourselves and the conventions that too often rule us. (Recommended for women's studies and culture/gender collections.) by Susan Wittig Albert for Story Circle Book Reviews reviewing books by, for, and about women 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Feminist Examination Of Mae West By R. M. Desjardins Kathleen Rowe's "The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter," published in 1995 is a university press publication that examines Mae West's contributions to the Feminist Movement and evaluates her role as a female icon of the twentieth century. This treatment of West is a typical academic text with good research of textual sources, but with little or no interviews and featuring theory that is hit or miss. When Mae West was asked why she never wrote an article supporting the Feminist Movement she reportedly drawled, "I was nevah asked....."

Unruly women have been making a spectacle of themselves in film and on television from Mae West to Roseanne Arnold. In this groundbreaking work, Kathleen Rowe explores how the unruly woman--often a voluptuous, noisy, joke-making rebel or "woman on top"--uses humor and excess to undermine patriarchal norms and authority. At the heart of the book are detailed analyses of two highly successful unruly women--the comedian Roseanne Arnold and the Muppet Miss Piggy. Putting these two figures in a deeper cultural perspective, Rowe also examines the evolution of romantic film comedy from the classical Hollywood period to the present, showing how the comedic roles of actresses such as Katharine Hepburn, Barbara Stanwyck, and Marilyn Monroe offered an alternative, empowered image of women that differed sharply from the "suffering heroine" portrayed in classical melodramas.

From the Back Cover Unruly women have been making a spectacle of themselves in film and on television from Mae West to Roseanne Arnold. In this groundbreaking work, Kathleen Rowe explores how the unruly woman--often a voluptuous, noisy, joke-making rebel or 'woman on top'--uses humor and excess to undermine patriarchal norms and authority. About the Author Kathleen Rowe (now Kathleen Rowe Karlyn) is Professor of English and Director of the Cinema Studies Program at the University of Oregon.