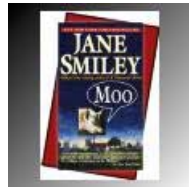


A Busman's Holiday

Reading the Academic Novel for Fun and Profit

Helene Androski
WAAL 2001



"University politics are vicious precisely because the stakes are so small"
--- Henry Kissinger

Discussion Questions for *Moo*

- **Would Jane Smiley agree with Henry Kissinger?**
- **What did you think of the satire? Too broad? Too weak?**
- **How does this book compare with other academic satires?**
- **Did you recognize any character types or issues from your own institution?**
- **What is Smiley doing with the structure of this novel?**

Selected Academic Novels

A Bibliography in Progress

Please send suggestions for more titles to handroski@library.wisc.edu

Amis, Kingsley. *Lucky Jim*, 1953. A classic. Wickedly, cynically funny account of a young academic's attempts to achieve a permanent position in a provincial British university for which he has no respect to teach and study a subject in which he has no interest.

Lodge, David. *Changing Places*, 1975. *Small World*, 1984. *Nice Work*, 1988. *Thinks*, 2001. Although not as cynical as Amis, Lodge has been deftly satirizing the British academic world for decades, in both its pre- and post-Thatcher states.

Prose, Francine. *Blue Angel*, 2000. The academic world has become a dangerous place, beset by sexual harassment and political correctness.

Sayers, Dorothy L. *Gaudy Night*, 1936. Ostensibly a detective novel set in Oxford, it devotes most of its ink to an earnest discussion of the role of women in the academic world. Some issues from the 1930s remain unresolved today.

Hassler, Jon. *Rookery Blues*, 1995. *The Dean's List*, 1997. The first novel is set in a small Minnesota state college in the riotous 60s, and the second revisits the characters 30 years later. Gentle, affectionate humor.

Hynes, James. *Publish and Perish*, 1997. *The Lecturer's Tale*, 2001. In these books set in a Midwestern university, Hynes uses elements of the gothic, the satire, and the epic to poke fun at the state of literary studies.

Bradbury, Malcolm. *Eating People is Wrong*, 1959. *Stepping Westward*, 1965. *The History Man*, 1975. Highly literate British academic satires. Much like Lodge.

Grudin, Robert. *Book*, 1992. An English professor in a university in the Pacific Northwest has disappeared and the chief suspect is a paranoid deconstructionist. Grudin acknowledges his debt to Rabelais in this romp filled with word-play.

Pym, Barbara. *An Academic Question*, 1986. Life in a provincial British university as seen by a vaguely dissatisfied faculty wife. Librarians come in for their share of skewering along with the usual cast of eccentrics.

Lethem, Jonathan. *As She Climbed Across the Table*, 1997. A blend of campus comedy and the X Files. An anthropologist is in love with a physicist working on an experiment involving a vacuum bubble known as "Lack." Metaphysics and romance.

Russo, Richard. *Straight Man*, 1997. Beset by budget cuts, the chair of the English Department of a small liberal arts college jokingly threatens to strangle a duck a day from the campus pond until he gets his funding. It's not the first time his sense of black humor has gotten him in trouble.