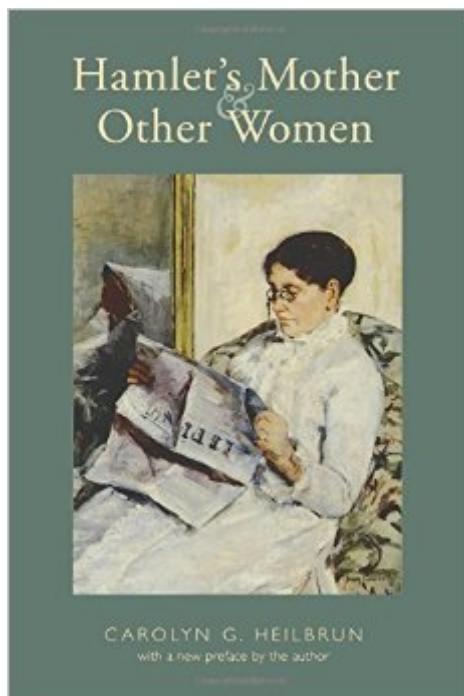


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Hamlet's Mother And Other Women



Synopsis

Now in a new paperback edition with a new preface by the author, this collection explores feminism within the profession of literature.

Book Information

Paperback: 266 pages

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Customer Reviews

In one of the several introductory notes to the sections of this collection, Carolyn Heilbrun recounts that when she delivered one speech at a convention in 1985, "I could not see the Southern gentleman on the platform behind me, but I was later told that if looks could kill I would have dropped dead on the spot." (Having been present at another of her speeches during the same decade, I can vouch that she doesn't embellish the reaction.) The essay, "What Was Penelope Unweaving?," uses the story of Odysseus's wife to enlarge on the idea that "women must make new fictions of their lives." By today's standards, Heilbrun's speech is so innocuous--not to mention perceptive and textually grounded--that the reaction of the "Southern gentleman" is itself a comment on how far literary criticism and social attitudes have progressed in the intervening quarter century. One can be thankful that even many members of the Old Guard--those still living, anyway--now understand that resurrecting and discussing writing by and about women is not a threat but an enhancement of literature. And Heilbrun was one of those teachers largely responsible for the change in mindset, more effective than most because she scorned the tempting quagmires of jargon and was famous for her plain speaking. Even when you might disagree with her conclusions, her arguments make you think of literature and culture in new ways. This collection,

first published in 1990, gathers twenty-one selections, including several well-regarded and groundbreaking essays and a few obscure pieces that deserve to be more widely read. Among the highlights are the title essay (published in 1957!) and the explorations of the works of various authors.

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