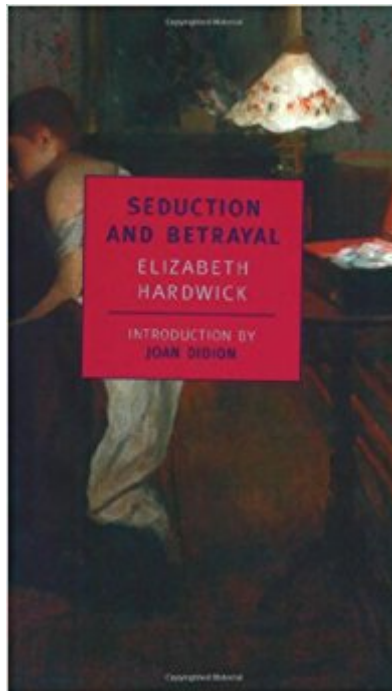


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Seduction And Betrayal: Women And Literature (New York Review Books Classics)



Synopsis

The novelist and essayist Elizabeth Hardwick is one of contemporary America's most brilliant writers, and *Seduction and Betrayal*, in which she considers the careers of women writers as well as the larger question of the presence of women in literature, is her most passionate and concentrated work of criticism. A gallery of unforgettable portraits--of Virginia Woolf and Zelda Fitzgerald, Dorothy Wordsworth and Jane Carlyle--as well as a provocative reading of such works as *Wuthering Heights*, *Hedda Gabler*, and the poems of Sylvia Plath, *Seduction and Betrayal* is a virtuoso performance, a major writer's reckoning with the relations between men and women, women and writing, writing and life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An excellent set of essays. Unlike the typical jargon-ridden contributions to academic journals, these essays illuminate their topics (the Brontes, Ibsen's women, Don Giovanni, Hester Prynne, Hetty Sorrel, Roberta [in "An American Tragedy"], Maslova [in "Resurrection"], Clarissa, Tess) without any ax-grinding. They are written for those who wish to learn from, to see more clearly what is being shown in, the works of imaginative literature that are the treasure belonging to us all. One sentence after another both gets at the essence of the text she is explicating and is memorable in its expression. The title essay is simply great. Examples: "Sexual transgression loses its overwhelming character as a wrong or a mistake when the persons have virtues of a compelling sort, or spiritual

goodness, or the grandeur of endurance." "In many respects, the characters in "The Scarlet Letter" are not characters at all, but large, fantastically painted playing cards. Symbolic action is Hester's role." "To think of the past as a series of agreements with others that make an everlasting claim on us is unreal, and yet it is one of the most interesting questions ever asked about the subject matter of so much art: youthful love." "Richardson thought, or told himself that he thought, of his brilliant creation as a sort of encyclopedia of male guile and treachery, an elaborate defensive karate, by which the menaced girls of the eighteenth century could learn to protect their virtue." "In a letter the writer holds all the cards, controls everything about himself and about those assertions he wishes to make concerning events or the worth of others. For completely self-centered characters, the letter form is a complex and rewarding activity." "Hardy sees Tess as a beautiful, warm soul run down by the dogs of fate, in her case the bloodhounds of sex and love, Alec D'Urberville and Angel Clare." Hardwick brings to light how it is that Hester, Clarissa, and Tess can be understood as heroic, while Hetty and Roberta cannot. Highly recommended!

Her essays on the Brontes, Zelda Fitzgerald, Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, and Jane Welsh Carlyle are absolute classics. If you are interested in any of these writers (and yes, even Zelda was a writer!), don't miss this one.

The writing is so good, but the subject matter is not new, and the few new insights into some fascinating literary woman aren't quite worth it. But I did read it and had moments of pleasure. So try it.

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