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Untamed and Unabashed: Essays on Women and Humor in British Literature (Humor in Life and Letters Series)

Regina Barreca

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#4487276 in Books Wayne State University Press 1994-02-01 1994-02-01 Original language: English PDF #1 .67 x 6.25 x 9.30l, .90 #File Name: 0814321364192 pages | File size: 74.Mb

Regina Barreca : Untamed and Unabashed: Essays on Women and Humor in British Literature (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 Untamed and Unabashed: Essays on Women and Humor in British Literature (Humor in Life and Letters Series):

In *Untamed and Unabashed*, Regina Barreca, noted authority on women and humor, examines the use of humor in the works of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Elizabeth Bowen, Muriel Spark, and Fay Weldon. She analyzes the ways that each writer uses comedic devices, especially those involving language itself, and discusses the gendered basis of their humor, providing a provocative feminist perspective on gender and comedy. Each of the essays argues that conservative critics have misread and misunderstood the importance of humor in the works of these women authors, and that women's humor serves to explode conventions oppressive to women and to offer women readers a critique of, and an alternative perspective on, the dominant cultural ideologies that contain and oppress them. The book concludes that these authors strategically deployed humor, coded in forms that women readers—but not men readers—would recognize and understand, as a means of educating and empowering those women readers. Barreca

asserts that much of women's comic play has to do with power and its systematic misappropriation, allowing women to gain perspective by ridiculing the implicit insanities of a patriarchal culture. Using detailed persuasive new readings of various works of each of her chosen authors, she shows how the straightjacket of conventional femininity is challenged, confronted, and finally, thrown off. This volume demonstrates that comedy can effectively channel anger and rebellion by first making them appear to be acceptable and temporary phenomena, and then by harnessing the released energies, rather than dispersing them. This kind of comedy, which is at the heart of *Untamed and Unabashed*, terrifies those who hold order dear. It should.

About the Author Regina Barreca is an associate professor of English at the University of Connecticut. She earned her Ph.D. at the City University of New York.