



Doubled Plots: Romance and History

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In art, myth, and popular culture, romance is connected with the realm of emotions, private thought, and sentimentality. History, its counterpart, is the seemingly objective compendium of public fact. In theory, the two genres are diametrically opposed, offering widely divergent views of human experience.

In this collection of essays, however, the writers challenge these basic assumptions and consider the two as parallel and as reflections of each other. Looking closely at specific narratives, they argue that romance and history share expectations and purposes and create the metaphors that can either hold cultures and institutions together or drive them apart. The writers explore the internal contradictions of both genres, as seen in works in which the elements of both romance and history are present. The theme that flows throughout this collection is that romance literature and art frequently engage with or comment on actual historical events or histories.

Included among the contributions are discussions of romance and race in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, the Rudolph Valentino film classic *The Sheik*, the series of English "Regency Romance" novels, the constructs of love and history in two of Alice McDermott's novels, and a feminist reading of African American women's historical romances.

Moreover, the essays approach romance and history from a variety of critical and political perspectives and examine a wide selection of romances from the 1800s to contemporary times. They look at bestsellers and literary classics, at texts by and for white audiences, and at works created by writers on the margins of Western culture.

The anthology is a radical approach to romance, a genre often dismissed as diversionary and reactionary. It explores how well this genre serves for critical examinations of history.

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