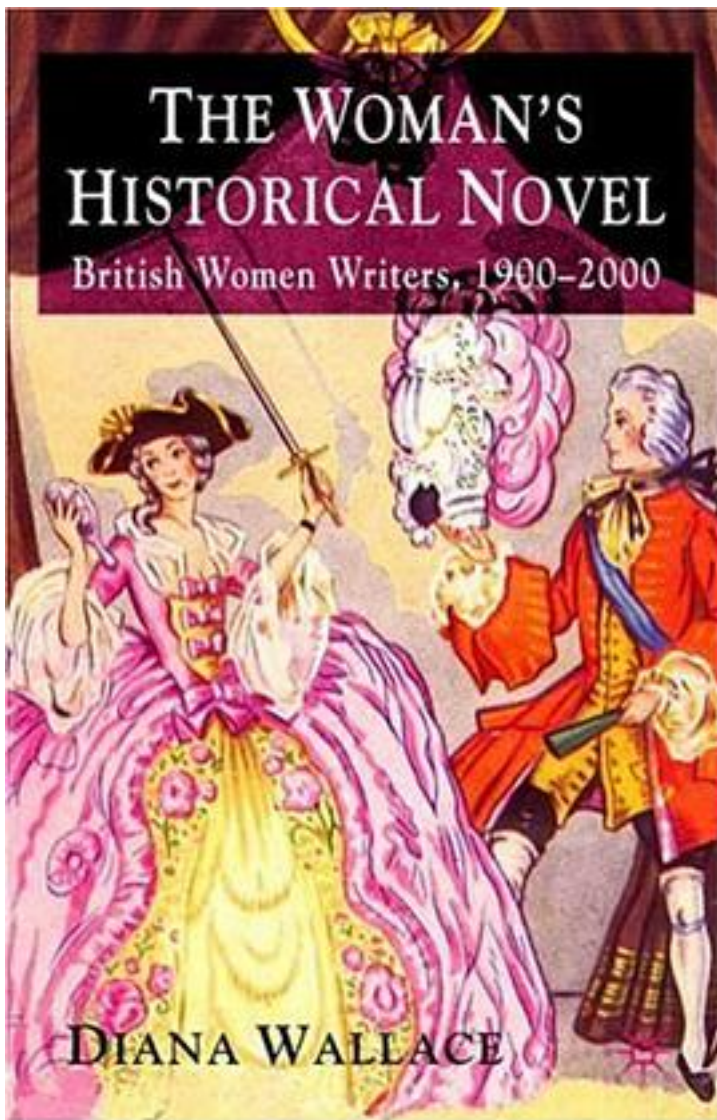


The Woman's Historical Novel



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In this first major study of historical novels by British women writers, now available in paperback for the first time, Diana Wallace explores the development of an important but neglected literary genre, revealing it to be one of the most significant forms of women's reading and writing in the twentieth century. Since the work of Sir Walter Scott, often regarded as the 'father' of the genre, in the early nineteenth century, the historical novel has been popularly associated with the masculine world of politics and power. Yet both before and after Scott, women writers developed forms of the historical novel which enabled them to re-imagine conventional history to encompass women's experience. Too often dismissed as 'nostalgic', 'unhistorical' or simply 'trash', women's historical novels, as Dr Wallace demonstrates in this extensively-researched book, deserve serious critical attention. Perhaps more than any other genre, she argues, the historical novel has offered women writers a mode within which they could evade censorship to address the most urgent political and social issues of their day. While in its popular form, the historical novel has offered women particular pleasures, providing a liberating space for erotic fantasy or even the transgressive thrills of 'masquerading' as a man. The Woman's Historical Novel combines a comprehensive survey with detailed readings of key writers, including Georgette Heyer, Naomi Mitchison, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Daphne du Maurier, Margaret Irwin, Mary Renault, 'Jean Plaidy', Dorothy Dunnett, Catherine Cookson, Mary Stewart, Philippa Gregory, Jeanette Winterson, A.S. Byatt and Pat Barker.

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