



History Meets Fiction

Beverley C. Southgate

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Is history factual, or just another form of fiction?

Are there distinct boundaries between the two, or just extensive borderlands?

How do novelists represent historians and history?

The relationship between history and fiction has always been contentious and sometimes turbulent, not least because the two have traditionally been seen as mutually exclusive opposites.

However, new hybrid forms of writing – from historical fiction to docudramas to fictionalised biographies – have led to the blurring of boundaries, and given rise to the claim that history itself is just another form of fiction.

In his thought-provoking new book, Beverley Southgate untangles this knotty relationship, setting his discussion in a broad historical and philosophical context. Throughout, Southgate invokes a variety of writers to illuminate his arguments, from Dickens and Proust, through Virginia Woolf and Daphne du Maurier, to such contemporary novelists as Tim O'Brien, Penelope Lively, and Graham Swift.

Anyone interested in the many meeting points between history and fiction will find this an engaging, accessible and stimulating read.

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