Reading literary texts in their historical contexts has been the dominant form of interpretation in literary criticism for the past thirty years. This collection of essays reflects on the origins of historicism, its present usefulness as a mode of literary analysis, its limitations, and its future. The volume provides a brief history of the practice from its renaissance origins, offering examples of historicist work that not only demonstrate the continuing vitality of this methodology, but also suggest new directions for research. Focusing on the major figures of Shakespeare and Milton, these essays provide important and concise representations of trends in the field. Designed for scholars and students of early modern English literature (1500–1700), the volume will also be of interest to students of literature more generally, and to historians.

Ann Baynes Coiro is Associate Professor of English at Rutgers University. She is the author of Robert Herrick’s Hesperides and the Epigram Book Tradition and has published many journal articles and book chapters on seventeenth-century poetry, Milton, book history, court culture, and English theater.

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RETHINKING HISTORICISM
FROM SHAKESPEARE
TO MILTON

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Frontmatter
More information
for Annabel Patterson
Contents

List of Contributors  ix
Acknowledgments  xiii

Introduction: Old, New, Now  1
Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton

I: HISTORICISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS
1. Has Historicism Gone Too Far: Or, Should We Return to Form?  23
Andrew Hadfield
2. Theory and Practice in Historical Method  40
Michael McKeon
3. Limiting History  65
Marshall Grossman

II: HISTORICISM AND THEOLOGY
4. The Politics of Renaissance Historicism: Valla, Erasmus, Colet, and More  87
Thomas Fulton
5. Historicizing Satisfaction in Shakespeare’s Othello  113
Heather Hirschfeld

III: DRAMATIC HISTORIES
6. The New Presentism and Its Discontents: Listening to Eastward Ho and Shakespeare’s Tempest in Dialogue  133
Paul Stevens
Contents

   Lawrence Manley
   159

IV: MILTON AND THE PROBLEMS OF HISTORY

8. Medea’s Dilemma: Politics and Passion in Milton’s Divorce Tracts
   Sharon Achinstein
   181

   Martin Dzelzainis
   209

V: GENDERING HISTORICISM

10. “You shall be our generalless”: Fashioning Warrior Women from Henrietta Maria to Hillary Clinton
    Laura Lunger Knoppers
    237

11. Wartimes: Seventeenth-Century Women’s Writing and Its Afterlives
    Erin Murphy
    257

    Afterword
    283
    Nigel Smith

Index

295
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Contributors


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xiii