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Sentimental Collaborations: Mourning and Middle-class Identity in Nineteenth Century America (Paperback)

By Mary Louise Kete

Duke University Press, United States, 2000. Paperback. Book Condition: New. New.. 231 x 152 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. During the 1992 Democratic Convention and again while delivering Harvard University's commencement address two years later, Vice President Al Gore shared with his audience a story that showed the effect of sentiment in his life. In telling how an accident involving his son had provided him with a revelation concerning the compassion of others, Gore effectively reconstructed himself as a typical, middle-class American for whom sympathy can lead to salvation. This contemporary reiteration of mid-nineteenth-century American sentimental discourse proves to be a fruitful point of departure for Mary Louise Kete's argument that sentimentality has been an important and recurring form of cultural narrative that has helped to shape middle-class American life. Many scholars have written about the sentimental novel as a primarily female genre and have stressed its negative ideological aspects. Kete finds that in fact many men - from writers to politicians - participated in nineteenth-century sentimental culture. Importantly, she also recovers the utopian dimension of the phenomenon, arguing that literary sentimentality, specifically in the form of poetry, is the written trace of a broad cultural...



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