



Loving and Hating Mathematics: Challenging the Myths of Mathematical Life

Reuben Hersh, Vera John-Steiner

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Mathematics is often thought of as the coldest expression of pure reason. But few subjects provoke hotter emotions--and inspire more love and hatred--than mathematics. And although math is frequently idealized as floating above the messiness of human life, its story is nothing if not human; often, it is all too human. *Loving and Hating Mathematics* is about the hidden human, emotional, and social forces that shape mathematics and affect the experiences of students and mathematicians. Written in a lively, accessible style, and filled with gripping stories and anecdotes, *Loving and Hating Mathematics* brings home the intense pleasures and pains of mathematical life.

These stories challenge many myths, including the notions that mathematics is a solitary pursuit and a "young man's game," the belief that mathematicians are emotionally different from other people, and even the idea that to be a great mathematician it helps to be a little bit crazy. Reuben Hersh and Vera John-Steiner tell stories of lives in math from their very beginnings through old age, including accounts of teaching and mentoring, friendships and rivalries, love affairs and marriages, and the experiences of women and minorities in a field that has traditionally been unfriendly to both. Included here are also stories of people for whom mathematics has been an immense solace during times of crisis, war, and even imprisonment--as well as of those rare individuals driven to insanity and even murder by an obsession with math.

This is a book for anyone who wants to understand why the most rational of human endeavors is at the same time one of the most emotional.

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