

= Irish Thoroughbred =

Irish Thoroughbred is American author Nora Roberts 's debut novel , originally published by Silhouette in January 1981 as a category romance . Like other category romances , the novel was less than 200 pages and was intended to be on sale for only one month . It proved so popular that it was repackaged as a stand @-@ alone romance and reprinted multiple times . Roberts wrote two sequels , Irish Rebel and Irish Rose .

Roberts drew on her Irish heritage to create an Irish heroine , Adelia " Dee " Cunnane . In the novel , Dee moves to the United States , where her sick uncle arranges for her to marry his employer , wealthy American horsebreeder Travis Grant . Although the early part of their relationship is marked by frequent arguments and misunderstanding , by the end of the story Travis and Dee reconcile . According to critic Mary Ellen Snodgrass , the couple 's transformation from adversaries to a loving married couple is one of many formulaic elements in the book . Although the protagonists adhered to many stereotypes common to romance novels of the 1980s , Roberts 's heroine is more independent and feisty than most heroines of the time . This book 's popularity helped pave the way for other romance authors to experiment with heroes and heroines who had greater economic and emotional parity .

= = Publication = =

In 1979 , Nora Roberts was a stay @-@ at @-@ home mother with two small children . Stranded during a blizzard with nothing to read , Roberts amused herself by writing down one of the stories in her head . After developing her idea into a novel @-@ length contemporary romance , she continued writing and soon finished six more manuscripts . Roberts submitted her work to Harlequin Enterprises , a Canadian company considered the foremost publisher of romance novels in North America . Harlequin typically published works by British authors set in the British Commonwealth , but in 1975 Harlequin relaxed its criteria slightly and purchased several novels from American Janet Dailey . Unconvinced that the market would appreciate novels such as Dailey 's ? all featuring American protagonists and set in the United States ? Harlequin was unwilling to further expose itself to risk . As a result , the company quickly rejected Roberts 's work ; one editor explained that " they already had their American writer . "

In an effort to take advantage of the untapped talent of American writers , in 1980 Simon & Schuster created a new imprint , Silhouette Books , to serve as a counterpart to Harlequin . Roberts sent her seventh manuscript , Irish Thoroughbred , unsolicited to the new company . Nancy Jackson , the acquiring editor at Silhouette , pulled the manuscript from the slush pile and was impressed . She offered Roberts a contract , leaving the writer " awestruck " .

= = Plot summary = =

The novel follows the relationship between Irishwoman Adelia " Dee " Cunnane and American Travis Grant . As the story begins , the young and penniless Dee emigrates to the United States to live with her uncle , Paddy , who works on a large horse farm . Dee 's love for animals is evident , and she is given a job working alongside her uncle . Dee has a fiery temper and often argues with Travis , the wealthy farm owner ; many of their arguments lead to passionate embraces . Travis later rescues Dee from an attempted rape .

When Paddy suffers a heart attack , he becomes very concerned about his mortality and Dee 's future . He becomes overwrought and insists that Travis take care of Dee . After privately agreeing to a temporary marriage of convenience , Travis and Dee exchange vows in Paddy 's hospital room . As the story progresses , the protagonists become increasingly unhappy , with neither willing to admit their love for the other .

Although still unwilling to vocalize their feelings , Dee and Travis appear more confident in their relationship after they finally consummate their marriage . Soon , however , Dee 's insecurities are exploited by Travis 's sophisticated former girlfriend , Margot , who has returned to the area to win

him back . Dee runs away . Travis follows , and the two confess their love and resolve to make their marriage work .

= = Genre = =

Irish Thoroughbred was initially published as a category romance novel . Books in this genre are short ? usually between 175 and 200 pages , or about 55 @,@ 000 words ? and are published in clearly delineated lines , or categories . Although each category romance novel is unique , it is required to conform to the general parameters that define its line . The small number of books published in each line every month are numbered sequentially within the line . Irish Thoroughbred was number 81 in the Silhouette Romance line . Novels in this line espouse more traditional family values and place greater emphasis on the characters ' emotions rather than their physical needs . Although these novels often describe sexual tension between the main characters , sexual intercourse is only described within the bounds of marriage .

Category romances are generally only available for a limited time , remaining on a bookseller 's shelves until they are sold out or until the next month 's titles are released . Popular category romances can be repacked as stand @-@ alone romance novels ; Irish Thoroughbred received five printings by 1984 . In 2000 , the book was paired with its sequel , Irish Rose , and republished as Irish Hearts , with an initial print run of one million copies . This coincided with the release of a second sequel , Irish Rebel , which focused on Travis and Dee 's daughter .

= = Themes = =

Silhouette editors were originally concerned that the novel was too ethnic . Like many of her early novels , Roberts 's debut featured characters who shared the Irish culture in which Roberts had been raised . The opening pages , alluding to the introductory scene of Daphne du Maurier 's Rebecca , detailed the heroine 's awed reaction to the extravagance of an American estate . This plotline of an impoverished Irishwoman 's surprise at the wealth of America essentially reframed the Irish emigration to the United States of the 19th century .

According to literary critic Mary Ellen Snodgrass , Irish Thoroughbred is not as polished as later Roberts works . Snodgrass cites many predictable elements , including the core " confrontation between an overconfident male and an assertive girl @-@ woman " . Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s , romance novel heroines were generally " trembling virgins " , of an inferior class and power level than the hero . The hero often was very rich and powerful , while the heroine worked in traditional , subordinate , female roles , such as governess or secretary . The heroine of Irish Thoroughbred conformed to this pattern in part , by being sexually inexperienced , immature , and poor , but Roberts deliberately deviated from the rest of the stereotype by providing her with a hot @-@ tempered and independent personality . Her later books have continued in the same vein . As Roberts explains , " My heroine may have problems , she may be vulnerable , but she has to be strong , she has to be intelligent . She has to be independent and so does he , or I 'm not interested in telling their stories . " The popularity of this book and Roberts 's subsequent novels helped transform the genre , making authors more willing to give heroes and heroines economic and emotional parity .

Despite the greater independence that Roberts allotted her heroine , Dee is trapped within a patriarchal culture in which her uncle and prospective husband arrange her future . The arranged marriage and ensuing events , including the misunderstanding and her running away , were common plot elements for romance novels at that time . Dee 's reactions , however , veered from the formulaic . Her retorts brought to mind the " quippy one @-@ upmanship of feminist literature " . When a man attempts to rape her , Dee responds with a series of sharp comments , calling him , among other things , " a filthy pig of a man " , before succumbing to the traditional feminine response of fainting in horror .

Roberts also includes the motif of jealousy . Dee is given a rival for Travis 's affections ? an over @-@ sophisticated woman who is essentially Dee 's antithesis . Roberts reused this plot point in

other novels , including Song of the West .