



Jane Austen and her Readers, 1786–1945

Katie Halsey

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Description

An innovative look at the reading of Jane Austen and the responses of ordinary readers to her works.

‘Beautifully written and drawing on a wealth of new manuscript and print resources, Katie Halsey places Austen’s nuanced comedy at the heart of fierce disputes about the art of the novel and the moral life of the reader in the period 1786–1945. This study is an elegant, authoritative and compelling account of Austen’s role in the history of the book.’ —*Dr Jane Stabler, University of St Andrews*

‘Katie Halsey presents an excellent, useful book about ways to define the “reading” and “readers” of Jane Austen [and] makes Austen novels part of the last two hundred years of material culture, a fascinating project. Summing Up: Highly recommended.’ —*R. Shapiro, City University of New York, ‘Choice’*

Jane Austen and her Readers, 1786–1945 is a study of readers’ interactions with the works of one of England’s most enduringly popular novelists. Employing an innovative approach made possible by new research in the field of the history of reading, the volume discusses Austen’s own ideas about books and readers, the uses she makes of her reading, and the relationship of her style to her readers’ responses. It considers the role of editions and criticism in directing readers’ responses, and presents and analyses a variety of source material related to readers who read Austen’s works between 1786 and 1945.

Previous studies of Austen’s influence on her readers and literary successors have either presupposed a hypothetical reader, or focused on the texts of the critical tradition, ignoring the views, reactions and thoughts of the common reader. This volume discusses the responses of ordinary readers to Austen’s novels, responses that offer insights into both Jane Austen’s particular appeal, and the nature of the act of reading itself.

Readership: The book will be useful to students and researchers in book history, Austen studies, and cultural historians.

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About the Author

Katie Halsey is a lecturer in eighteenth-century literature at the University of Stirling, Scotland.

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