see examples of early printing, outside of the occasional display of a book as part of a larger art exhibition. That began to change when the British Museum opened its first exhibition of books in the mid-1850s, followed by the Caxton Exhibition. As more people became familiar with the rich history of print, particularly through the “cult of Caxton” (144), the desire for facsimiles and derivatives grew.

The book’s strength is the breadth of the topics covered in a highly compact space. While each of the chapters could merit a book in its own right, McKitterick manages to cover the important issues in tightly focused and sharply written chapters, all the while being judicious with examples. In a nice twist, the book is also available as an e-book – which is how this reviewer read it.

JOHN SHOESMITH
University of Toronto


Katie Halsey’s ambitious study of the extended conversation between Jane Austen and her early readers employs a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches to explore what she imagines as “a dynamic two-way process wherein readers respond to the novels, but the novels and characters are also brought to life, re-imagined, re-created and re-invented in and through the reading experience in its totality” (3). Halsey explains that the dual focus of her research – treating both the author and her readers – is made necessary by Austen’s indirect and confidential style, the refusal of her writing to “take life and itself entirely seriously” (7). According to Halsey, this style demands energetic engagement from her readers and thereby brings about a wide range of resistant, compliant, deeply personal, and imaginative readings.

Presented in two parts, the first part of *Jane Austen and Her Readers* considers Austen’s own reading practices, the representations of readers in her fiction, and her ideas about the form of the novel and the constraints upon women’s reading (especially novels) in her day. These large topics are given brief treatment, but the chapters are well designed to set the stage effectively for the second part of the book. Halsey points out, for instance, that in *Pride and Prejudice*,
the pompous Mr. Collins literally judges a book by its cover when he refuses to read a book that is offered to him solely because it appears at a glance to be from a circulating library (41). In the second chapter, Halsey offers close readings of Austen’s playful treatments of women’s reading in her novels and reveals, among other things, that James Fordyce’s *Sermons for Young Women* (1765) – in which he dismisses the novel in favour of more serious genres – provides an unlikely source for Austen’s famous defence of the novel in *Northanger Abbey*: “‘Oh! it is only a novel!’ … only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language” (42). Halsey tells us that “Austen rejects Fordyce’s too-easy dismissal of the novel by appropriating his approval of the characteristics of the periodical essay for the novel itself: ‘animated sketches of modern manners’ in Fordyce becomes ‘thorough knowledge of human nature’ in Austen; ‘the powers of fancy, wit, and judgment’ becomes ‘the greatest powers of the mind’ and ‘the liveliest effusions of wit and humour’” (43). In the third chapter, Halsey interrogates Austen’s “elliptical and indirect” style and shows that she seems to require readers to “learn to read extremely carefully,” to reconsider “not only what they know, but how they know it” (59). It is this third chapter in particular that informs Halsey’s treatment of Austen’s readers in the second part.

It is in this second section that Halsey grapples with what has been called “the unbridgeable difference” (93) between our own diverse reading practices and those of readers in the past. She does not seek to identify a hypothetical reader or develop a single grand narrative, but to explore a range of complex and multi-faceted personal accounts of readerly interactions with Austen. While acknowledging the fraught nature of this type of research, she underscores its importance in the field of book history by quoting Simon Eliot’s assertion that it is “the history of reading which will make sense of all the other aspects of the history of the book – or not, if we don’t manage to crack it” (94). She goes on to assert the importance of her approach in the field of Austen studies by claiming that it will not only expand our understanding of Austen’s “novels themselves, but also [of] the social and cultural conditions in which her novels were received, and the cultural debates and preoccupations with which they and their readers engaged” (94).
The second part begins with a chapter devoted to bibliographic analysis in which the distinguishing features of important editions are tied to remarks in readers’ written accounts of their own reading experience. Halsey observes that readers “respond to the materiality of the book itself, commenting on the quality of the paper, binding, font, type, and edition size. They may remark on the capabilities of the translator (if relevant) or editor, the attractiveness, or appropriateness of the illustrations, the financial value of the book, or indeed the value it represents for the money” (103). Oddly enough, despite the material evidence and her careful reasoning, this is the one chapter in which Halsey shows a lack of confidence in her own assertions. The next chapter explores what can be learned from the nineteenth-century periodical press and its shifting representations of the novel, of Austen, and of readers, particularly women readers. The chapters that follow attempt to bring order to Austen readers’ written accounts, classifying them under several headings beginning with affectionate and appropriative (Mary Russell Mitford) or oppositional (Elizabeth Barrett Browning). In the final analysis, most of these short chapters are likely to leave readers wanting more detail, but the strength of this book is not in the details. Its strength is in its broadly sweeping approach, an approach that seeks to bring together far-ranging scholarly methods, which all too often fail to take each other into account.

Halsey’s book begins and ends with important questions about historical reading practices. She demonstrates that we can better understand what Austen asks of her readers if we understand the social reading practices of the author and her reading circle, an active form of reading in which novels and other books were read aloud, discussed and debated, compared and contrasted, and contextualized by sharing knowledge of history, society, and intertexts. “Austen’s texts encourage a plurality of meanings,” or readings, and Halsey maintains that the author is “assuming that a reader may be able to read in such a way as to keep all of these meanings concurrently active” (92). This active and social form of reading seems very far removed from more familiar private reading practices, and it seems even further removed from the browsing style of reading that is presently emerging in response to the proliferation of digital content. This reviewer can’t help but wonder what Jane Austen and her reading circle would have made of the fact that Halsey’s publisher pushed the Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada to review the e-book version of this particular scholarly monograph. “For what do we live,
but to *make sport for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn?”* (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*).

LINDA QUIRK

*University of Alberta*


Publié en 2013 en deux volumes, l’ouvrage de Yannick Portebois et Dorothy Speirs propose de définir le recueil périodique tel qu’il est développé en dialogue et en concurrence avec les deux pôles médiatiques entre lesquels il s’insère dans la France du long XIXe siècle : le livre et le journal. Il offre ainsi un éclairage inédit dans l’histoire de l’édition grâce à une riche enquête menée par les auteures à partir de 103 publications périodiques non quotidiennes parues en France entre 1800 et 1914. Basé sur le fonds Joseph Sablé de l’Université de Toronto, ce corpus avait d’abord pour fonction d’analyser les rapports commerciaux entre éditeurs français et britanniques. Aussi n’était-il restreint ni aux publications périodiques de grande influence comme *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, ni à celles illustrées telles que *Le Magasin pittoresque*, non plus qu’aux revues d’avant-garde de la fin du siècle, qui toutes ont fait l’objet d’études indépendantes recensées dans la bibliographie. L’originalité du travail de Portebois et Speirs résulte précisément de la diversité des formules, des périodicités, des rapports à l’illustration et des orientations des publications examinées. Cette diversité leur a en effet permis d’identifier une catégorie essentielle dans le champ éditorial français du XIXe siècle, le recueil périodique englobant la revue et le magasin. L’ouvrage poursuit alors un double objectif : d’une part, proposer une synthèse de l’évolution des caractéristiques de cette formule hybride et de ses sous-ensembles ; d’autre part, offrir aux chercheurs en histoire de la presse, du livre, de l’imprimé et de l’édition une somme considérable d’informations susceptibles de nouveaux développements.

Intitulé *Le recueil périodique du XIXe siècle*, le premier volume de 465 pages est cosigné par les deux auteures et composé de trois parties : une étude diachronique, le catalogue du corpus et un ensemble d’outils.