

Call for Papers Deadline: 2009-11-11

## **Reading the (Re)Presented Past: Literature and Historical Consciousness, 1700-present.**

Since the emergence of self-consciously fictional forms in the late seventeenth century, the boundary between literary and historical techniques for representing the past has been both permeable and contested. Readers have long been the focus of rhetoric about the dangers of representing history in fiction, but their agency in negotiating this borderland has been largely overlooked.

Reading the Past is an edited collection of essays that investigates the relationship between representations of the past and their real or imagined readers. Focusing on readers of literary texts from the long eighteenth century to the present day, the collection considers the intersection of historical representation, fictional techniques, and reading practices. While the collection considers generic boundaries, the focus is upon readers and reading itself as an act of historical recollection. It explores the way in which the reader's response to the past is mediated by the text, shaped and structured by the relationship between past and present postulated within it. The collection examines, too, how readers themselves conceptualise, enact and/or embody the relationship between past and present as they read. To what extent does reading perform cultural memory? How does the reader contribute to the production of historical meaning? Can reading itself be understood as a form of history production? Taken together the essays gathered in this collection will examine the continuities and shifts from the eighteenth century to the present in the reader's relationship to a represented past.

Possible topics might include, but are not limited to:

- The role of affect in reading the past.
- Collective, cultural, or embodied memory.
- The writer as history's reader: how do authors use the past in their fiction?
- Temporality literary and historical time.
- Writing and re-membering lives.
- The imagined reader: how do texts position the reader in relationship to the past they represent?
- The relationship between fiction and history in the secret history, or roman à clef; the historical novel; historiographic metafiction.
- Reading communities, or reading as sociability.
- Questions of epistemology in reading the past in the literary text.
- Reflections on reading history / the history of reading.
- Questions of genre: how do different narrative strategies position the reader in relation to the past? How does genre affect history-writing, and reading, in literature?

— Representations of readers in literature, including amateurs and professionals reading the past.

Please send an abstract of 500 words along with a brief biographical note to Kate Mitchell (Australian National University) [kate.mitchell@anu.edu.au](mailto:kate.mitchell@anu.edu.au); or Nicola Parsons (University of Sydney) [nicola.parsons@usyd.edu.au](mailto:nicola.parsons@usyd.edu.au) by 11 November 2009.

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