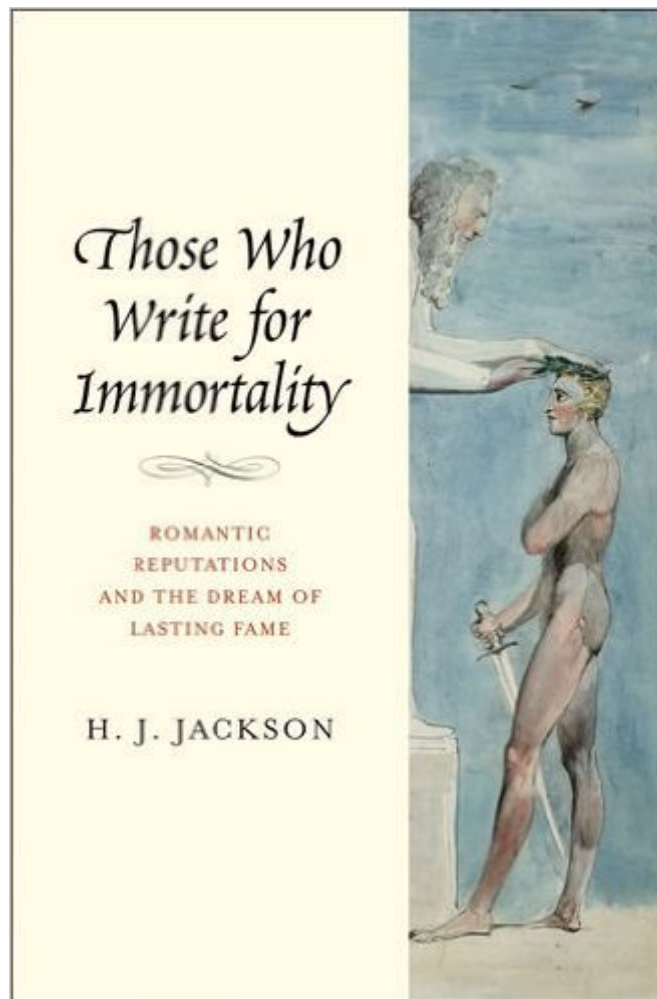


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Those Who Write For Immortality: Romantic Reputations And The Dream Of Lasting Fame



Synopsis

A provocative inquiry into lasting literary fame, the gifted writers who have achieved it, and the gifted writers who have not. Great writers of the past whose works we still read and love will be read forever. They will survive the test of time. We remember authors of true genius because their writings are simply the best. Or . . . might there be other reasons that account for an author's literary fate? This original book takes a fresh look at our beliefs about literary fame by examining how it actually comes about. H. J. Jackson wrestles with entrenched notions about recognizing genius and the test of time by comparing the reputations of a dozen writers of the Romantic period—some famous, some forgotten. Why are we still reading Jane Austen but not Mary Brunton, when readers in their own day sometimes couldn't tell their works apart? Why Keats and not Barry Cornwall, who came from the same circle of writers and had the same mentor? Why not that mentor, Leigh Hunt, himself? Jackson offers new and unorthodox accounts of the coming-to-fame of some of Britain's most revered authors and compares their reputations and afterlives with those of their contemporary rivals. What she discovers about trends, champions, institutional power, and writers' conscious efforts to position themselves for posterity casts fresh light on the actual processes that lead to literary fame.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book presents a discussion of the sometimes fickle trajectories of the posthumous reputations of Romantic poets. It is a worthwhile read for anyone who naively believes that the Canon is a

purely rational construct in which the cream will inevitably rise to the top on the strength of its undeniable aesthetic merit. Prof. Jackson discusses cases of authors such as Wordsworth who achieved widespread fame and recognition during their lifetimes and never let go of it in the afterlife, cases such as Robert Southey or Walter Scott, i.e., authors whose reputations soared and then plummeted, others such as John Clare who were neglected in their day and for a long while afterwards but became belated "recovery projects" finally earning their place in the Canon and others who have been unjustly neglected to this day. She also attempts to discuss various theories of how posthumous reputation/immortality is attained and to discuss the most significant factors that may play a role in the process, with actual aesthetic quality being only one among many and requiring only that the author's work be above a certain threshold to qualify him for consideration among the "greats," with other relevant factors being the quantity of the author's work, his biography, his appeal to multiple audiences (non-readers, readers, critics and other authors), influential works written about him by critics, his own efforts to elevate his reputation, etc. All of this is interesting and enlightening, and Prof. Jackson's writing is not bogged down by academic jargon or what non-humanities-types would call "theoretical mumbo jumbo" (though I'm personally fine with such language where it has its place).

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