

*Abstract: This paper aims to explore the insights provided by Karen Joy Fowler's 2004 novel The Jane Austen Book Club into the ways in which readers' responses can be construed both as rewritings of the original text and as reassessments of one's own identity, as well as into the various aspects of reception and the literary market, from the book club phenomenon to genre literature. After tracing the evolution of the term 'Janeite' and discussing the place occupied by this somewhat elusive category of readers in relationship to both academia and the hoi polloi, the paper will highlight the features of academic and 'common reader' approaches to Austen by comparing Fowler's book club members with the protagonists of David Lodge's Changing Places and Azar Nafisi's Reading Lolita in Tehran. The analysis will insist on the contributions brought by each member of the reading club to the understanding of the six novels and on the extent to which they confirm both the timeless quality of Austen's prose and the continuing potential for new interpretations of a set of texts whose meanings have not been exhausted in two hundred years of escalating academic and popular attention.*