



# **Women Reviewing Women in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Critical Reception of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot (Nineteenth Century Series (Ashgate))**

*Joanne Wilkes*

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Focusing particularly on the critical reception of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot, Joanne Wilkes offers in-depth examinations of reviews by eight female critics: Maria Jane Jewsbury, Sara Coleridge, Hannah Lawrance, Jane Williams, Julia Kavanagh, Anne Mozley, Margaret Oliphant and Mary Augusta Ward. What they wrote about women writers, and what their writings tell us about the critics' own sense of themselves as women writers, reveal the distinctive character of nineteenth-century women's contributions to literary history. Wilkes explores the different choices these critics, writing when women had to grapple with limiting assumptions about female intellectual capacities, made about how to disseminate their own writing. While several publishing in periodicals wrote anonymously, others published books, articles and reviews under their own names. Wilkes teases out the distinctiveness of nineteenth-century women's often ignored contributions to the critical reception of canonical women authors, and also devotes space to the pioneering efforts of Lawrance, Kavanagh and Williams to draw attention to the long tradition of female literary activity up to the nineteenth century. She draws on commentary by male critics of the period as well, to provide context for this important contribution to the recuperation of women's critical discourse in nineteenth-century Britain.

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