The Making of Jane Austen

Devoney Looser

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Suggested Further Reading

One book cannot possibly do justice to describing Jane Austen's rise to celebrity, as all who have tried to tell it would join me to testify. We've had the benefit of wonderful books on Austen's textual lives, her cults and cultures, her readers, and her uses, on Jane's fame, everybody's Jane, Janeites, and why Jane Austen? We've seen ongoing contentious debates in scholarly venues and in the popular press over her letters, editions, and portraits and their provenance. The present book could not have been written without this accomplished body of scholarship, making sense of how Austen's life and works have been received (hence "reception studies") in the years since the 1810s.

No scholars or serious students of Austen could complete our research without the equivalent of our "bibles." For Austen's texts themselves, we quote from the most reliable, edited versions, the standard edition, now widely considered to be the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen*, under the general editorship of Janet Todd. There isn't an easily agreed upon standard biography, but my vote would be for Claire Tomalin's *Jane Austen: A Life* (1997). For a valuable account of Austen's life with a focus on her career as an author, Jan Fergus's *Jane Austen: A Literary Life* (1991) has not yet been surpassed. For the whole shebang of undigested biographical facts, we use Deirdre Le Faye's *A Chronology of Jane Austen and Her Family* (rev. ed., 2013) and *Jane Austen's Letters* (4th ed., 2011).

Personally, I also cannot live without concordances to Jane Austen—print and digital—to look up particular words and phrases across most (but unfortunately not all) of her writings. We would benefit from updated versions of these tools, combining the best print-born texts with the freely available digitized manuscripts at the *Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts* site. At the moment, most of us sift through combinations of jumbled results from multiple print and electronic sources, in order to search and consult the six published novels, juvenilia and early or unfinished fiction, miscellaneous writings, and surviving letters. I hope the future holds a freely available online resource that would include the ability to search the contents of all of her writings and letters at once. (An electronic version of the *Letters* is available by prohibitively expensive library subscription through Oxford Scholarly Editions.)

For the study of Austen's history as an author beyond the family, David Gilson's *A Bibliography of Jane Austen* (1997, rev. ed.) remains the gold standard. Gilson's decades of painstaking work, locating and describing thousands of print sources, is, for my money, every bit as important a contribution to Austen scholarship as the far more often lauded efforts of her famed twentieth-century textual editor, R. W. Chapman (1881–1960). Chapman is credited with creating the first standard edition of Austen's novels—sometimes described as the first standard edition of *any* English novelist—based on his collations of and annotations to the earliest texts. What Chapman was to establishing standards for presenting Austen's original writings to modern audiences, Gilson was to documenting republications of her work and writings about her. Chapman had himself published a 62-page critical bibliography of Austen (2nd ed., 1955), but Gilson's bibliography, at 877 pages, dwarfs it. He examines and catalogues seemingly every Austen-related object published up until 1975 or so. He describes with care the original editions, American editions, translations, later editions, minor works, letters, dramatizations (published), continuations and completions, books owned by Jane Austen, and biography and criticism on her. For digging into the critical history, Barry Roth's three volumes of annotated bibliographies of Jane Austen have one drawback—they cover only the period 1952–94. (Roth's work has been continued sporadically by others in *Persuasions On-line*.[1])

Early formative sources in laying the groundwork for our conversations about Austen's reception and legacy were edited collections of historical documents. These books offer direct evidence (usually in the form of excerpts) that allow us glimpses into the unfolding and establishment of her reputation. None of these collections looms larger than B. C. Southam's *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, published in two volumes. Volume 1 compiles materials from 1811 to 1870 and volume 2 from 1870 to 1940. The influence of these books on Austen scholarship has been immense. The forty-five excerpts (more than three hundred pages) from Southam's volume 1 serve as urtexts for decades of critical arguments that followed. These excerpts are drawn largely from essays published in well-known magazines or from once-private commentary about Austen made by well-recognized literary figures. Southam's volume 2 includes forty-one later selections from similar types of material.

Southam's introduction to volume 2, at 158 pages, is like a book all its own. It has extensive documentation of Austen's reputation in that period, despite some inevitable blind spots and limitations. One is his focus on selecting excerpts from book-length works and prominent periodical essays. As a result, the *Critical Heritage* documents tend to showcase Austen from a high-culture vantage point. The Austen heritage that Southam assembles is most certainly a Heritage with a capital H. He deftly documents the origin and the flowering of Austen *criticism*, but he (intentionally) leaves aside most of the popular angles of Austen's reception. They come in for brief mention in his introduction, but they are implicitly made to sound ancillary, if not inconsequential.

The *Critical Heritage* volumes must be given their due. They helped establish reception studies, as Kathryn Sutherland points out in her obituary notice of

Southam: "Before digitisation of early newspapers and periodicals, such materials were inaccessible without good scholarly guides and anthologies. In providing these, [Southam's] Critical Heritage volumes helped to stimulate the fashion for reception studies and histories of reading still powerful today."[2] That's unquestionable true. But it's also true that we've come far beyond them and ought rightly to be further beyond them still. There's no longer a need to limit ourselves to quoting from the Austen excerpts and documents that Southam assembled. In fact, we now know that doing so constricts our picture of her complicated reception.

Primary source documents on Austen's reception continued to be published after Southam's *Critical Heritage* volumes. These collections further his work, although most of them hew rather close to what he provides, in offering an overwhelmingly critical scope. The most extensive collection is Ian Littlewood's *Jane Austen: Critical Assessments* (1998) in four volumes, with 187 excerpts organized by subject (e.g., biographical background, social background, intellectual background), by chronology (e.g., nineteenth-century response, twentieth-century response), and by single Austen text (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Lady Susan*, *Letters*, etc.). Littlewood made exceptionally good choices, and the volumes remain valuable.

Joan Klingel Ray's *Jane Austen's Popular and Critical Reception: A Documentary Volume* (vol. 365 of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 2012) uses its contents to tell a story, with subheads declaring what the critical excerpts set out to narrate: "Jane Austen's Slow Rise in Popularity," "Answering the Demand for a Growing Interest in Jane Austen," and "Jane Austen Enters the Academy." The volume is heavily illustrated and includes "sidebar" discussions of the feature texts by the editor. The volume's main drawbacks are its prohibitive expense ($315) and the brevity of its excerpts, although offering a taste of many more sources is obviously the best editorial choice during an era when getting access to complete works, especially those out of copyright protection, has become more widely possible.

Books about Austen's reception have also helpfully paved the way to understanding the contours and scope of her posthumous fame. Lawrence W. Mazzeno's *Jane Austen: Two Centuries of Criticism* (2011) considers the documents in the sources above and more. He crafts a book about their meanings, describing how critical trends have shifted and how they might be grouped, in a way that is spot on. He calls his study one "intended to gaze at the gazers" of Austen. It helps readers grasp what he calls the "Great Austen Controversy," whether she's "a conservative or a radical."[3] If you want to understand the big-tent history of Jane Austen criticism, this is the book for you.

Claire Harman's *Jane's Fame* (2009) remains the best one-stop shopping for a chronological concatenation of Austen-afterlife details that includes some popular culture. Its drawbacks are that its story is told on a surface level, with little analysis to sink your teeth into. At 342 pages, its ostensible charge was to summarize two hundred years of "changing public tastes and critical practices."[4] It's a tall order, and the book delivers a breezy romp. Harman's thesis throughout is that there were two "big surges" of "Austen mania," the first in 1870, with the publication of her nephew's *Memoir of Jane Austen*, and the 1990s, with its film and

TV adaptations (7). It makes for a neatly packaged story, but it accords more with previous scholarship than with the facts. Harman does have a knack for an apt turn of phrase; her description of Austen as "an infinitely exploitable global brand" hits the nail on the head (3).

There have also been volumes devoted to Austen's reception through the lens of the history of the book—looking at the practices of publishers, editors, authors, and readers. These studies ask us to resituate Austen, not as a sui generis exception, above the fray, in a class by herself, whether in her own day and thereafter, but as an author working in a literary marketplace with many moving parts, on which she and her reputation depended. Such work, especially books by Annika Bautz (on Austen's reception in comparison with Scott's), Katie Halsey and Olivia Murphy (each with a book on Austen, reading, and readers), Anthony Mandal (on Austen's publishers and authorial practices), Kathryn Sutherland (on Austen's textual legacy), and the essay collection by Anthony Mandal and B. C. Southam (on Austen's reception in Europe), compel us to re-see the author in a widened textual and literary historical framework.

Kathryn Sutherland's *Jane Austen's Textual Lives* (2005) breaks new ground in its brilliant, careful attention to the construction and afterlife of Austen's texts, especially helping us understand the impact of R. W. Chapman's 1923 edition of Austen's novels. She also turns her careful eye to the formation of the Austen biography industry, to Austen descendants' role in forming her image, and to the print and film Austen adaptations, among other subjects. As the prime mover of the *Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts* website, Sutherland has also changed the face of Austen studies for the digital generation.

Single-volume treatments on Austen's legacy with distinct emphases have appeared. These include Juliette Wells's *Everybody's Jane* (2011), valuable for its work on Austen collectors, tourists, and print adaptations. In *Why Jane Austen?* (2011), Rachel Brownstein offers a multilayered teaching memoir, a study of the sexing-up of recent Austen adaptations, and a consideration of academic approaches to Austen. Her reprinting of a 1949 *New York Times* cartoon by Carl Rose, "The Two Camps of Jane Austen Devotees"—featuring a statue of Austen at its center, with a marching band on her left and a high-society receiving line on her right—is a terrific visual microcosm of Brownstein's revelations on the history of Austen's later celebrity.[5]

Emily Auerbach's *Searching for Jane Austen* (2004) was an early entrant to the field but made possible many of the studies above and remains valuable. Her introductory chapter comparing the images and portraits of Jane Austen with those of Emily Dickinson is superb. Auerbach considers Austen's writings and her legacy, asking us to "break free of dear Aunt Jane—and of two centuries of putdowns and touchups."[6] I hope that my own book's wallowing in such putdowns and touchups in more kinds of popular media gives us another way to "break free," in grasping more clearly what we've inherited and in clarifying how we might choose to re-see the present as a result.

The most recent major study of Austen's legacy, Claudia Johnson's *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures* (2012), propels forward our re-seeing. Her book reorients

us to consider anew many subjects, including Austen's portraits, the literal and metaphorical positioning of her as a ghost, the meanings of her writings in a posthumous tradition of fairy tales, her centrality to the reading practices of men in the World Wars, and the history of Austen worship and monuments. Johnson, more than anyone, has been a foundational force in the renewed study of what she calls "the deathlessly divine Austen," pondering "what loving her has meant to readers from the nineteenth century to the present."[7] No work on Austen's legacy would be possible without the benefit of her discoveries and analysis. I know mine certainly couldn't have proceeded, as Johnson's ideas influence in some way nearly every page of this book.

Essay collections, too, offer many scholars the chance to have a brief say on an aspect of Austen's legacy. Deidre Lynch's *Janeites* (2000), its fine introduction, and its many contributors give us ways to tease out "tension between alternative Austens" and to turn to the past, not in order to wallow in nostalgia but to "reactivate the past in ways that empower us to revise the future"—a goal my book shares.[8] Gillian Dow and Clare Hanson's *The Uses of Austen: Jane's Afterlives* (2012) describes Austen as a "crossover author, bridging high and low culture," noticing the pattern that "while male critics may be the first to publish 'appreciations' of Austen, it is women writers who publish creative responses and reworkings in their own fiction."[9] This is especially in the case of dramatic reworkings, as I show in chapters 4 and 5 of this book. If you want more information on Austen and dramatic adaptation before 1975, Andrew Wright's "Austen Adapted" remains the most complete source.[10]

Drama has been largely passed over in Austen studies, but text, film, and TV adaptation have not. Scholarship on Austen print adaptations, sequels, and continuations is featured in many of the collections named above, as well as in stand-alone essays. Readers may be surprised to learn that the first full-length, Austen-inspired mash-up novel, or fan fiction, is said to be Sybil G. Brinton's *Old Friends and New Fancies: An Imaginary Sequel to the Novels of Jane Austen*, believed first published in 1912–13.[11] Austen scholars have devoted more concerted attention to Austen's afterlife on screen, particularly after 1995. This scholarship includes Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield's edited collection *Jane Austen in Hollywood* (1998), John Wiltshire's *Recreating Jane Austen* (2001), Sue Parrill's *Jane Austen on Film and Television* (2002), Gina and Andrew Macdonald's *Jane Austen on Screen* (2003), Suzanne Pucci and James Thompson's *Jane Austen and Co.: Remaking the Past in Contemporary Culture* (2003), Lisa Hopkins's *Relocating Shakespeare and Austen on Screen* (2009), David Monaghan's *The Cinematic Jane Austen* (2009), and many others. An impressive body of work on the subject of Austen adaptation has been published or edited by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan.[12] Cartmell's *Screen Adaptations: Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: The Relationship between Text and Film* (2010) is an ideal first stop for the Austen-and-film curious.[13]

The most recent Austen legacy work moves into the realm of the web video and digital text adaptation, including Kylie Mirmohamadi's *The Digital Afterlives of Jane Austen: Janeites at the Keyboard* (2014), Gabrielle Malcolm's *Fan Phenomena:*

Jane Austen (2015), Hanne Birk and Marion Gymnich's *Pride and Prejudice 2.0: Interpretations, Adaptations and Transformations of Jane Austen's Classic* (2015), as well as a spate of essays on the Emmy-award winning online web series content of Pemberley Digital.

Individual essays on Austen's legacy are too numerous to name, but readers will find their influence and trace their contributions in the notes to the book. One important recent essay is that on the Folger Shakespeare Library's 2016 *Will & Jane* exhibit, by Janine Barchas and Kristina Straub. Their work situates William Shakespeare and Jane Austen's popular legacy in comparison and contrast.[14] For excellent critical content, some freely available, readers will want to consult the Jane Austen Society of North America's print and online journals, *Persuasions* and *Persuasions On-Line*. The *Jane Austen Society Report*, published annually since 1949, is not digitally available or free but is equally excellent and includes important essays on Austen's legacy. Scholarly websites and popular blogs devoted to Jane Austen deliver content that varies greatly in quality but that forwards our collective work on her reputation and legacy. Each of us will have a favorite site, but I'm grateful for *What Jane Saw*, *Republic of Pemberley*, *AustenProse*, *AustenBlog*, and *Molland's*.

This book appears in 2017, the two hundredth anniversary of Jane Austen's death. That bicentenary year will no doubt produce a spate of new work, assessing her past, describing her present, and predicting her future. I look forward to documenting more of each in future research, as well as to providing images that enhance the reading of this book and the greater understanding of Austen's knotty legacy at www.makingjaneausten.com.