The Making of Jane Austen

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Introduction

Jane Austen Matters

She was not born, but rather became, Jane Austen.

On one hand, this is a ludicrous statement. Jane Austen was an actual historical person. She came into the world on December 16, 1775. She wrote six full-length novels. She died, age forty-one, on July 18, 1817. These details are not in dispute by anybody, nor should they be.

But it was only after she died—and in some cases long after she died—that her life and its story gained its public dimensions. Adjectives were attached to her name. They included glowing words and phrases, such as great novelist or greatest novelist. Shakespeare of the novel. Devoted daughter, sister, aunt. Universal. Satirist. Genius. Gentlewoman. Celebrated. Less glowing words and phrases emerged, too: Minor novelist. Lady novelist. Without passion. Narrow. Uneventful. Apolitical. Vulgar. Elitist. Old Maid. Some phrases go both ways, like chick lit, feminine, and feminist. It's at the moment when we acknowledge the formative power of these phrases on past readers, viewers, and critics—and on us today—that Jane Austen, actual historical person, becomes the Jane Austen of prayer candles, learned tomes, and salt and pepper shakers.

Simone de Beauvoir famously wrote, "On ne naît pas femme: on le devient" (One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman). De Beauvoir revolutionized understandings of gender identity and performance.[1] Her statement also reminds us that famous women authors are manufactured creations who had an especially challenging time of it. The invention of Jane Austen has been, and continues to be, a fraught public process—in her case, a bizarre, unprecedented, social, literary, and historical extravaganza. Austen's celebrity has a fantastically shambolic past, its depths only partly and very misleadingly plumbed.[2] Many say she's a great English novelist. Some

claim she's the greatest novelist writing in English. Others speak of her as a great woman writer or a pioneer or a role model. We're often probed to agree or disagree with these assessments. It might be more fruitful to ask ourselves how and by whom these questions were framed and posed in first place. Some ask, "Why Jane Austen?" We might just as easily ask, "Whose Jane Austen?"

She has been so much to so many for so long that in some circles she can pass for "Jane," going by one name and requiring no introduction. She's emerged as our go-to classic novelist, whether for smart romance, campy fun, or serious life lessons. She's referenced by politicians, actors, critics, teachers, artists, fellow writers—by almost every category of people who speak and work in public. These people, whether or not they believed they were being true to her, have repurposed her words and images. Even de Beauvoir herself participated. In *The Second Sex* (1949) she mentions Austen as a cultural-victim-woman-author who supposedly had to hide herself in order to write (124). It's a caricature that de Beauvoir had every reason to believe and repeat as accurate in the 1940s. It was a circulating myth that suited the case she was making. Many myths have come and gone in the years since Austen's death. Tracking their fashionability and staying power has taken on greater importance as her popularity has soared in our own time.

There's little to be gained, except perhaps false comfort, in approaching Jane Austen's posthumous road to fame as a straight-line history. It's not an account best laid out with a single overarching argument. The bona fide story of the making of Jane Austen has neither a comic novel's rising action, climax, and happy ending nor a tragedy's disturbing, mass killing-off. Worthier histories of the making of Jane Austen must take on strands, offshoots, and contradictions. In this book, I set out to describe particularly important stories of her making as they unfolded in culturally significant zones. Each chapter digs into images, texts, people, and institutions of Austen, describing contributions, debates, and patterns over time and seeking places that we haven't yet scrutinized or scrutinized enough. The story of the making of Jane Austen ought to weigh more heavily on matters such as book illustration, dramatization, early film, and uses by politicians, activists, and teachers, rather than on the musings of literary critics ensconced in academic communities.

Despite a massive amount of scholarship and commentary on Austen, we've only just begun to offer better histories of her legacy, especially for anything pop culture–related that happened prior to 1995. We like to talk

about Austen's film adaptations of the past decades above all else, but we often describe them as if they arose only out of the original novels and their own present. That's simply not the case. As the chapters of this book show, their characterizations and visual patterns are almost always indebted to earlier films, dramatizations, and even book illustrations. We imagine that fictionalized biopics like *Becoming Jane* (2007) and *Miss Austen Regrets* (2008) are something newfangled, yet a play copyrighted in 1919 and performed in New York in 1932, *Dear Jane*, sounds many of the same notes. It also has a fascinating queer history to its credit, as we'll see in chapter 6.

Many believe our own era deserves credit for discovering Austen's potential as an inspiration for what we call girl-power feminism. We're wrong. We'll see in chapter 4 how countless *Pride and Prejudice*–inspired amateur theatricals of the 1890s taught women not only elocution and acting but led them to ventriloquize Austen's most fervent domestic protest speeches. Their Austen was an author invested in female independence, self-determination, and forceful public oration. Still, the amateur dramatizations did not offer an uncontested view of Austen. School textbooks of the same era described her as a placid and pious woman who lived a life of quiet retirement, as we'll see in chapter 11. Late nineteenth-century students of acting and public speaking and students of English literature were getting Austens that were entirely at odds.

It sounds impossible, but Jane Austen has been and remains a figure at the vanguard of reinforcing tradition *and* promoting social change. In early 1900s London, when elite men were drinking, singing, and calling Austen an apolitical author in their private men's clubs (chapter 8), suffragists were marching through the streets outside with her name emblazoned on a banner (chapter 9). One marcher—the first to play Jane Austen on stage, the first to codirect a Jane Austen dramatization for the legitimate stage, and the first professional actor to play Elizabeth Bennet—even participated in a suffragist protest that threw rocks at the clubmen's windows, in order to gain attention and provoke arrest. Each group saw its image of Austen as the right one, although these versions of the author couldn't have been more different. For more than a century, Austen has been an inspiration, role model, and mascot for groups that have otherwise had little in common. In some situations, and at some moments, Austen has been presented as gloriously conservative. At others, she's described as unflinchingly progressive. No wonder it's exceptionally difficult to tell the history of her image, reputation, and legacy with any nuance.

Whatever we make of her, Austen comes to us now as a household name, with greater recognition than any other author writing in England not named William Shakespeare.[3] She also has the most creative, active, visible followers, unless you count all of the world's Renaissance Faires as Shakespearean fan sites. (Let's agree to leave J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels out of the running for the designation "classic" for a generation or two.) Unlike celebrities of her day and afterward who were deeply involved in the creation, repetition, and extension of their public images, Austen—the actual person—had very little to do with hers. Her anonymously published novels were at first considered merely very good examples of their then-little-respected genre. She was revealed as their author the year after she died, in her brother Henry Austen's hagiographic preface to *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* (1818).

Her literary reputation, then, was created almost entirely posthumously, first by her siblings, familial descendants, and a few reviewers, involving what we'd now call celebrity endorsements, logrolling quotes, trash talk, commercial efforts, and enthusiast activities. Austen's legendary status was also driven forward in part by being mentioned, discussed, beloved, and detested by luminaries of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whose words, once made public, were repeated ad nauseam. Their assessments were often reported reductively or crudely: Sir Walter Scott (loved, jealously), Charlotte Brontë (hated, jealously), Thomas Babington Macaulay (loved, excessively), Mark Twain (hated, unclear), Henry James (loved, unclear), Rudyard Kipling (loved, cheekily), Virginia Woolf (loved, condescendingly), and Winston Churchill (loved, narrowly). The Famous noticing her at all has served as evidence of Austen's importance, longevity, and centrality. But "we" cannot just look at "them" from the outside. In a sense, all of us who talk about or repurpose her become a part of her legacy. Saying this isn't meant to give those of us who describe or use her too much power. It's to suggest that we do indeed have power—over *her* even—just as our invoking her gives her a kind of power over *us*.

Jane Austen has taken many shapes and forms, as we'll see over the course of this book. One near constant is that her imagined intimacy with audiences has been described as of the coziest, quotidian, familial kind.[4] Some of us describe her as if we know her personally. Some talk about her characters as if they are real people or compare people in our lives to those in her novels. She's certainly not the only author for whom these practices exist. It's just that Janeites have taken this kind of thing to another level. We've

created an industry out of visiting her places and then staunchly defended or laughed at ourselves for doing it. Or both at once. What is Shannon Hale's clever novel (later made into a film) *Austenland* (2007) about, if not the hilarious yet serious ways that some of us want long-dead authors like Austen to fulfill present needs and desires? How did Jane Austen, and we, get here? The following chapters set out to answer that question with newly identified patterns of representation, stories of pioneering individuals, and hard evidence.

One place it all started was with a powerful moniker. In the first decades of Austen's wide celebrity, some conceived of her not just as "Jane" but as a close relative. No nickname became more influential in the making of her reputation than that of Aunt Jane. There were other nicknames, too, such as dear Jane and St. Jane, but one of the author's first and furthest-reaching pet names turned her into an aunt. Scott had been the Wizard of the North, and Shakespeare the Bard of Avon, but Austen would end up on the receiving end of a name far more intimate and domestic, less tied to any particular geographical place.[5] The label Aunt Jane suited what were then the most repeated stories of her life and the most valued qualities of her fiction—their reassuring moral safety, their genius with precious little details, and their unobtrusive charm.

The safe, beloved auntie myth was formed in part by twisting Austen's own words. She wrote a private letter to her nephew, comparing her own writing to a "little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour."[6] It was a tongue-in-cheek line—evidenced by the fact that it's communicated in the course of telling a joke about theft, of all things! But Austen's "bit of ivory" quip, "famous, if not mindlessly overused,"[7] has been intoned and recycled with the utmost seriousness, inviting readers to envision her as a miniature, modest, familial author, working on a small piece of ivory to create a portable portrait. These were just the sort of objects an unobjectionable aunt might be assumed to deal in, in literary technique and in life. Where Austen's public image was concerned, the idea of a harmless genius aunt who was comfortable in her own two inches of the world came to be writ astonishingly large. One late twentieth-century critic refers to Austen as "the most active and successful aunt in our literary history," a claim that ought to be seen as more problematic than praiseful.[8]

In the late nineteenth century, aunt was but one Austen nickname. Her other monikers invoked literary status and authorship, for example, the

Shakespeare of Prose.[9] It's important to note that she wasn't the first woman author who'd been called a Shakespeare of something. Bestselling Gothic novelist Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) was known to some as the Shakespeare of Romance Writers (Frye 319). One-time celebrity poet and dramatist Joanna Baillie (1762–1851) occasionally went by The Female Shakespeare or Shakespeare in Petticoats (318). (Baillie's nickname was a tradition said to begin with Scott.[10]) George Eliot was for a time also in the running for the title female Shakespeare.[11] As this nickname-jockeying was happening, some Victorians were loudly denouncing the notion that any woman could be the Shakespeare or the female Shakespeare of anything.[12] It didn't help that the two most famous British male eighteenth-century novelists, Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) and Henry Fielding (1707–54), each held a longstanding claim to the honor of the sobriquet Shakespeare of Novelists.[13] Some commentators tried to give Austen a link to Shakespeare's greatness in a way that doubly (and literally) belittled her, calling her "a female Shakespeare in miniature" or "a little female Shakespeare."[14] But nothing gained more traction in the formation of her early public image as a celebrity author than Aunt Jane.

Previous critics have described the emergence and repetition of Aunt Jane as a sign that her collateral descendants wanted to prop up her polite, conservative reputation. For a time, it worked. Austen descendants steered the conversation in safer, milder directions. But the label Aunt Jane would eventually spin out of familial control. By the early twentieth century, Aunt Jane would prove more than an inconsequential echo of reputation-protective or name-dropping descendants. It would become a politicized riff. Some today may be tempted to ridicule anyone in the past who referred to Austen as Aunt Jane, seeing that choice as unserious or as insufficiently scholarly. We ought to check that impulse. Nothing makes that clearer than a look behind the circumstances of the production of the groundbreaking book, *Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends* (1902), by the sisters Constance Hill (1844–1929) and Ellen G. (Gertrude) Hill (1841–1928).

The larger story of how Aunt Jane came about over the course of the nineteenth century is one now well told. After Austen died in 1817, the management of her writings and the curation of her public image fell at first to her surviving siblings. Two were especially influential: Henry Austen (1771–1850), her soldier-turned-failed-banker-turned-clergyman brother, and Cassandra Austen (1773–1845), her only sister, closest confidante, and literary-artistic collaborator. By the mid-nineteenth century, as Austen's reach began to extend further into the reading public, all of the Austen siblings followed their

sister to the grave. Their surviving children, her nieces and great-nieces and, especially, her nephews and great-nephews, would try to shepherd her legacy from there forward, but they had to rely on publishers, critics, and illustrators, too. These people and organizations had their own agendas.

Austen descendants published two landmark books that tried to set the tone, if not the stage, for her late nineteenth-century reception and gradually growing fame. First was the biography, the *Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870), by her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh (1798–1874). Second was the first edition of the *Letters of Jane Austen* (1884), collected and introduced by her great-nephew, Edward, Lord Brabourne (1829–93).[15] These men, naturally enough, referred to Austen as Aunt Jane. She *was* their Aunt Jane. Calling her Aunt in print not only advertised their intimacy; it underwrote their right to speak about her life and writings. The effects of this naming would become more profound. The phrase Aunt Jane was quoted approvingly over decades of subsequent Austen criticism and biographies. Dubbing the Aunt Jane years as the origin of the "Jane Austen myth," Emily Auerbach argues that we're "still feeling the effects" of it.[16] The notion of Austen's safe innocuousness may have been quick to mutate, but it was slow to die.

These first two family-authored works promoted their author-ancestor as a very particular kind of aunt—the cheerful, pious, domestic, polite, maiden aunt. She was, as readers were assured at every turn, the opposite of the sour, jealous, busybody old maid. Victorian single women had come in for special cultural vitriol, referred to not only as spinsters but as surplus or redundant women. J. E. Austen-Leigh describes Aunt Jane's life as one "singularly barren . . . of events," not an innocent word choice (1). He takes great pains to make Aunt Jane out to be a friendly, prim gentlewoman. A few lines sum up his agenda: "'Aunt Jane' was the delight of all her nephews and nieces. We did not think of her as being clever, still less as being famous; but we valued her as one always kind, sympathizing, and amusing" (3–4). It's adorable that Aunt Jane wrote those clever, famous novels, Austen-Leigh suggests, but what you really need to know about her is that she was a nice lady.

This was pigeonholing her, plain and simple. We can see this by comparing Austen-Leigh's typecasting to one used in a work of fiction from earlier in the period, *The Maiden Aunt* (1849), a novel by Menella Bute Smedley (1820–1877). Its practically-perfect-in-every-way protagonist is described as "one of a class, which, fortunately for mankind, is neither small, nor rare. She was a Maiden Aunt, and she possessed that cheerful unselfishness, that indefatigable activity in the service of others, those warm, ready, and expansive

affections, which we are enabled, by happy experience, to pronounce the appropriate characteristics of her genus."[17] It gets deeper. The phrase Aunt Jane wasn't coined by Austen-Leigh. Many adults would have encountered Aunt Jane in their childhood reading as a fictional teacher in *Aunt Jane's Grammar* (1850), by Elizabeth Warren, or as the teacher-poet in *Aunt Jane's Verses for Children* (1851, 1855).[18] In those works, the figure of Aunt Jane was an educated, educating gentlewoman, serious and pious, morally uplifting—good with and good for children.[19]

Setting up the charged conflicts about Austen's feminism or lack thereof, there were some then who bristled at the Aunt Jane image. These readers questioned whether the delightful auntie stereotype accurately captured the more critical, acerbic-witted author also on display in her fiction. Among the skeptical was novelist and critic Margaret Oliphant (1828–97), who questioned Austen-Leigh's apotheosis of his aunt. Not entirely approving of Austen herself, Oliphant suggests that Austen-Leigh doesn't give enough credence to the "fine vein of feminine cynicism which pervades his aunt's mind" as seen through her frequently not sweet, nor always good-natured, fiction.[20] However, the response of critic Richard Simpson (1820–76) was more typical. He argues in an unsigned review that the public ought to "borrow" from Austen-Leigh the "title" and "recognise her officially as 'dear Aunt Jane.' "[21] His call was certainly answered. But as Aunt Jane was recycled beyond the family circle, the phrase came to carry more complicated meanings. Taking up the nickname, writers reformed it for their own purposes, using it to describe something other than a domestic, unambitious, cheerful figure.

This brings us back to Constance and Ellen Hill, among the most powerful revisers of the name Aunt Jane. Their best-selling book, *Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends* (1902), offers a merry concatenation of details and stories, as many have ably noted. Constance wrote and Ellen illustrated the work.[22] Their book describes real places, using Austen's own writings. It quotes liberally from other sources, especially from Austen-Leigh's *Memoir* and Brabourne's Austen *Letters*. The Hills even consulted Austen's unpublished writings in manuscript that were then in family hands, a labor that Kathryn Sutherland declares of "lasting value."[23] But *Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends*' main contribution is describing the sisters' own journey—an "Austen pilgrimage," following the author's "gentle steps" through life.[24] The Hill sisters claimed they traveled to every place associated with the novelist.

The Austen places they visited were then virtually unmarked with imprints of the author. The Hills take readers on an adventure envisioned not only as a trip with a purpose but as pseudo–time travel. As Constance Hill puts it, "We would now request our readers, in imagination, to put back the finger of Time for more than a hundred years and to step with us into Miss Austen's presence" (viii). It's a book full of perhapses, would-have-beens, and fantasy, in a narrative that hovers between travelogue, biography, memoir, and work of fiction. The eager protagonists set out with an educational purpose—to learn all that could be learned in what they curiously called, in both a chapter title and an illustration of a fictional road sign, "Austen-Land."[25] The Hills' Austen-Land made history. It brought readers to a figurative crossroads to meet Aunt Jane and laid the groundwork for actual signs and plaques.[26]

For a time, the Hills' book was considered the most important Austen title after the *Memoir* and the *Letters*.[27] It also shifted the meaning of Aunt Jane as a family author. The Hills' book was a commercial success, going into two further editions.[28] It prompted companion volumes, documenting the lives and sites of other female author contemporaries.[29] The Hills' book made visiting dead literary foremothers (or foreaunts) in the pages of books into a cheap, educational family vacation. Yet a closer look demonstrates that Austen descendants' much-vaunted image of the safe, domestic, miniaturized Aunt Jane is profoundly decentered in the Hills' appropriation. It's a decentering that can be traced back to the book's conception.

Constance and Ellen's author-artist partnership echoes that of Jane and Cassandra Austen.[30] But the Hills cast *themselves* as a new, improved kind of family member, proponents of an Austen-for-all-of-us. Their book refers to Aunt Jane on nearly every other page.[31] It renders "Aunt Jane" in quotes, as if putting the phase in someone else's mouth, but its repetition shapes the narrative. Noting that Austen's fame was slow growing and her first devotees few, Hill concludes, "Now her works are enjoyed by thousands of readers who owe to her some of the happiest hours of their lives" (262). This is a monumental claim and phrasing: Austen's work for thousands, who owed her for her labor, and which produced happiness. The Hills move Aunt Jane, the author, beyond the safe modesty of Austen-Leigh's Aunt Jane. Acknowledging her "racy humour," the Hills' Aunt Jane retains her cheerful, charitable aunt-like veneer (vi). But in their formulation, Austen's reputation gains a public service dimension. Her novels are reimagined as acts of charity that improved the lives of many. The last lines of the Hills' book echo Simpson:

"We should like to close this account of Jane Austen with the words of another critic," asking readers, Shouldn't we "recognise her officially as 'dear Aunt Jane'?" (268).[32]

This Aunt Jane is designedly not from someone else's family. She's a people's aunt, a public figure, and an agent of change. She's the aunt who gives happiness to thousands. In creating that image, the Hill sisters rewrote themselves into Austen's family history/story, a bold act that came not just from a wild, presumptive imagination but from a family history of social reform, economic privilege, and literary standing. The Hills describe themselves as a central part of Austen's family legacy so that you, too, dear imaginary-niece-or-nephew reader, could picture her as your aunt. This rhetorical sleight of hand might even be understood as an act of literary altruism. Few could afford to go on an Austen pilgrimage. The Hills' comfortable circumstances made their venture possible, as spinsters of independent means.[33] Their charitable literary labor in *Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends*, like Austen's novels, provides thousands of less fortunate readers with a few happy hours.

Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends wears its politics very lightly, but the Hill sisters were carrying on a family tradition of advocating for women. Their mother worked with male and female criminals, refugees, and schools for the poor. She read books advocating for women's rights, teaching her daughters that women were held "in a restraint and a subjection that was most unjust."[34] It's a line that ought to have us rereading with fresh eyes the claim in *Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends* that Austen must be beloved by men and women with an "equal interest" and discussed on "equal terms" (vii). The Hill sisters also had the example of their own writer-activist maiden aunts and their women's literature-minded uncles.[35] The Hills' repurposing of "Aunt Jane" ought not to be belittled as an exercise in echoing its previous presentations of her as an inoffensive author for all. Constance and Ellen Hill turned what had been an anodyne act of naming into a charitable family project verging on literary activism.

The Making of Jane Austen begins with the premise that Austen's posthumous journey to becoming an icon looks very different when we take the back roads. It looks different when it's not narrated by protective collateral descendants or prevailing cultural gatekeepers, by relatives or literati. We get a different history of Austen—author, woman, and works—from perspectives

of literary populism, moments of commercial opportunism, or political and cultural clashes. All of these standpoints mattered to Austen's making. Sanctioned intellectuals and illustrious authors, even at moments when they might rightly be credited with Austen-inspired discoveries and innovations, have had an awful lot of now-uncredited help. This book is committed to reorienting our accounts of Jane Austen's afterlife, steering us away from a hyperfocus on the words and ideas of the elite caretakers of her image or on breezy accounts that mention only the biggest names. Little-studied book illustrations, artists, dramatizations, actors, early films, teachers, and textbooks, as well as the uses of Austen's name, image, and writings in political speech and activism, were critical to building and expanding her literary status. Too often these kinds of things have been dismissed as cultural detritus. The most snobbish and closed minded of our learned experts have a bad habit of telling us that Austen herself would have been disgusted by such lightweight trash put forward in her name.

That's their Austen. It's not my Austen. But it's also not the point. Whoever we say Austen is, or whatever we suspect she would or wouldn't have liked, we're writing inferior literary and cultural histories if we leave out the incredible range of people, practices, texts, and images that contributed to her complicated and unlikely trek to becoming an icon. We need more histories that put in conversation a greater number of the people who had a role in making Jane Austen into *Jane! Austen!* Many well-rounded, egalitarian accounts describe how Jane Austen became first a good enough, then a great, and now one of our greatest novelists. (You can find these books and essays described in the further reading appendix and in each chapter's copious notes.) These studies have sought to include more kinds of evidence and to widen our sense of Austen's afterlife. After Jane Austen's post-1990s cinema superstardom, many asked, "Why Austen? Why now?" One way to answer is by turning to the history of her afterlife, taking seriously the notion that past is prologue.

The century and a half of Jane Austen's legacy on which this book focuses was crucial to the formation of her never-fixed image. From her novels' republication in 1833 to the bicentenary of her birth in 1975, this middle period laid the groundwork and set out the terms of debate for the Jane Austen who would become ours.[36] Highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow culture makers, whether working together or at cross-purposes, collectively changed Austen's persona from that of a marketable author of sensational domesticity

to an apolitical Christian-spinster moralist to an inspirer of women's suffrage protesters to a flirtatious gender-role-bending demure rebel to the hyper-heterosexual creator of the sexiest fictional man alive. Perhaps Austen was "really" all of these. Who can say—and with what authority?

Many have tried to have their say. This book shares their stories, especially the previously little-known or unknown individuals who were innovators in fashioning Austen's mutable reputation in their own day and the impact they made. They include Austen's previously unidentified first English illustrator, the eccentric, heart-rending artist Ferdinand Pickering, whose artistic career tanked against a backdrop of bullying, bigamy, and an attempted matricide. Austen's little-known first dramatist, Rosina Filippi, was also a colorful, daring director-actress, whose efforts led thousands of young women to ventriloquize Elizabeth Bennet's most audacious lines in front of drawing-room audiences. The first actresses to play sisters Jane and Cassandra Austen on the professional stage, director-visionary Eva Le Gallienne and stunning starlet Josephine Hutchinson, turn out to have been a real-life romantic couple whose queerness prompted snarky comments from reviewers. The student-author of the first Jane Austen dissertation, George Pellew, was believed by his Harvard professor-mentor to have come back from the dead. Jane Austen shaped their lives (and afterlives), but their efforts shaped her reputation in return. In the course of offering their remarkable stories, I make sense of larger-scale patterns for visualization and dramatization, for teaching and political preaching, as these forms and media radically changed Austen's image and our sense of how she matters.

The story of Jane Austen's rise to fame can certainly be told small, with the words of a select, privileged few. But it can and should also go big, offering us a reflection not only of Austen but of ourselves reflected through her, as her fiction and her image spoke to the many. That her stories and characters have been rediscovered with each new generation suggests their amazing adaptability, if not universality. *The Making of Jane Austen* tells tales of fame and infamy, art and schlock, poverty and wealth, in order to grasp her mutable legacy and cultural influence over time. It charts old and new fashions, things that change and those that endure, setting out on an expedition to redraw Austen-Land on a few more maps, across time as well as oceans.