The Making of Jane Austen

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Stone-Throwing Jane Austen

Suffragist Street Activism, Grand Pageants, and Costume Parties

On June 13, 1908, suffragists took Jane Austen to the streets of London. The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) held its Great Procession, a demonstration march and rally, in what would become known as a "new style."[1] It was ordered, majestic, and artistic. An estimated ten thousand women representing forty-two organizations participated, marching across London for an hour and a half to Royal Albert Hall, where speeches were given by the movement's high-profile leaders. The visual centerpiece of the march was "a thousand beautiful banners and bannerettes, each different, each wrought in gorgeous color and in rich material."[2] Most of the banners used in the march advertised place names, as thousands of women had arrived in special trains from Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Hull, Birmingham, and Bristol, with representatives from America, France, Hungary, South Africa, India, and many other countries taking part as well. A significant albeit smaller number of the banners depicted "famous woman leaders and pioneers" (9). It's on one of these banners that Jane Austen's name was blazoned.[3]

Austen's name and image were used prominently in the street activism, political stage, and issue-oriented fundraisers of the women's movement's first wave, yet you'd never know it from our histories of her legacy. Histories of Jane Austen's critical legacy describe feminists of the 1970s and afterward with great care, but the political uses of Austen by suffragists have been almost entirely neglected in our Austen reception studies. A Virginia Woolf here, a Rebecca West there. There's little sense given in our literary histories of Austen's place among hundreds and thousands of Victorian and early twentieth-century feminists—among an entire political movement across several continents.[4] Putting Austen's suffragist champions back into the conver-

sation about her legacy is not only right and just; it also reorients our sense of how Austen has been used for political purposes. We can't possibly understand political struggles over Austen in our own day without grasping just how long—and how loudly—debates over her and the political meanings of her writings have ranged.

Dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the moment when women's suffrage was achieved in many industrialized countries by the end of the 1920s, first-wave feminist activists sought female role models in history. Austen was, for those purposes, a perfect fit. Where the men's club Janeites saw in Austen a safe, admirably domestic figure whose life and writings were often seen as without political intention, the suffragists' Austen was almost always cast as a rebel. The more accurate phrase for the way many suffragists imagined and used her, as we'll see, may be "demure rebel." We saw in chapter 4 how amateur dramatizations of Austen drew on the tropes and ideas of the New Woman movement. Many of these dramatists were or would become suffragists. It's no surprise that they'd bring a strong, independent-woman-loving version of Jane Austen with them, from the amateur theatricals to the streets of London.

On that day in 1908, the marchers, nine out of ten of whom were female, represented "every class in society, from the highest (not Royal) to factory workers and working women of all grades, including domestic servants" (Fawcett, "Woman" 9). Among the professional women's groups represented was the Women Writers' Suffrage League (WWSL). This "very merry lot" wore signature red badges crossed with quills.[5] Its impressive banner was designed by artist and member of the Artists' Suffrage League, Mary Lowndes (1856–1929). The WWSL's large banner was carried by at least three women: actress and playwright Cicely Hamilton (1872–1952), novelist and New Woman essayist Sarah Grand (1854–1943), and American actress and playwright Elizabeth Robins (1862–1952). The WWSL's smaller bannerettes featured names from literary history, such as Maria Edgeworth, Fanny (Frances) Burney, and Mary Wollstonecraft. The stunning beige and reddish-brown banner commemorating Jane Austen featured a quill design, echoing the quills on the large banner and badges of the WWSL.

The banners used in the march were reportedly an awesome sight, creating a memorable event for participants and onlookers alike. "The striking sights of women's suffrage activism, their spectacular actions, banners and symbols," as a recent critic has put it, "made an immediate impression on public consciousness."[6] A witness reports that the crowd was "ready to scoff

Figure 9.1. Jane Austen Suffrage Banner, 1908, by Mary Lowndes. Courtesy of the Women's Library at the London School of Economics.

and jeer" but that "the flaming beauty of the procession smote them into a reverent silence."[7] Lowndes had designed the banners to do just that. As she wrote, poetically, "A banner is not a literary affair . . . A banner is a thing to float in the wind, to flicker in the breeze, to flirt its colours for your pleasure, to half show and half conceal a device you long to unravel."[8] The banners of famous women were designed to be a moving spectacle. By all accounts, they were.

The very act of carrying them was also a spectacle. It apparently involved a significant feat of strength. Holding the banners for any distance walking, particularly in the strong wind said to be blowing that day, was challenging work. "The Men's League for Women's Suffrage," leader Millicent Fawcett reports, "have volunteered help in the carrying of the banners," but the plans called for "the young stalwarts among the women" to "bear their own

burdens" ("Woman" 9). Novelist May Sinclair (1863–1946) is said to have "seriously hurt herself by carrying a heavy banner for many miles in a Suffragist procession," perhaps on this very day.[9] The stakes of letting the banners drop were high. One newspaper account makes this clear: "At one point the guiding cords of a banner broke away," and "seeing the distress of the [female] bearer," a spectator called out, "You want a man's help." The woman carrying the banner is said to have replied, "No, I don't," as she successfully "wrestled with the intractable folds of the flapping silk" and, as the reporter puts it, "shows that she did not speak in vain" (qtd. in Tickner 293). Not everyone was impressed with such feats of female strength. As another periodical writer argues, "A woman who will walk five miles on a hot day and wave a banner all the time may be plucky, but the admirers of such pluck are not exactly deep thinkers, being, in short, persons whose intellects are of a mediocre caliber."[10] Not only exhibiting but just admiring female strength, for this writer, is a sign of intellectual weakness.

At the end of the march, the banners were placed carefully in Royal Albert Hall "in terraced ranks of raw and flaming color." As reporter James Douglas put it in the *Morning Leader*, "The names wrought upon the delicate silk were the names of women whose power was the power of the intellect and whose strength was the strength of the soul" (qtd. in Tickner 86, 89).[11] The official program doesn't reprint all of the names that were represented on banners, but it highlights several. After the banners of Vashti (called the first suffragist) and the "Three Great Queens" (Boadicea, Elizabeth, and Victoria), the next group advertised was the "Women Writers," with Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Jane Austen, George Eliot, and the Brontës chosen as representative.[12] Austen was prominently listed on the banners and program.

Including Austen's name among the Great Procession's banner honorees had everything to do with what scholars have called "an acute awareness during the period of the weight of literary history and precedent against which they were struggling . . . Significant literary and historical figures were identified and appropriated in this revisionist phase."[13] Austen, despite having only recently achieved the designation of "significant" to literary history and women's history, had quickly become one of the most frequently and prominently used "great women," chosen to serve as an "effective role model" to the women's suffrage movement.[14] No doubt this is because of her wide appeal, across political lines and among both men and women.

Public complaints arose about the propriety of featuring some of the women's names on the banners. The complaints centered on speculations

about what was (or would have been) their positions on women's suffrage. For instance, a descendant of Caroline Herschel (1750–1848) wrote a letter to the *Times* to complain that Herschel did not believe in women's suffrage or would not have supported it then. The descendant suggests this was also the case with Mary Somerville (1780–1872). That descendant, Lady Gordon, objects to Herschel's and Somerville's names being included on banners.[15] Another letter writer makes much the same argument for Mary Kingsley (1862–1900).[16] Fawcett, as NUWSS president, replies, explaining that the intention of naming them on banners had been to make a wider point: "Suffragists believe that the names of 'distinguished women who did noble work in their sphere' are in themselves an argument against relegating a whole sex to a lower political status than felons and idiots."[17] Further, "This is quite independent of whether the particular distinguished women named on the banners were suffragists or not. The names of Joan of Arc and Queen Elizabeth are found on the banners. The inference is surely clear" (Fawcett, "To the Editor," 9). Fawcett also rebuts Lady Gordon by outlining what she sees as Somerville's direct involvement in women's rights causes.

Such complaints were further addressed by the suffragists in their printed materials. In its *Programme of Banners*, the NUWSS explains, "This was regarded as an occasion for women to honor women. The banners are commemorative, and involve no assertion that the women whose names are inscribed upon them advocated the enfranchisement of their sex, though there are many such among them." The writer states, "It is said that Queen Victoria and Mary Kingsley were opposed to the franchise movement and that Caroline Herschel would certainly have been so. None the less do their sisters honour them for the good work they did." Jane Austen should be honored, the pamphlet suggests, whether her relatives endorse it or not.[18] It does not appear that collateral descendants made public comment on the 1908 banner with her name.

Perhaps the lack of public comment was a result of the Austen family descendants themselves being divided on the question of suffrage. In 1889, a Miss Austen-Leigh (otherwise unidentified) was a signatory to approve the extension of the parliamentary franchise to women.[19] The surname is unusual enough that it seems probable she was a collateral descendant. That there was a descendant active at this time who was prominently *anti*suffrage is, however, a certainty. Mrs. Florence Emma Austen-Leigh (1857–1926) was the president of the Cambridge Women's Branch for Opposing Woman Suffrage in the 1910s.[20] She was the widow of the late provost of King's

College, Cambridge, Augustus Austen-Leigh (1840–1905), great-nephew of Jane Austen, descended through her brother James Edward Austen-Leigh, the *Memoir* author. But Florence Austen-Leigh herself was the daughter of George Benjamin Austen Lefroy, so she, too, was a descendant of the Austens, through Jane Austen's niece Anna Lefroy. (The Cambridge Austen-Leighs were first cousins, once removed.)

Florence Austen-Leigh worked against women's suffrage before the war, but, once World War I started, she spoke out more extensively, arguing that war was a reason for all other political work to cease. In 1917, she wrote to the *Times* that "a great war is not a time when so controversial a matter [as women's suffrage] can be properly discussed."[21] She did not invoke Jane Austen's name, but for many she would not have had to. She was well known in Cambridge as the widowed, Austen-descended "Provostess."[22] She also served nationally as an antisuffrage leader, having been one of a delegation of antisuffragists to the prime minister in 1910, along with novelist Mrs. Humphry Ward, Mrs. Arnold Toynbee (widow of the economic historian), literary historian Sir Alfred Lyall, and a number of other activists.[23] Austen-Leigh would appear to have been there, with that group, in her guise as a literary descendant of Jane Austen, as well as a leader in her own right.

Early feminists didn't seek approval for their use of dead women writers' names and images. Not long after the 1908 procession, the suffrage banners went on tour across the country.[24] Soon after that, many of the prominent marchers took their idea of exhibiting famous women in support of women's rights from the streets and the lecture hall onto the stage. Just a year later, an actor first took the role of Jane Austen, portraying her on the stage in a new suffrage play. Cecily Hamilton's *A Pageant of Great Women* (1909) would become one of the most prominent and popular of its kind, an indoor political extravaganza. The brisk thirty-minute production debuted on November 10, 1909, at the Scala Theatre in London. It was said by the *Times* to have drawn a "large audience" "in enthusiastic sympathy with the movement," although two trade theatrical newspapers attacked it as propaganda.[25]

A Pageant became fashionable with suffrage groups, nationally and internationally. Organizations "up and down the country" asked for the chance to stage it (Whitelaw 89). Edith Craig would travel to these locations with her small number of principal actors and the needed wardrobe, serving as the play's producer. Most of the large cast was drawn from local women. One source suggests *A Pageant* was produced more than a hundred times in England between 1906 and 1914.[26] Presenting audiences with a vivid spectacle,

the idea was to offer a celebratory piece that would "cast the largest number of actresses possible," to raise funds for the cause and rouse audiences to action (Gandolfi 54). Hamilton's play (said to have been coauthored with producer Craig) originated from a suffrage cartoon and featured three leads: Woman, Justice, and Prejudice.[27]

It had a good versus evil plot, with the allegorical Woman pleading her case before the female figure of Justice, while battling her male nemesis, Prejudice. These three characters speak most of the play's lines. Prejudice is "the sole male in a cast of forty seven," and the rest of the cast consists of "a display of exceptional women through history."[28] *A Pageant of Great Women* begins with Woman accusing Prejudice of trying to squelch her spark and glow of intellect with jeers and laughter: "Oh, think you well / What you have done to make it hard for her / To dream, to write, to paint, to build, to learn," celebrating those women who nevertheless "fought their way to achievement and fame!" (Hamilton 25–27). The play makes the figure of Jane Austen prominent among those exceptional historical women who fought.

In the original production, the role of Jane Austen, like almost all of the pageant's great women, was a nonspeaking part. The only one with lines of her own was famous actress Ellen Terry, the mother of the play's director, Edith Craig. (Craig and Terry had later experience with staging Austen, in the 1922 Squires' play *Pride and Prejudice*, discussed in chapter 5.) It's unclear whether it was Craig or Hamilton who chose to write the character of Jane Austen into *A Pageant*, but it seems likeliest that it was Craig. Craig's associations with Austen on the stage often involved her mother but turned out to be lifelong as well. Craig's last production, staged in July 1946, was a pageant based on classics of literature, beginning with Julius Caesar and ending with a garden party for Jane Austen.[29] Austen's inclusion in *A Pageant* was surely a calculated, deliberate literary and political choice.

The original cast list of Hamilton's *Pageant* reads like a who's who of the suffrage movement. The roles these activists played in public also seem either directly or dimly to echo the historical women they played on stage. The extensive cast list gives us a hint of what must have been its spectacular visual effect. Beyond the three leads, the remaining cast members are divided into six categories: "Learned Women," "Artists," "Saintly Women," "Heroic Women," "Rulers," and "Warriors," representing many centuries and countries. Austen is placed among "The Learned Women," and she's the only British woman writer among the forty-four. She is just one of four literary figures, alongside Madame de Staël, George Sand, and Madeleine de Scudéry.

The character of Woman announces that it was a female hand who had penned the first novel (de Scudéry) and that "English Jane Austen and George Sand of France" were her disciples. This role positions Austen as the most important Englishwoman in a feminist history of the novel. At the end of the *Pageant*, after being faced with all of these famous, accomplished women, Prejudice goes silent and "slinks away" (Hamilton 43).

This international impulse of the play illustrates the extent to which the suffrage movement was forging global connections and communities. Publicizing the countries that had earliest passed some form of women's suffrage, such as New Zealand, Australia, and Finland, put pressure on other nations to do the same. (Britain would allow some women the vote in 1918, followed by universal women's suffrage in 1928. In the United States, women's suffrage was achieved in 1920.) It was in this global framework that Jane Austen served as the exemplar of Englishwomen's literary and intellectual accomplishments. It's likely that these suffragists singled out Austen and her novels for feminist recognition in *A Pageant* because they "were popular and pleased the majority," as one critic puts it, in a more contemporary context.[30] We could rail at this as a dilution of feminism or of Austen. We could see it as pandering to the masses in the name of progress or as misrepresenting Austen in the name of politics. Perhaps it makes best sense to recognize it, however, as a canny understanding of how to use a liberal though not radical author to widen the audience for a progressive political cause. In any case, Austen was made to stand in for Britain in *A Pageant* because of her wide appeal. She had already developed name recognition that was attracting a following beyond its borders.

A Pageant of Women became not just a national but an international performance phenomenon. Nationally, as we've seen, it traveled across Britain and was staged in regional theaters. It was "one of the most successful and widely performed" suffrage plays, according to Katharine Cockin, serving to educate "its audiences about role models."[31] Cockin has documented at least fifteen different locations in which the play was performed between 1909 and 1912. She also describes a failed attempt to stage the play in translation in Hungary (Cockin, introduction x; "Cicely"). There may have been an Irish production, and, as late as the mid-1920s, requests to stage the play were still being made to its playwright (Cockin, introduction x). Five suffragist actresses played Austen across England in 1909–10, the best known of whom was Edith How Martyn, the woman who tried to make a speech in the House of Commons in 1906, one of the first militant acts of suffragist

protest (Cockin, "Cicely" 539). A 1911 performance of *A Pageant* was mounted at the Women's Reform Club in Johannesburg, South Africa.[32] Americans, too, staged versions of *A Pageant* in May 1913, including one at the New National Theater in Washington, DC, derivative of Hamilton's play and retitled *Woman*. Its Jane Austen was played by Mrs. Alexander Jenkins.[33] Jane Austen had become, in the 1910s, a transnational figure used in support of women's suffrage. To call her the darling of the male literati of the period may be accurate from one vantage point, but to leave it at that tells a partial story.

A Pageant was performed in venues large and small, designed for ultimate adaptability, without scenery. It guaranteed large audiences, many of whom would come to see the local suffrage activists who made up the majority of its cast. As Roberta Gandolfi has put it, "Imagine all the friends and relatives of more than sixty women" amateur actresses (58). Producer Craig was very clear about the reasons that plays like *A Pageant* were mounted: "The plays have done such a lot for Suffrage. They get hold of nice, frivolous people who would die sooner than go in cold blood to meetings. But they watch the plays, and get interested, and then we can rope them in for meetings" (qtd. in Gandolfi 55). Another source suggests this may be overstated and that "audiences were mostly enthusiastic suffragettes."[34] In either case, nowhere is the use of history, culture, and performance—and the use of Jane Austen as part of it—to sell feminist politics to conventional middlebrow audiences put more condescendingly or clearly. *A Pageant* gained a name for "converting unbelievers" (Gandolfi 55). Jane Austen's presence in the play tells us not only about her prominence among lauded historical women and in a history of women writers but also about her perceived potential for political repurposing and impact. Significant numbers of actresses impersonated her, as untold thousands saw Learned Woman Jane Austen in a powerful feminist stage tableau. Meanwhile, some establishment men went on obliviously writing their essays in establishment periodicals about Austen's small fiction and safe domesticity.

The first actor to play Jane Austen on stage in *A Pageant* was Winifred Mayo (Winifred Monck-Mason; 1869–1967). Mayo had served as the codirector of the first professional stage version of *Pride and Prejudice*, Rosina Filippi's *The Bennets* (1901), as we saw in chapter 5. Mayo not only directed but played the heroine Elizabeth Bennet as "pert and petulant."[35] Born in India, Mayo was the daughter of a flautist and opera producer. Her father was a man who serially gained and lost fortunes, also known for his contributions to

the history of ballooning.[36] In the end, he left his widow and daughters with some financial means. Winifred Mayo used them to become an actor, a prominent women's suffrage leader, and one of the founders of the Actresses' Franchise League. She gave elocution lessons to suffragists to improve their public speaking.[37] Her obituary describes further ways in which her stage background allowed her to assist the cause: "A little known aspect of the [Actress's Franchise] league's work was the skilled advice on make up and dressing up," the obituary writer reports, "which enabled many women 'on the run' from police to successfully disguise themselves and elude recapture."[38]

Mayo also became active in the Women's Social and Political Union, the militant wing of the suffrage movement. A friend of leader Emmeline Pankhurst, Mayo engaged in demonstrations that landed her three times in prison.[39] The year before the *Pageant* and her taking the stage as Jane Austen, Mayo published a moving autobiographical essay, "Prison Experiences of a Suffragette" (1908).[40] In late life, Mayo discussed these activist experiences with the BBC, describing her participation in the stone-throwing campaigns in November 1911. On a foggy night, a group of activists decided "it would be a good thing to wake up the Club Men."[41] They set out to break windows at London's tony men's clubs. Mayo chose a large, glass-paned door, not knowing which club lay behind it, took a stone out of her pocket, and hurled it. "To my great joy and satisfaction, it broke the window," she later reported. She did not run, as the point was to get caught and imprisoned. The club's porter ran out and seized her, asking what she was doing. She explained her political purpose.

She was asked, "Why the Guards? They don't know nothing about woman's suffrage?"

Mayo responded, "Well, that's exactly my point. Now they will!"

When a policeman finally arrived on the scene, he reportedly said to Mayo, "Did you do that?"

She answered, "Yes," as she tells the interviewer.

"What did you do it with?" the policeman asked.

"I did it with stones."

"Have you got any more stones?" he asked.

"Yes," she replies, in a matter-of-fact tone (BBC).

Then, with the police officer holding one of her arms, she reports that she took a stone out of her pocket and broke yet another window. As a result, she was imprisoned for a fortnight. Mayo notes with glee that some young guardsmen afterward attended a suffrage meeting. An obituary writer

describes her as "Dainty and dignified, with a clear, carrying voice."[42] Mayo's activities, and their attachment to Jane Austen as a figure, show us that Austen was enthusiastically embraced by both the militant and the nonviolent wings of the women's suffrage movement.

The Great Procession of 1908 and *A Pageant* may turn out be Austen's highest-profile public political appearances of the day, but she played a role in several related minor women's suffrage events as well. One was an evening fundraiser—a dinner in London. Winifred Mayo attended it, too. It was billed as a "Costume Dinner of Suffragists." This time, Mayo dressed up as Charlotte Brontë. The June 1914 dinner at the Hotel Cecil is described in the newspaper, *Votes for Women*, as a Pageant of Famous Men and Women, arranged by *Pageant* director, Edith Craig. It was sponsored by both the Actresses' Franchise League and the Women Writers' Suffrage League, designed to attract an audience of the suffrage-supporting public. We might call it an alternative society event put on to further the suffragists' cause. Newspaper coverage billed it as an evening's spectacle featuring "rebels of all the ages impersonated by rebels of to-day."[43]

That night, novelist May Sinclair—the one who had been injured once carrying a banner in a suffrage march—came dressed as "a very demure Jane Austen."[44] Sinclair seems a more likely impersonator of Austen than does Mayo. Reviewers were then comparing Sinclair's writings to Austen's, one wondering "if in future years the quiet little English woman may not be recognized as a new Jane Austen."[45] The adjective "quiet," as dismissive as it seems, was also a word that suited Sinclair's self-concept. Her biographer calls her an "unlikely suffragist," due to her reluctance "to appear in public or to draw attention to herself."[46] The costume party in which she dressed as Austen would seem to be something of a departure from her preferred habits, but it was also an understanding of Austen's politics that was then taking hold among suffragists. Austen's status as a demure rebel might sound oxymoronic, but she was increasingly understood as a genteel, widely palatable, literary exemplar promoting social change for women.

This idea of Austen as a behind-the-scenes suffragist (nevertheless one who was squarely on the public stage, as in *A Pageant*) was a change of focus from earlier representations. From the 1890s to the 1910s, descriptions of Austen in progressive political rhetoric gradually shifted from imagining her as a pert, petulant, pioneering comic satirist, like her Elizabeth Bennet, to a quiet, demure, suffrage-friendly, but not suffrage-active, social critic. This shift is very much on view in Bertha Brewster's centenary-celebrating

essay "The Feminism of Jane Austen" (1917), published in the suffrage newspaper *Votes for Women*. It sets out to establish the level and kind of the author's contributions to the cause.[47] Brewster—a militant, hunger-striking suffragist who was subjected to forced feedings in prison—is today best known for her 1913 letter in the *Daily Telegraph*:

> Sir, Everyone seems to agree upon the necessity of putting a stop to Suffragist outrages; but no one seems certain how to do so. There are two, and only two, ways in which this can be done. Both will be effectual.
>
> 1. Kill every woman in the United Kingdom.
> 2. Give women the vote.
>
> Yours truly, Bertha Brewster.[48]

Brewster was no stranger to political humor and satire in print. She also engaged in public speaking of a sort. It was then a common suffrage tactic for women to seek means to interrupt men's political speech. Brewster and another suffragist once hid in the rafters of the House of Commons to interrupt Chancellor of the Exchequer Lloyd George's speech. One of them shouted down from the rafters a criticism of the chamber's being unrepresentative where women were concerned. In the ensuing uproar, George addressed the men present. He dismissed the protest with, "I see some rats have got in; let them squeal, it does not matter."[49] Brewster, as "rat," was arrested and jailed.

This provides us with further context for understanding Brewster's remarks on Austen. In her essay, Brewster revisits old debates, such as its being "usual to speak of [Austen's] writing as feminine." Her commentary is reminiscent of Gladstone's rebuttal to Lord in 1903, which we saw in chapter 8. Brewster argues, "We frankly confess we do not know what exactly is meant by the term in her case." Austen's writing, according to Brewster, shows "strength and decision" and "robust common sense." Brewster, too, is engaged in rewriting the term "feminine" where Austen is concerned. Yet Brewster casts Austen as an independent thinker, rather than an activist: "We may admit her independence of thought: we cannot imagine her capable of equal independence of action" or "claim her as a fellow-suffragist." Brewster concludes, "We cannot picture Miss Austen addressing, far less interrupting, a public meeting; indeed, we fear she might consider it an unpardonable breech of decorum. But we can very well imagine her making fun of [Conservative MP] Mr. Arnold Ward's speeches" ("Feminism" 282). (Arnold Ward himself was the son of the famous antisuffragist novelist, Mary Augusta [a.k.a.

Mrs. Humphry] Ward [1851–1920], part of the antisuffrage delegation that included Florence Austen-Leigh, as we saw earlier.) Austen is assessed and lauded by Brewster. The author is cast as a demure suffrage satirist, an appreciative observer. To Brewster, Austen powerfully uses humorous words in print, rather than public oratory, to effect political change.

Whether this characterization is accurate to the "real" Austen may not matter in this circumstance; the women's movement in this period set out to use Austen to attract supporters to the cause, just as the men's club Janeites used her for their political purposes. The early feminist version of Austen was differently empowering and inspiring. She gave cautious or introverted women the option of being demure feminist rebels—Jane Austen suffragists. If unwilling to serve as public orators, they could still snicker at the lack of common sense in speeches by Conservative MPs. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Austen served as an exceptionally useful rallying point for progressive women's causes. Later and better-remembered feminist literary critics, such as Woolf and West, inherited the feminist Austen that Mayo, Hamilton, Brewster, and others had created, shaped, and sustained, yet in subsequent years the forerunners lost the credit for their labor and innovation in building Austen's legacy, neglected even in second-wave feminist literary histories of the 1980s and afterward.

The conversation shifted in wartime. The repeated criticisms leveled at feminists that wars ought to halt any other political activity but war had an effect. The repetition of views like Chesterton's about Austen's conservatism and views like Winston Churchill's on Austen's value for escapist pleasure had a lasting impact. The going out of fashion of the Austen-inspired amateur dramatizations, with their independent-spirited domestic protester heroines, likely played a role, too. Austen's increasing commodification and memorialization in ways aligning her with commercialism, luxury, and tourism served to help readers forget her earlier political legacy. We can see this in an Author Series set of role-playing bridge tally cards from Charles S. Clark Company in New York in 1924. It features Austen's name above an image of a book-cradling, hair-in-curling-papers bookworm flapper, reading in bed. Inside the tally card, the player is instructed, "You are Jane Austen" and told to find and partner with John Ruskin. We can see it in 1935, when London tobacco manufacturer Carreras Limited's Celebrities of British History series put out a fifty-card set that included Jane Austen.[50] In 1957, Benson and Hedges used Jane Austen's name to link expensive elegance, romance, and cigarettes, using a misquoted line from *Pride and Prejudice*.[51] By the

early years of second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, Austen's former importance to suffragists had become virtually unknown.

For a time in the late twentieth century, Austen served less as a poster child than as a problem child for feminism. When Lawrence Mazzeno describes feminist critics as having had "a love-hate relationship with Austen," he's summing up late twentieth-century, second-wave feminist debates over Austen, marriage, and class, not the largely approving attitudes toward Austen of the women's movement in the early 1900s (107). It's easy to see why the second wave became impatient with Austen. Her fiction seemed to reinforce traditional marriage, to advocate for the heteronormative. All of those happy-endings marriages! Austen's novels didn't appear to have enough righteous feminist anger at systemic and everyday sexism to suit the prevailing political mood.

Only in the late 1970s would late eighteenth-century feminist influences on Austen start once again to become readable, palatable, and repeatable. An essay linking Austen and Wollstonecraft, by Lloyd Brown, had appeared in 1973–74.[52] But it was after Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's feminist revision of literary history in *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Margaret Kirkham's *Jane Austen, Feminism, and Fiction* (1983), and Mary Poovey's *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984) that the notion of a feminist Austen returned to literary criticism with vigor.[53] Unfortunately, few seem to have recognized that Austen had enjoyed a long popular feminist history. Second-wave feminist work on Austen and its greater circulation and acceptance among all literary critics did lead to her being widely used once again in public rallying cries for progressive and feminist causes. We might say that it culminated in Austen's face being chosen for the British ten-pound note, an act that famously prompted antifeminist, Austen-related death threats on Twitter in 2013.[54] We could see these events as bizarre oddities. But they are not isolated events in a political history of Austen. Waving banners, righteous pageants, political cosplay, and rats in the parliamentary rafters stand demurely behind today's feminist Austens. They need no longer stand silently.

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