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An engaging account of who and what made Jane Austen a household name.

THE MAKING OF JANE AUSTEN

by **Devoney Looser**

Just how did Jane Austen become the celebrity author and the inspiration for generations of loyal fans she is today? Devoney Looser's *The Making of Jane Austen* turns to the people, performances, activism, and images that fostered Austen's early fame, laying the groundwork for the beloved author we think we know.

Many of the Austen influencers Looser highlights are either previously unknown or long lost to history. Among the cast of characters are:

- Austen's first English illustrator, the eccentric Ferdinand Pickering, whose sensational gothic images may be better understood through his brushes with bullying, bigamy, and an attempted matricide.
- The daring director-actress Rosina Filippi, who shaped Austen's reputation with her pioneering dramatizations, leading thousands of young women to ventriloquize Elizabeth Bennet's audacious lines before drawing room audiences.
- Even the supposedly staid history of Austen scholarship has its bizarre stories. The author of the first Jane Austen dissertation, student George Pellew, tragically died young, but he was believed by many, including his professor-mentor, to have come back from the dead.

Looser shows how these figures and their Austen-inspired work transformed Austen's reputation, just as she profoundly shaped theirs. Through them, Looser describes the factors and influences that radically altered Austen's evolving image. Drawing from unexplored material, Looser examines how echoes of that work reverberate in our explanations of Austen's literary and cultural power. Whether you're a devoted Janeite or simply Jane-curious, *The Making of Jane Austen* will have you thinking about how a literary icon is made, transformed, and handed down from generation to generation.

"... a fascinating study ..." —[Jennifer Scheussler, *The New York Times Podcast*](#)

[One of *Publishers Weekly's* "Best Summer Books"](#)

"A potential game changer, full of force and originality. Looser's refreshingly democratic approach to Austen scholarship not only will add to our knowledge of this author's reception history and literary afterlife but will surprise even the most informed Austen scholar."

— Janine Barchas, University of Texas at Austin, author of *Matters of Fact in Jane Austen: History, Location, and Celebrity*

"This highly entertaining book makes clear that contemporary Janeites – with their cosplay, their clashing interpretations of much-loved novels, their wet-shirt Darcy, and their fiercely possessive relationship to their favorite author – are heirs to a tradition of Austen-love that stretches back to the early 19th century."

— Deborah Yaffe, author of *Among the Janeites: A Journey Through the World of Jane Austen Fandom*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Devoney Looser is a professor of English at Arizona State University. Beyond the halls of academia, Looser is an avid roller derby athlete, and goes by Stone Cold Jane Austen in the rink. She is the author of *Women Writers and Old Age in Great Britain, 1750–1850* and *British Women Writers and the Writing of History, 1670–1820*. She writes regularly for places like [The Atlantic](#), [Times Literary Supplement](#), and [Entertainment Weekly](#).

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