



Jane Austen and Animals

By Barbara K. Seeber

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The first full-length study of animals in Jane Austen, Barbara K. Seeber's book situates the author's work within the serious debates about human-animal relations that began in the eighteenth century and continued into Austen's lifetime. Seeber shows that Austen's writings consistently align the objectification of nature with that of women and that Austen associates the hunting, shooting, racing, and consuming of animals with the domination of women. Austen's complicated depictions of the use and abuse of nature also challenge postcolonial readings that interpret, for example, Fanny Price's rejoicing in nature as a celebration of England's imperial power. In Austen, hunting and the owning of animals are markers of station and a prerogative of power over others, while her representation of the hierarchy of food, where meat occupies top position, is identified with a human-nature dualism that objectifies not only nature, but also the women who are expected to serve food to men. In placing Austen's texts in the context of animal-rights arguments that arose in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Seeber expands our understanding of Austen's participation in significant societal concerns and makes an important contribution to animal, gender, food, and empire studies in the nineteenth century.

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Editorial Review

Review

Barbara Seeber offers us a fascinating new Austen by situating her writing - from letters and poetry to short fiction and novels - in astutely aligned histories of women and animals. Read through intersecting 18th-century arguments over animals' nature, the animal time of female biology, the assertion of dominance over lower creatures that made sport a pleasure, and unexpected claims for vegetarianism, Austen's imagined world grows darker, richer, and deeper even as literary approaches to animals gain added subtlety and nuance.' Teresa L. Mangum, The University of Iowa, USA

About the Author

Barbara K. Seeber is Associate Professor of English at Brock University, Canada. She is the author of *General Consent in Jane Austen: A Study of Dialogism* (2000).

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