



Jane Austen and Animals

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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