Jane Austen, *The Beautifull Cassandra: A Novel in Twelve Chapters*. Afterword by Claudia L. Johnson. Artwork by Leon Steinmetz. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. Pp. 72. £13.99. ISBN 9780691181530.

Reading *Love and Freindship* (1790) nearly a century ago, Virginia Woolf remarked the quality of the teenaged Jane Austen's sentences. Princeton University Press's edition of *The Beautifull Cassandra* (composed ca. 1787-90) brings fresh attention to the sentences and other formal units of Austen's prose, especially her chapters. *The Beautifull Cassandra* typically takes up a few pages in a larger collection of Austen's youthful writings. The first edition to present Austen's self-described 'novel' as such, in its own volume with a complement of artwork by Leon Steinmetz and an afterword by Claudia L. Johnson, gives us something rare: a Jane Austen novel that feels new.

Johnson's afterword provides an accessible introduction to general readers and persuasive critical insight to a scholarly audience. In it Johnson explores the significance of 'Austen's own choice' (not paginated) of genre along with the author's interest in the formal conventions of eighteenth-century fiction. As Johnson shows, the concerns of this miniature novel are not something that Austen grows out of as she develops her mature work, but part of larger, career-long concerns. The combination of Austen's text, Steinmetz's illustrations, and Johnson's afterword results in a compelling and beautiful gift book of unique ambition. This edition offers us a chance to revise the way we think about the Austen canon.

The Beautifull Cassandra itself is, in Johnson's words, a 'masterpiece of novelistic minimalism', complete with a succinct dedication to Cassandra Austen and twelve chapters, each from one to four sentences. The heroine, Cassandra, liberates a bespoke bonnet from her parents' shop and careers through town gobbling ice cream, paying for nothing, and walking away from the people she encounters. Johnson briefly offers one possible explanation for the novel's pointedly short chapters – that 'foreshortening her chapters almost to the breaking point' might send up the 'prolixity' of Austen's contemporaries – in favor of expanding on another. Austen 'eschew[s] grandiose adventure' in this 'first novel to […] fully embrace the uneventful'.

This lack of significant event is, Johnson observes, both an object of derision for Austen's critics and the basis for her 'artistic originality' throughout her career. It is also the basis of Austen's comedy; she 'thwart[s our] assumptions' that, as in most novels, something will happen in favor of 'more forward movement'. So a tense encounter with Maria in Chapter 9, which seems to promise a confrontation, yields one of many quick exits. This momentum, subdivided into equally quick chapters, draws readers' attention to the formal units of fiction – to plot, chapter, and sentence.

Since images change the rhythm of these units, one might react to the addition of Steinmetz's artwork with trepidation, in case it might arrest Austen's spectacular momentum. But Steinmetz's quick lines and textured brushstrokes have a momentum of their own that complements that of Austen's prose. Insofar as they slow the reader down in the act of looking, it is in the best way possible. These pauses reinforce those of the chapter divisions, further encouraging readers to notice Austen's 'smart fun' (in Johnson's words) with them.

Finally, the modernity and minimalism of the artwork reminds readers that both art and text are 'masterpieces of economy'. We might usefully consider this combination of text and image in terms of its overlap with the recent picture books for adults trend, the conventions of which this edition reverses. In its current iteration, the picture book for adults combines the verbal and pictorial style of a children's book with adult themes, as in Avery Monsen and Jory

John's *All My Friends Are Dead* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2010). Steinmetz's images, by contrast, are both unmistakably playful and unmistakably grownup. In this way, they promote one of this edition's, and Johnson's, central claims. *The Beautifull Cassandra* and other youthful writings, though 'disparaging[ly]'counted as Austen's 'juvenilia', are anything but juvenile. This edition makes the case that these writings deserve their place, without minimization or dismissal, within the Austen canon.

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