

Joe Bray and Hannah Moss, eds., *The Edinburgh Companion of Jane Austen and the Arts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024. Pp. 544. £150. ISBN 9781399500418.

In their Introduction, editors Joe Bray and Hannah Moss claim their anthology is the first to place Jane Austen in relation to ‘the full variety of arts in her work, from miniatures to music, caricatures to craft’ (2): the depth and comprehensiveness of subjects here justify the claim. The book’s 33 chapters, divided over three parts, provide contexts and arguments from eighteenth-century aesthetic theory to twenty-first century digitisation. While readers can dip into select topics, the volume benefits from a full read-through, as the elegant progression of chapters creates its own internal conversation. The many illustrations, including 48 colour plates, elevate the reading experience.

The power of the image is immediate and effective in the first chapter of Part I: ‘The Arts in Context’. In ‘Jane Austen, Early Modern Aesthetics and the Contemplative Sublime’, Natasha Duquette introduces Austen’s recorded response to Benjamin West’s painting *Christ Rejected* to build an argument around what Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck termed the ‘contemplative sublime’ (Duquette 20). Starting the collection with a painting Austen was known to have seen and admired creates an immersive experience, appealing to scholars and Janeites alike. The following chapters discuss aesthetic theories and ideas around taste and sensibility through the long eighteenth century, providing useful, concise definitions of key terms. For instance, Kathryn E. Davis introduces the topic of moral philosophy and then effectively demonstrates its application in *Sense and Sensibility*. The highlight of this section is its concluding chapter, Clara Tuite’s ‘The Flemish Jane Austen’, in which Tuite offers a convincing speculative argument regarding Austen’s relationship to the Flemish school of painting, through a combination of past and future art movements, nineteenth-century reviews, and close readings, supplemented by images. This combination of contextual specificity and knowledgeable breadth of Austen’s style is a shared trait of the book’s most successful chapters.

Many chapters in Part II: ‘The Arts in Austen’ focus on a particular artistic practice, reading its interplay across the novels. The way in which Tuite’s defined artistic focus leads to broad and interesting claims is replicated in Laura Engel’s ‘Shadow Portraits: Jane Austen, Lady Susan and Silhouettes’, where she parallels the early novella with the silhouette: both are ‘poised between craft and high art, amateurism and professional practice, likeness and embellishment’ (142). Engel reads *Lady Susan* as ‘shadow archive of Austen’s authorial practice’ (142), but also shows how the art of the silhouette emblematises the shadowed labour of female authors and artists. Some chapters emphasise fascinating contexts over argument, which is appropriate for an anthology of this kind: these include Juliette Wells’ insights on the British cultural distrust of artistically talented (gentle)men, Kathryn L. Libin’s illuminating dive into the Austen family’s musical archive, and Angela Barlow’s entertaining biographical and historical survey of Austen’s own theatregoing but also of the principal actors and actresses of the Regency period. Like the first, this second section ends on a high point: Stephen Bending’s “‘Nothing but Pleasure from Beginning to End’: Austen’s Gardens’ is contextually specific and original. In arguing that Austen not only participates in the eighteenth-century rendering of gardens as dangerous, liminal spaces of desire, but that in so doing she explores ‘forms of pleasure at once “natural” and in need of constraint’ (Bending 322), Bending provides a nuanced reading, teasing out ‘the entanglements between pleasure gardens, pleasure in gardens, and the gendering of such pleasures’ (323); the chapter itself is a pleasure to read.

Part III: ‘Afterlives’ progresses from the nineteenth-century afterlives of Austen’s surviving letters, in Catherine Delafield’s entertaining and informative chapter, all the way to literary tourism today. The second chapter in the section, Annika Bautz’s ‘Austen in a

Competitive Literary Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Illustrated Editions' is a standout, giving a concise background on nineteenth-century book history as well as Austen's place in it. The bulk of the chapters in this section focus on adaptation, whether through translated texts, novelistic continuations, fanfiction, or television and film. Accompanied by marvellous images, Janine Barchas and Gillian Dow argue for the importance of 'bad translations' (373); Joanne Wilkes gives an excellent survey of completions of Austen's unfinished novels, *The Watsons* and *Sanditon*; and Joe Bray goes beyond a simple critique of novelistic adaptation to provide a compelling comparative analysis of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and Jo Baker's *Longbourn* (2013). These, along with other chapters, show how, as Frances Babbage writes in her discussion of contemporary theatre, 'adaptation is a creative as well as re-creative act' (436). Anthony Mandal offers an overview of digital tools that could prove hugely helpful to both early and later-career researchers, and in doing so turns us wonderfully back to Austen's own language. This is an ambitious, comprehensive, and thoughtfully curated book—itsself a work of art.

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