

# JANE AUSTEN



AND PHILOSOPHY

*Edited by Mimi Marinucci*

GREAT AUTHORS & PHILOSOPHY

## CHAPTER ONE



# Love in the Time of Epistemic Injustice

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It is a truth universally acknowledged that society at the time of Jane Austen was profoundly unjust. In the first decades of the nineteenth century gross social and material inequalities based on gender, race, and social class were the norm, equality of opportunity was an alien notion, and class mobility was considered by those who held the reins of power as a threat to civilization, to be fought and resisted at all costs. At the turn of the nineteenth century in England, and throughout the Victorian era, for the vast majority of the population, and women in particular, life was determined by factors beyond their control to such an extent that their future was, at best, predictably bleak.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter focuses on a specific type of injustice that attracted much attention among philosophers in recent years, and was also pervasive during Jane Austen's time: epistemic injustice.<sup>2</sup> A close reading of five novels, *Persuasion* (hereafter P), *Emma* (E), *Northanger Abbey* (NA), *Pride and Prejudice* (PP) and *Sense and Sensibility* (SS) will show not only that the idea of epistemic injustice is accurate, compelling, and informative, but that thanks to Jane Austen we can perceive a dimension of epistemic injustice that has so far gone unnoticed in the philosophical literature.<sup>3</sup>

### Jane Austen and Social Injustice

To her credit, albeit not always acknowledged, Jane Austen was not unaware of issues of social injustice around her, and perhaps keenly felt due to her

own circumstances, indeed the narratives she writes about are all framed by such injustice, and a recurring theme in her novels is how the female characters, while very different in temperament and abilities, all share one common factor: they have to confront and overcome the social and economic unjust predicament they find themselves in. In general women in the nineteenth century had their destinies often dictated by the men in their lives, and as a result the opportunities to formulate and pursue their autonomously defined conception of the good life were severely curtailed.

One way to capture the institutional injustice at the heart of English society at the time is the precarious insecurity and vulnerability felt by many members of society, especially women. The heightened sense of vulnerability of women in Austen's work is a key theme in one of the best critical responses to Austen<sup>4</sup> by Mary Evans in *Jane Austen and the State*: "Jane Austen does not argue that women are helpless victims. . . . But what she does show is the vulnerability that leads to the paradox of both their inadequate protection (in the sense of real provision for their needs and those of their children) and their excessive restrictions (in terms of their inferior civil liberties and assumptions about female dependence)."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps this is nowhere more obvious than in her best known work, *Pride and Prejudice*, where the future of the female members of the Bennet family is determined by the legal restriction, fully embraced by the dominant social norms of the day, that being women they would be barred from inheriting their family home, since (in most cases) estates were entailed on a male child.<sup>6</sup> In the story the laws pertaining to private property proved to be Mr. Collins's greatest asset and the source of desperation for Mrs. Bennet and her girls. Elizabeth Bennet is much more aware than her sisters of the economic vulnerability and material insecurity that define her life, and perhaps on this point she has something in common with her mother: like Elizabeth, Mrs. Bennet resents the profound injustice that women experience, which is what drives her to ensure that her daughters all marry well, since finding a rich husband is their only hope for long-term security. From this point of view Mrs. Bennet, far from being inept and inane, is in fact a paradigm of strategic rationality.

The rational, calculating, strategic reasoning of the characters in Austen's novels are carefully exposed and copiously analyzed in Michael Suk-Young Chwe's brilliant *Jane Austen, Game Theorist*.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps my only slight disagreement with Chwe is that he doesn't give Mrs. Bennet the credit she deserves, referring to her at one point as a "strategic sophomore," someone who thinks they know something they don't, taking pride in the trivial. I

find Mary Evans's (1987) interpretation of Mrs. Bennet much more convincing: "Mrs Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* is generally regarded as one of the absurd and comic figures of English fiction, and her preoccupation with marrying off her daughters as the mania of a somewhat inadequate intelligence. But in view of the economic exigencies facing the unmarried daughters of the eighteenth-century gentry, Mrs. Bennet's concerns do not seem entirely ridiculous. . . . Given that she has five daughters, it is little wonder that at times Mrs Bennet is less than rational."<sup>8</sup> The social injustice that pervaded English society in the early decades of the nineteenth century manifested itself in two ways: structural injustice (including economic injustice) and epistemic injustice.

Iris Marion Young<sup>9</sup> explains that structural injustice occurs whenever limitations unfairly constrain the opportunities of someone while granting privileges to others. The oppression which results from structural injustice often does not take the form of intentional coercion; instead it stems from the everyday practices of people who fail to question norms, habits, and the many hidden assumptions underlying institutional rules.<sup>10</sup>

Gender oppression is a clear example of structural injustice, as defined by Young. As Serena Parekh points out, "We can understand gender oppression as a form of structural injustice because it limits and shapes individual choices and circumstances, but is mostly sustained by the unintentional, unself-conscious actions of millions of people and in norms, habits, and institutions."<sup>11</sup> If that is the case today (and it is), it was even more so in Austen's time; it is not surprising therefore that the women in Jane Austen's novels are, in different ways and degrees, all victims and survivors of structural injustice.

It is the recognition of the institutional and cultural reality of the oppression of women in England throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that inspired authors as different as Mary Wollstonecraft, William Thompson, Harriet Taylor, and John Stuart Mill to denounce the injustice of society against women. But that was not the only injustice present at the time. Apart from structural injustice, there is another way to capture the oppression of women, then and now: epistemic injustice.

### Jane Austen and Epistemic Injustice

The theory of epistemic injustice is one of the most recent, original, and influential contributions in philosophy to the way in which we theorize injustice. Miranda Fricker deserves much of the credit for drawing our attention

to this phenomenon. In her groundbreaking book, *Epistemic Injustice*, she defines epistemic injustice in terms of the wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower. There are two types of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice manifests itself in patterns of incredulity, misinterpretation, silencing: "to be wronged in one's capacity as a knower is to be wronged in a capacity essential to human value. . . . The capacity to give knowledge to others is one side of the many-sided capacity so significant in human beings: namely, the capacity to reason."<sup>12</sup>

Fricker explains that testimonial injustice is closely associated with discrimination and prejudice, and it normally manifests itself as a credibility deficit—namely, when a speaker receives less credibility than she otherwise would have. In order to highlight the fact that the credibility deficit is usually tied to the notion of identity prejudice, Fricker uses two examples from twentieth-century films and novels. The first is taken from Anthony Minghella's screenplay of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, where a young woman, Marge Sherwood, is silenced by an older man, Herbert Greenfield, who refuses to listen or give any credibility to her suspicions, and this only because she is a woman: "Marge, there's female intuition, and then there are facts."<sup>13</sup> Similarly in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* Tom Robinson is charged with raping a young girl. Tom Robinson is innocent, but because he is black while the girl is white, his testimony in court is not believed, and he is found guilty.

The two examples chosen by Fricker refer to particular individuals who are victims of identity prejudice, and are not believed in specific circumstances, the first relating to a murder, the second a rape. In the first case it is a young woman who is not believed, in the latter case a young black man. Testimonial injustice and identity prejudice are also present in Austen's novels, but in a different way. Virtually all the female characters in her novels are victims of testimonial injustice. The prejudice against the validity of epistemic claims by women is so widespread, so inculcated in the culture that it fails to shock us, or even register with the characters in Austen's novels. We almost come to expect it. Men had the monopoly over knowledge, and Austen knew it. In the early decades of the nineteenth century men simply had no respect for women as authentic sources of knowledge, or wisdom, and the assumption was that a man always knew more than a woman, hence he was by nature and nurture her superior. As Austen remarks in *Persuasion*: "Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in

their hands."<sup>14</sup> Occasionally Austen highlights the comical absurdity of this state of affairs, as when in *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Collins is so intoxicated by his sense of superiority that he is convinced that Elizabeth Bennet couldn't possibly refuse his proposal of marriage: "I am not now to learn. . . . That it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept, when he first applies for their favour."<sup>15</sup> Clearly for Mr. Collins when a woman says "no" she means "yes." But more often than not the epistemic disadvantage women experience is portrayed by Austen in tragic terms. Perhaps this is most clear in her sixth and last novel, *Persuasion* (1818). Often referred to as Austen's most feminist novel, its main character, Anne Elliot, is arguably Austen's most complex creation. In the opening pages we are told that Anne Elliot is twenty-seven, yet she "was nobody with either father or sister; her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way; she was only Anne" (emphasis added).<sup>16</sup> This description captures the essence of what Miranda Fricker refers to as epistemic injustice, in particular the claim that the heroine of this story, notwithstanding her astuteness and intelligence, is not given the epistemic credibility she deserves: no one listens to her, no one gives her any credit, no one is interested in what she has to say or contribute. The fact that at twenty-seven years of age Anne Elliot is the oldest of Austen's heroines is worth consideration. Women are victims of epistemic injustice not simply because they tend to attract the attentions of older and more experienced men; the issue is one of gender, not age.

What makes *Persuasion* particularly interesting is the fact that unlike the other heroines in Austen's previous novels, Anne Elliot is strong, independent, and confident. She is the only one to stand up against the pervasive epistemic injustice inflicted on all other members of her sex. In a pivotal scene it is Anne Elliot who has the confidence, and know-how, to step up and take control of the situation, not the men around her. This is when, during a seaside walk, in a misjudged attempt at flirting with a gentleman, young Louisa Musgrove jumps from a wall, falls on the pavement and is seriously injured: in Austen's words she lies "lifeless." Austen tells us that in this moment of crisis Anne Elliot takes charge of the situation, and while the other women who witnessed the accident are either insensible or hysterical, the men look to Anne for guidance: "Both [Charles Musgrove and Captain Wentworth] seemed to look to her for directions. 'Anne, Anne,'" cried Charles, "what is to be done next? What, in heaven's name, is to be done next?"<sup>17</sup> Anne is not a nurse, just a woman who deserves respect for her

intellect and knowledge, and is not inferior to the men around her: in this scene gender roles are spectacularly turned upside down.

So far we have focused on one type of epistemic injustice, namely testimonial injustice. The other form of epistemic injustice is hermeneutical injustice. Hermeneutical injustice refers to instances when someone is not able to make sense of an experience due to prejudicial flaws in circumstances of shared resources for social interpretation, or in other words, when someone is harmed by a sort of gap in collective understanding which makes one's own experiences unintelligible: "Hermeneutical injustice is the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource."<sup>18</sup> Fricker points out that this definition brings out the discretionary character of epistemic injustice: "in both sorts of epistemic injustice, the subject suffers from one or another sort of prejudice against them *qua* social type."<sup>19</sup>

Fricker gives a number of examples of hermeneutical injustice, including sexual harassment in work places. According to Fricker, we can define this sort of hermeneutical injustice in the following way: "The injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource."<sup>20</sup>

While there is nothing remotely resembling explicit physical sexual harassment in Austen's novels, this doesn't mean that hermeneutical injustice is not present. On the contrary, hermeneutical injustice is rife in her fictions. With a few notable exceptions, the female characters in Austen's novels seem to accept the oppressive norms that dictate every aspect of their lives, and are incapable of fully understanding what is happening in their world. In *Pride and Prejudice* Lydia Bennet is so intent to get one over her bigger sisters that she doesn't understand the risks and potential consequences of running away with Wickham. In *Northanger Abbey* Catherine Morland is unable to make sense of the fact that she is being sent home by General Tilney, unaccompanied by a servant and at an inconvenient (and potentially dangerous) time. In *Sense and Sensibility* Marianne's inability to understand Willoughby's abandonment of her has very serious consequences for her mental and physical health.

Whenever things don't work out as they should, or were hoped to, the women in Austen's novels always blame themselves first.

Epistemic injustice has attracted a great deal of attention in the philosophical literature on injustice since Fricker introduced this concept.<sup>21</sup> Build-

ing on Fricker's work, José Medina reminds us that testimonial injustice is problematic not only to the oppressed subjects, for all the reasons we are familiar with, but also to those who stand to gain from this injustice.<sup>22</sup> The problems that ensue from the epistemic excesses that privileged subjects enjoy is an under-researched issue. In particular, Medina reminds us that it is a vice to overestimate one's powers, epistemic or otherwise. Epistemic arrogance leads to cognitive immaturity, epistemic laziness (lack of curiosity), close-mindedness, and ultimately what Medina calls "active ignorance": the epistemic attitudes and habits that contribute to create and maintain bodies of ignorance. This is true of many male characters in Austen's novels, including Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*,<sup>23</sup> Anne's father Sir Walter Elliot in *Persuasion*; Mr. Elton in *Emma*, and finally General Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*.

### From Victim to Perpetrator

There are many reasons philosophers interested in gender issues could do worse than accumulate examples from Jane Austen's fiction. One reason, as we have seen so far, is to find confirmation and validation of *a priori* defined philosophical concepts, such as epistemic injustice. But there is also another reason: a close reading of her novels can reveal hidden dimensions and other subtle factors of philosophical concepts we are familiar with. I will discuss in this final section that there is a dimension of hermeneutical injustice that has not received the philosophical attention it deserves, but that comes out clearly thanks to the fine writing of Austen and the complexity of her characterizations. Namely, hermeneutical injustice does not only manifest itself when a victim of this injustice is incapable of making sense of her own experience, because she is hermeneutically marginalized. Instead it also reveals itself when the victim is unaware of the fact that she is instrumental in reproducing and propagating the same injustice in which she is a victim. This aspect of hermeneutical injustice will be referred to as the Perpetuating Force of Epistemic Injustice.

The Perpetuating Force of Epistemic Injustice can take two forms: it can be passive or active. In the passive form, the victim perpetuates the injustice when she fails to prevent the same injustice to be inflicted on others. Here we are treading on Judith Shklar's idea of passive injustice: "the refusal of both officials and of private citizens to prevent acts of wrongdoing when they could and should do so."<sup>24</sup> The character trait most closely associated with passive injustice is indifference: this is what makes social injustice not only

pervasive, but also invasive and difficult to displace. There is a great deal of indifference in Austen's novels. In *Pride and Prejudice*, for all her cleverness even Elizabeth Bennet appears indifferent to the fate of her younger sisters, except when their actions have a potentially negative impact on her. Furthermore, she is blind to the even more serious injustice suffered by the women of social classes below her, starting from the maids and other servants at Longbourne,<sup>25</sup> and including her best friend, Charlotte Lucas.

But the Perpetuating Force of Epistemic Injustice can also take a more active or direct form. This is when the victims of epistemic injustice become the vehicles of more epistemic injustice, as they inflict the same type of injustice on other people around them, who happen to be more vulnerable and powerless than themselves. This is perhaps most obvious in *Emma*.

Emma Woodhouse, the twenty-one-year-old heroine is both the victim and perpetrator of epistemic injustice. In the opening sentence of the novel she is described as "handsome, clever, and rich"<sup>26</sup>; indeed later on we are told that "Emma is spoiled by being the cleverest of her family,"<sup>27</sup> but being clever is not enough for Emma to escape her predicament of being seen as socially and intellectually inferior to her male counterparts, so much so that Emma accepts her inferiority. But in an interesting twist to an otherwise recurring theme in Austen's novels whereby the female characters are always depicted as subordinate and subservient, we find that Emma passes from victim to perpetrator, and albeit involuntarily she becomes instrumental in perpetuating the type of epistemic injustice that is one of the sources of her oppression, and of social injustice more generally.

In the story, Emma amuses herself by playing matchmaker, and one of her projects is to find a respectable gentleman for seventeen-year-old Harriet Smith, an attractive but socially inferior young woman who she has decided to take under her wing. Harriet Smith was found as a baby abandoned outside a boarding school; as Austen explains, she "was the natural daughter of somebody."<sup>28</sup> The mysterious origins of Harriet Smith is indicative of the injustice of life in nineteenth-century England where someone's unknown parentage should not only be looked down upon but also treated as shameful and indecent, a sufficient reason to be excluded from certain circles. One can detect a certain sense of irony in Austen's writing when describing Harriet's parentage:

She proved to be the daughter of a tradesman, rich enough to afford her the comfortable maintenance which had ever been hers, and decent enough to have always wished for concealment.—Such was the blood of gentility which Emma had for-

merly been so ready to vouch for!—It was likely to be as untainted, perhaps, as the blood of many a gentleman: but what a connexion had she been preparing for Mr. Knightley—or for the Churchills—or even for Mr Elton!—The stain of illegitimacy, unbleached by nobility or wealth, would have been a stain indeed.<sup>29</sup>

It is to Emma's credit that she takes an interest in Harriet, although her motivations for doing so are not always clear. Austen simply tells us: "Emma knew [Harriet] very well by sight and had long felt an interest in, on account of her beauty."<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless what soon becomes clear is the way Emma inflicts testimonial injustice on Harriet, perpetuating (no doubt involuntarily) the same epistemic injustice which she is the victim of. Harriet is in love with a young farmer, Mr. Martin, who by all accounts is a very decent, hard-working, and loving young man, but Emma will not have it. Harriet is Emma's personal project, and for her entertainment she is determined to find a better match for her. As a result, Emma appears to be incapable of listening to her friend in accepting that Harriet holds legitimate sentiments that ought to be acknowledged and respected. Instead Emma does her best to dissuade Harriet by piling on all the prejudices that people of Emma's class have against those of lower social standing. At first Emma tells Harriet that "Mr. Martin is now awkward and abrupt . . . he will be a completely gross, vulgar farmer—totally inattentive to appearances, and thinking of nothing but profit and loss,"<sup>31</sup> but when he makes a marriage proposal Emma is so afraid to lose her friend that she turns against Mr. Martin with renewed (undeserved) malice, telling Harriet that to marry Mr. Martin would mean to be "confined to the society of the illiterate and vulgar all your life,"<sup>32</sup> and that would be the end of their friendship as Emma would never visit her if she were to become Mrs. Martin.

*Emma* was published in December 1815, eighteen months before Jane Austen's death. This was followed by *Persuasion*, which Jane Austen finished in 1816 although it was only published posthumously in 1818. One could argue that while in her portrayal of women Austen was herself guilty of propagating the Perpetuation Force of Epistemic Injustice, especially in her earlier novels, this is not the case in her last novel. One recurring theme in earlier novels is the way a young woman's "epistemic awakening"<sup>33</sup> is triggered by a male character. Thus as Angela Ryan (2006) has pointed out, Elizabeth Bennet only acquires true "self-knowledge" upon reading Mr. Darcy's letter:

How humiliating this discovery!—Yet, how just a humiliation!—Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been

my folly. Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance and driven reason away. . . . Till this moment I never knew myself.<sup>34</sup>

It is disconcerting how Elizabeth Bennet needs Mr. Darcy to gain self-knowledge, which makes the contrast between her and Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* even greater, since Anne Elliot knows herself and doesn't need a man to acquire self-knowledge. The fact that there is no moment of "epistemic awakening" in Austen's more mature work is a testament to her wisdom, and perhaps feminist credentials.

### Conclusion

Jane Austen was not a philosopher, but she had insights about social relations that have philosophical value. I have argued that Austen's novels add support to two types of epistemic injustice singled out by Miranda Fricker: testimonial and hermeneutical. Epistemic injustice is a powerful tool to explain gender oppression, past and present, and the validity of this philosophical concept finds corroboration in Austen's novels.

I have also argued that reading Austen can help philosophers interested in hermeneutical injustice to see an added dimension of this phenomenon. The aim was not only to highlight the extent to which Anne Elliot, Elizabeth Bennet, and many other female characters in Jane Austen's novels are the victims of both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, but also how these characters give us a nuanced understanding of how epistemic injustice, once established, perpetuates itself. In Austen's novels the victims of epistemic injustice turn into being perpetrators of that same injustice; perhaps unintentionally and unwillingly, but always with devastating consequences for those even more vulnerable than themselves, we are reminded just how deeply ingrained and powerfully resilient epistemic injustice can be, and how difficult it is to overcome epistemic injustice once it is instituted.

### Notes

1. I am grateful to Mary Edwards, Johanne Herlihy, and Clóna Ó Gallchoir for their comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this chapter.
2. Injustice can be defined and measured in terms of three dominant factors: maldistribution, exclusion, and disempowerment. All three factors are present in abundance in

nineteenth-century Britain. For this three-dimensional analysis of social injustice, see V. Bufacchi (2012). Vittorio Bufacchi, *Social Injustice: Essays in Political Philosophy* (London: Palgrave, 2012).

3. Rogers (2006, xliii) would no doubt disapprove of my argument in this paper, and perhaps all the papers in this volume: "[Austen] was a novelist and we do her most serious art no service if we ask it to perform philosophic tasks in which she had little or no ascertainable interest." The point is not whether Jane Austen had an "interest" in philosophical problems; the fact remains that her work, whether she was aware of it or not, has philosophical value. There is no disservice in suggesting that Austen was an accidental philosopher.

4. There are of course many more recent feminist studies of Austen that focus precisely on issues of unequal power relations in the late eighteenth century, including Johnson (1988); Looser (1995); Bilger (1998); Greenfield (2002). I'm grateful to Clóna Ó Gallchoir for alerting me to this body of literature. Audrey Bilger, *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Burney, Edgeworth and Austen* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1998); Susan C. Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters: Novels and the Politics of Family Romance in Burney and Austen* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2002); Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Devoney Looser (ed.), *Jane Austen and Discourses of Feminism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1995).

5. Mary Evans, *Jane Austen and the State* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987), x.

6. This is also the case in *Sense and Sensibility* with the Dashwood sisters, and their mother, who are forced to leave the family home at Norland when Mr. Henry Dashwood dies, since the estate passes to Mr. John Dashwood, son of Mr. Henry Dashwood from a previous marriage. In terms of women's vulnerability Miss Bates in *Emma* also comes to mind. I'm grateful to Johanne Herlihy for suggesting these references.

7. Michael Suk-Young Chwe, *Jane Austen, Game Theorist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

8. Mary Evans, *Jane Austen and the State*, 7.

9. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Iris Marion, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Iris Marion, "Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference," in T. Christiano and J. Christman (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009).

10. Young singles out five categories of oppression that also double as categories of injustice: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. All of the above form the backdrop to Austen's novels.

11. Serena Parekh, "Getting to the Root of Gender Inequality: Structural Injustice and Political Responsibility," *Hypatia*, vol. 26, no. 4 (2011): 677.

12. Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 44.

13. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 9.

14. Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 335.
15. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 120.
16. Austen, *Persuasion*, 6.
17. Austen, *Persuasion*, 120.
18. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 155.
19. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 155.
20. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 155.
21. See the forum of Fricker's book in *Theoria*, 2008, vol. 23/1, no. 61; the special issue on her book in *Social Epistemology* 2011, vol. 26, issue 2; and the symposia on her book in *Episteme*, 2010, vol. 7, issue 2. Fricker's work was also the subject of a two-day conference at the University of Bristol, "Understanding Epistemic Injustice," 26–27 June 2014.
22. José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
23. Mr. Darcy is guilty of epistemic arrogance in the first part of the book but seems to redeem himself by the time he makes the second proposal of marriage to Elizabeth Bennet.
24. Judith Shklar, *The Faces of Injustice* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 5.
25. On this, although it isn't Jane Austen's work, Jo Baker, *Longbourn* (London: Doubleday, 2013) deserves to be praised. This novel tells the story of the servants in the Bennet's household, and the story unfolds simultaneously to the events described in *Pride and Prejudice*. The Bennet family is not only ignorant of their servants' troubles and tribulations but totally indifferent.
26. Jane Austen, *Emma* (London: Penguin, 1996), 7.
27. Austen, *Emma*, 36.
28. Austen, *Emma*, 23.
29. Austen, *Emma*, 450–51.
30. Austen, *Emma*, 23.
31. Austen, *Emma*, 33.
32. Austen, *Emma*, 53.
33. I am grateful to Mary Edwards for suggesting this idea, and for her views and suggestions around this topic.
34. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 185. Angela Ryan, "Elizabeth's Missteps: hubris and hamartia in *Pride and Prejudice*", in *Pride and Prejudice: Le Roman de Jane Austen et le Film de Joe Wright* (New York: Ellipses Press, 2006).

## CHAPTER TWO



## Can there be Sense without Sensibility?

### *The Middle Road to Love and Marriage in Jane Austen*

SALLY WINKLE

Have you ever wondered why Jane Austen's novels resonate so deeply with twenty-first-century North American readers? Her novels are often read as romance fiction with fairy-tale endings. Austen's exploration of the kind of love and partnership that leads to a happy marriage is still relevant for many Americans and Europeans today, and seems to confirm many young women's fantasies of romantic love and marriage. Indeed, this narrow view of Austen as merely a romance author is quite common. However, I would argue that Austen is proto-feminist in her veneration of a love that is based on mutual respect, affection, intimacy, and common values, which seems to promote the equality of her male and female characters in their heterosexual relationships, despite and within the limitations of eighteenth-century patriarchal society. Her narratives offer much more than a simplistic concept of everlasting, passionate love and marital bliss.

Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* is a complex representation of evolving concepts of love and marriage within late eighteenth-century upper-class British society. Her satirical portrayal of the conflicting philosophical trends of Rationality and Sentimentality as personified in her protagonists is present through witty dialogue, narration, and characterization; it also