

“We shall . . . call it Waterloo Crescent”: Jane Austen’s Art of Naming

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O Romeo, Romeo!—wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name.
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I’ll no longer be a Capulet.
'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What’s Montague? It is nor hand nor foot
Nor arm nor face nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What’s in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name;
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

Romeo, however, cannot “doff his name” and as the tragedy which unfolds in Shakespeare’s famous play proves, his name is all too much a part of himself. The names Montague and Capulet, and the hatred they have come to represent, are at the very core of the play’s tragedy. Juliet might ask “What’s in a name?” but Shakespeare knew the answer. There is a great deal of power in a name and his entire play revolves around that power.

Jane Austen showed that she was also well aware of the power of a name in her letters, her juvenilia and her novels, and she shares the awareness of this power with many of her characters. “You will not think I have made a bad exchange, when we reach Trafalgar House—which by the bye, I almost wish I had not named Trafalgar—for Waterloo is more the thing now. However, Waterloo is in reserve—and if we have encouragement enough this year for a little crescent to be ventured on . . . then, we shall be able to call it Waterloo Crescent—and the name joined to the form of the building . . . will give us the command of Lodgers” (*Sanditon* 380). In pointing out to his young guest Charlotte Heywood the house he has named after Nelson’s famous victory, Mr. Parker gives due importance to the power of a name. For him, names reflect fashion and the right name goes a long way to creating the image he wants both the town of Sanditon and his own public persona to have. To be unfashionable in one’s naming is a fate barely to be contemplated. In one of her letters, Jane Austen talks of a bad name as “a direful penance.” Writing to

her niece in December 1814,¹ she thanked Caroline for sending a story she had written which contained the magnificently named characters Henry Mellish, Olivia and Devereux Forester—"I am much obliged to you for the sight of Olivia, and think you have done for her very well; but the good for Nothing Father, who was the real author of all her Faults and Sufferings, should not escape unpunished. I hope *he* hung himself, or took the surname of *Bone* or underwent some direful penance or other. . . ." Good characters are rewarded with names such as Darcy or Wentworth; characters who are fit only to be hanged are punished with the name of Bone.

Names of characters, names of places and names of houses are seldom chosen at random by Jane Austen. All form an integral part of her craft and are vital to her purpose within each novel. I would like today to examine Jane Austen's art of naming and to illustrate the importance of its place within her fiction. *Sanditon*, as we know, indicates "a new direction" in her work—I would like to question whether or not this new direction is supported by a correspondingly new variety of names. I will also discuss Jane Austen's astonishingly repetitive use of first names in her novels, the way in which names are used to denote character and origins, and why unusual names are sometimes chosen. In what ways are games played with names in her books, how are names used and misused, and when does the choice of characters' names form part of Jane Austen's famous irony and humor? What about house names, street names, village names, place names—were these, too, chosen with a purpose? In other words, I am going to apply Juliet's famous question "What's in a name?" to the novels of Jane Austen.

It has been said that Jane Austen's use of first names for her characters was unoriginal and there can be no denying that it was repetitive. Take the name Anne as an example. It is given to one of her most intelligent heroines, Anne Elliot, who admirably exemplifies its Hebrew meaning of "grace." Another Anne of high stature is the sensible and intelligent Anne Weston ("poor Miss Taylor that was") and her admirable qualities will probably be passed on to her daughter, little Anna Weston. However, the name Anne is also given to one of the silliest characters in the novels, Anne Steele (although she is often known by the pet-form of Nancy). Anne de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice* and Anne Thorpe (Isabella's sister in *Northanger Abbey*) are another two stupid women who have the name and Anne Mitchell, a friend of Isabella's who wears a turban, is also likely to be pretty foolish. Mr. Darcy's mother was an Anne, Miss Anne Cox of Highbury would get Robert Martin if she could, and little Anna-Maria Middleton becomes the owner of a filigree basket. Interestingly, Jane Austen always used the French spelling of Anne with an "e," in preference to the English spelling "Ann," although

at the time she lived ten Ann(e)s spelled the name without the "e" for every one who included it.² Perhaps she just agreed with Anne of Green Gables, who felt the "e" made the name look more distinguished.

Mary is used even more frequently than Anne. We have Mary Musgrove and a Lady Mary Grierson in *Persuasion*, Mary Crawford and little Mary Price in *Mansfield Park*, Mary Bennet and Mary King in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mary Middleton in *Sense and Sensibility*, Mary Edwards in *The Watsons*, Mary Parker and her daughter Mary in *Sanditon* and possibly Mrs. Gardiner whose initial is "M." Other forms of the name appear in Maria Bertram and her mother Lady (Maria) Bertram, Maria Lucas, Maria Manwaring, Anna-Maria Middleton and Marianne Dashwood. It is easy to find several examples of other commonly used names for female characters in the novels—Elizabeth, Jane, Fanny, Catherine and Charlotte all appear again and again. The repetition of female first names is reinforced in *Persuasion* when Sir Walter Elliot's beloved *Baronetage* lists "all the Marys and Elizabeths" (4) that his ancestors had married.

Some men's names are also used repetitively. Charles wins the prize for turning up most frequently. *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* have each got five characters with that name! There are two Charles Smiths (one in *Persuasion* and a minor character in *Lady Susan*, which also has a Charles Vernon). Also in *Persuasion* we have Charles Musgrove, his father Charles and his son Charles and his cousin Charles Hayter. In *Pride and Prejudice* there is Charles Bingley, *Mansfield Park* has Charles Maddox (who might have acted in *Lovers' Vows*), Fanny's little brother Charles Price, Sir Charles—of the Admiralty who helps Admiral Crawford get William's promotion, Tom Bertram's friend Charles Anderson of Baker Street and Charles the coachman who drives Mrs. Norris when she calls on Mrs. Rushworth. *Northanger Abbey* has a Charles Hodges whom Isabella Thorpe is convinced will "plague her to death to dance with him." Little Charles Blake does get to dance in *The Watsons*, there is Mrs. Charles Dupuis in *Sanditon* and the stories of the juvenilia contain four characters called Charles. If you add Sir Charles Grandison, the hero of Jane Austen's play of that name, this makes a grand total of twenty-one! Charles, Thomas, James and John, William, Robert, Edward, Henry and George are the good English names which make up most of Jane Austen's male world in her books.

Jane Austen chose many of the popular names of the day for her characters, but it was not from necessity that she used them again and again. There were examples of unusual names in her own social circle which she could have put into her novels—Fulwar, Brook, Gislingham, Alethea, Philadelphia and Grizel were all first names of people she knew. As a teenage author she had no difficulty what-

soever creating a wonderful list of exotic names for her juvenilia. There we find a Gustavus and Augustus, a Rodolphus, a Godfrey, a Philander and a Mountague (did Jane Austen have Romeo in mind here?). There is even a Sir Edward Spangle. Their residences are at Kilhoobery Park and Crankhumdumberry. Many of the heroines of the youthful stories also have uncommon names—Laurina, Janetta, Elfrida, Agatha, Cecilia, Eloisa, Claudia, Amelia, Philippa, Jemima, Rebecca and Dorothea. I wonder if her passion for names ending in an “a” reflected her adoration for the sister whose name also ended that way?

So why did Jane Austen not choose a greater variety of first names in her adult fiction—why is there no Janetta Fairfax, Eloisa Musgrove and Katerina Morland? The answer lies in the fact that Jane Austen used names as a structural means of portraying her fictional world. Her world is a limited and small one; hence, she draws on a restricted and intensely traditional stock of names. Children named after parents and grandparents (and there are countless examples of this in the novels) indicate the intensely conservative desire to perpetuate current social values and structures within societies such as Hartfield and Norland. Mr. Woodhouse, a man who loves tradition, is pleased when his first grandson is named Henry after himself. In the same way that he clings to the customs of his youth and to the furniture purchased by his parents, so he clings to the good old names which have served his family well over the generations. Many other characters share his naming preferences and his traditional reasons for liking family names.

However, tradition is not the only motivation in the passing on of names. On other occasions Jane Austen selects names to comment on moral or intellectual qualities in the characters who own or choose the names. For example, a superfluity of the same name, as is the case with Charles Musgrove, his father Charles Musgrove, his son Charles Musgrove and his cousin Charles Hayter calls attention to a lack of distinguishing characteristics in these gentlemen.

There is also naming for greed (I am certain this is why little Harry Dashwood was named after his wealthy grandfather), and there is naming for love (Isabella Knightley’s children are all named from her deep affection for both her own family and her husband’s). The choice of a name can uncover motives which are as varied as the characters themselves—we see them naming for respect (surely this is Sir William Lucas’s purpose in naming his daughter Charlotte after the Queen to whom he was presented at the Court of St. James) and we see them naming to influence. We even see them naming from laziness—Lady Bertram resorts to the most unimaginative naming in any of the novels. Her beloved dog is simply “Pug.” Those “three or four families in a country village” re-used first names for many

reasons and as Jane Austen probes the values and social behaviour of those families, so she uncovers the intriguing reasons for their choice of names.

In Jane Austen's fiction, the unusual names of the juvenilia are reserved for the outsiders, the upstarts and the empty people of fashion. Augusta Elton and her sister Selina Suckling, Penelope Clay, Alicia Johnson and Flora Stornaway are all women who don't belong to the "three or four families in a country village." Often they remain in town where they belong, but if they do enter the country it is to cause discord with their fashionable manners or their shabby behaviour. They tend to be restless women, never content to stay in one place for very long. Their exotic names act as a sign-post to the reader that these characters will never truly belong in the world of the country village! I think it is for this reason that Jane Austen never used the unusual name of the woman she loved most in the world, her sister Cassandra. It did not escape use in the juvenile fiction, where we find a heroine of that name in *The Beautiful Cassandra*, but in her mature work Jane Austen, even though she used the names of her father and every one of her six brothers, never once used the name Cassandra. Cassandra was not a name to take liberties with, it could not be given to some flimsy parvenu of a character and it was obviously not to be ranked with names like Selina Suckling's. Her sister Cassandra did belong to the world of the country village and if Jane Austen had used the name in her fiction, she would have lost the structural purpose behind her use of unusual names.

In *Persuasion* Admiral Croft has difficulty remembering the names of the Musgrove girls, Louisa and Henrietta. "I wish young ladies had not such a number of fine christian names," he complains. "I should never be out if they were all Sophys, or something of that sort" (171). Obviously he likes old-fashioned names—Henrietta had come fairly recently into use and Louisa (originating from the French Louis) was not much older. Fashionable characters in the novels tend to have fashionable first names—Louisa Hurst, Caroline Bingley, Julia Bertram, Lydia Bennet (the name had been popularised by Lydia Languish in Sheridan's play *The Rivals*), and Augusta Hawkins are all examples. Sir Walter Elliot likes to think he is the height of fashion, but his name had gone out of vogue many generations before. I was interested to learn that it would have been pronounced "water" three hundred years ago.

Some characters are deprived of first names altogether. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, in the opening scene of *Pride and Prejudice*, reveal everything about themselves but their names. We learn all about the fluctuations of Mrs. Bennet's "poor nerves," but we never learn what her first name is and whether or not Mr. Bennet has ever used it when addressing her. Such satire is often achieved by the absence of

names—there is no need for the reader to know Lady Dalrymple's first name because all that matters to Sir Walter is her title. In the case of his daughter's friend, again it is only the name and not the person behind it which counts: "a mere Mrs. Smith, an every-day Mrs. Smith, of all people and all the names in the world . . . Mrs. Smith! Such a name!" (158). Characters who act as figures of authority within the novels are often deprived of their first names—were we to be on first name terms with them, their authority would be softened. General Tilney, Lady Russell, Mr. and Mrs. Churchill and Colonel Brandon are a few examples. Mr. Darcy tries hard to be the aloof figure of authority in the eyes of all Meryton society, and he succeeds in this so long as we know him as *Mr. Darcy*. Elizabeth, however, has a softening and a humbling influence and when he signs *Fitzwilliam Darcy* at the end of his letter, the reader knows that he has come down from his pedestal and been thoroughly humanised. Had he written *F. Darcy* or just *Darcy*, there would have been little hope for his eventual happiness with Elizabeth. Emma is very much aware of the humbling influence of a first name when she teases Mr. Knightley by calling him George.

Sometimes the absence of a first name indicates the way Jane Austen wishes her reader to view a particular character. For example, she wants us to see Mrs. Dashwood primarily in her role as a mother and the lack of a distinguishing first name helps the reader to focus on this maternal role. Many characters whose only real role within the stories is to be a parent receive the same treatment—Mrs. Morland, Mrs. Bates, Mrs. Rushworth, Mrs. Thorpe and Mr. and Mrs. Heywood are some examples.

There are, of course, many minor characters in the novels whose first names we never learn for the reason that more formal modes of address were current in Jane Austen's day. In our society a young woman on holiday with family friends would quickly be on first name terms with them—Catherine Morland, however, never dreams of calling Mr. and Mrs. Allen by their first names, and so we never find out what those first names are.

Names also function within the novels as external signs of character and it is fascinating to look up the meanings of the names used. George Knightley is an especially obvious example of this: his Christian name, meaning "farmer," indicates his practical nature and his profession of active landlord, while at the same time associating him with the royalty of England. The surname Knightley links him to the world of chivalry to which his strong sense of duty and his moral code belong. Jane Austen usually chose names carefully to suit the personalities of those who held them. The Gardiners of *Pride and Prejudice* are the people who bring Elizabeth and Darcy together—their name suggests an ability to cultivate growth and growing is

exactly what Elizabeth and Darcy must do before they can be united. Their growth is encouraged by the Gardiners. There are many other examples: Morland (Moor Land) indicates Catherine's love of the countryside and lack of sophistication; Fanny Price is eventually discovered to be the "pearl of great price" at the heart of the Mansfield home; Thorpe (meaning small town) hints at the small-mindedness and small-town concerns of that family; Rushworth says something derogatory about the intellectual value of that young man; while the name Fitzwilliam denotes aristocracy going back to William the Conqueror. I was at first puzzled that Jane Austen, a confirmed Anglophile, should have used a French name for her most romantic hero. However, it is important to note that she has Anglicised it, removing the apostrophe between the D and the A, and that it ties in with the Fitzwilliam and its suggestions of ancient pedigree. The prefix "Fitz" also has connotations of royal bastardy. Originally a corruption of "fils" (French for "son of"), the prefix became a popular name for the illegitimate sons of English kings and princes. Illegitimacy rarely carried any shame in such a case and those whose names began with "Fitz" were proud to boast of royal parentage or ancestry.³ Mr. Darcy could not be outdone by name by a de Bourgh (the "de" of that name also denotes an aristocratic connection) and yet de Bourgh has retained the Frenchness that Jane Austen disliked. The name Fitzwilliam Darcy is loaded with all the right connotations—a family pedigree to outdo Sir Walter Elliot's, a hint of royal scandal, and yet with an Anglicisation that Darcy's proud aunt is lacking in her name. Mr. Darcy, Jane Austen insists, is an English hero, not a French one.

Those well-known distinguishing characteristics of Jane Austen's style, irony and humour, are also apparent in her choice of names. The Braggles and the Sucklings, characters who speak only through the mouth of Mrs. Elton, are immediately characterised by their names. Captain O'Brien, the man who married Emma's aunt in *The Watsons*, is a caricature of an Irish army man because of his name. Mrs. Norris's name adds to the irony of *Mansfield Park*. Its meaning is "nurse" (from the French "neurice") and Sir Thomas leaves her in the position of nurse, or carer, to his daughters once they have left the nursery. She has all the "busyness" of Juliet's nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* and she also attempts to live up to the more modern meaning of the word. We frequently hear of her suggesting physics for the gardener or the coachman, probably without much success. Irony is created, however, when she is quite unable to function responsibly in her role as nurse to Maria and Julia. *Romeo and Juliet* is used again with irony in the naming of the horse which Willoughby wishes to give Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*. The animal is called Queen Mab, after the "fairy's midwife" in Mercutio's famous

speech. Queen Mab is a creature of dreams, insubstantial and renowned for playing games. Willoughby turns out to be only a dream-lover for Marianne—he plays games with her heart, he is only too insubstantial when the time for a proposal arrives. It is an ironic foreshadowing of his behaviour in the novel that the horse, which Marianne never actually gets to see, should be named from fairy-land. Mrs. Elton's inability to deal properly with names is also treated with irony by her creator—when Mr. Knightley is reduced to “Mr. K.,” it is Mrs. Elton and not Mr. Knightley who is reduced in reader estimation. Frank Churchill objects to Jane Fairfax becoming “Jane” to Mrs. Elton, whose excessive ease and familiarity in naming is the butt of both Emma's satire and Jane Austen's.

Names are also used for fun within the novels. Richard is a name that comes off very badly. Richard Musgrove in *Persuasion* is reduced to “poor Dick,” there is a Richard who is cursed by the surname of Pratt in *Sanditon*, Dick Jackson in *Mansfield Park* is “a great lubberly fellow,” while Mr. Morland of *Northanger Abbey* is “a respectable man, though his name was Richard.” This could easily be a private joke on Jane Austen's part as she gained revenge on the publisher who should have published her *Northanger Abbey* and didn't, Richard Crosby. Was her little dig at the name inserted when she re-worked her novel after it had sat for years on Crosby's shelf? We can't be sure, but I suspect it was. Even in her letters, Jane Austen is not kind about the name Richard. “Mr. Richard Harvey's match is put off,” she wrote to Cassandra in 1796,⁴ “till he has got a better Christian name, of which he has great hopes.”

Mr. Parker speaks in *Sanditon* of his concern over the name of his house, but house and place names are important in *all* the novels, though few have the same concern for fashionable naming as is displayed in *Sanditon*. “Prospect House” and “Bellevue Cottage,” two houses in that town, are named specifically to attract the visitors the place needs if it is to become a fashionable resort. In *Northanger Abbey* Catherine Morland's imagination is set on fire by a name: “With all the chances against her of house, hall, place, park, court, and cottage, Northanger turned up an abbey, and she was to be its inhabitant” (141). She is well aware of her luck and of the power of a place name. I suspect that Jane Austen was also well aware of her luck in finding a street in Bath so aptly named Union Street, in which to stage the re-union of Anne and Wentworth, but she uses her good fortune with a skill that appears as happy and natural as the re-union itself.

Donwell (Don Well) is a name carefully chosen to add to the social commentary of *Emma*, while the name Churchill (Church III) adds further contrasting commentary. Meryton is the merry town of *Pride and Prejudice*, the place where the Bennet girls go to gossip, flirt and

have fun. The Gardiners live in Gracechurch Street—it may not be a grand address in the eyes of the Bingley sisters, but the name hints at the function their home has as a place both of morals and of shelter. Lydia is taken in there when in disgrace, in spite of Mr. Collins's advice that she be thrown off for ever. Hartfield is, of course, the place where all the affairs of the heart are worked out within *Emma*, and Abbey Mill Farm once again hints at both shelter for its future mistress Harriet Martin and at the practical working nature of its occupant, Robert Martin. Uppercross acts as a crossroads in the lives of Anne and Wentworth. There are many other examples within the novels of symbolic meanings for the place names Jane Austen chose for her settings.

When Frank Churchill pushes an arrangement of letters across the table at Hartfield to Jane Fairfax, "she was evidently displeased; looked up, and, seeing herself watched, blushed more deeply than he had ever perceived her, and saying only, 'I did not know that proper names were allowed,' pushed away the letters with even an angry spirit" (349) Frank (whose name is ironic because he is anything but frank) is playing games with names—the word he has formed is Dixon—and Jane Fairfax, only too aware of the power of a name, does not like it. *Emma* is full of naming games—names left unspoken cause mischief, names become an element of role-playing (Mrs. Elton's *Caro Sposo* is an example) and names are used or abused with formality or liberty as part of the game of courtship. Mr. Weston at Box Hill attempts to enliven a dull picnic by punning on Emma's name—"What two letters of the alphabet are there that express perfection?" (371) he asks. The answer, of course, is M and A, or Emma—"an indifferent piece of wit" on his part that amuses some of the party and offends others. In *Persuasion* there is confusion between Anne and Mrs. Smith over an unspoken name and in *Sense and Sensibility* the new Mrs. Ferrars turns out to be Mrs. Robert and not Mrs. Edward Ferrars, and so Elinor's happiness is assured, not destroyed.

Names and how they were used were an important part of the social decorum of Jane Austen's day. Correct forms of address are a vital part of the world she depicts in her fiction. They indicate rank within society, which is why it is appropriate that Emma calls her friend Harriet, while Harriet calls her Miss Woodhouse. They also indicate seniority—for example, Miss Bertram and Miss Julia Bertram are carefully distinguished. Miss Crawford and Fanny Price are each, in their different ways, only too aware of the difference in sound between Edmund and Sir Edmund. "There is something in the sound of Mr. *Edmund* Bertram so formal, so pitiful, so younger-brother-like that I detest it," says Mary, but Fanny responds "How differently we feel! . . . To me, the sound of *Mr.* Bertram is so cold

and nothing-meaning, so entirely without warmth or character. It just stands for a gentleman and that's all. But there is nobleness in the name of Edmund. It is a name of heroism and renown; of kings, princes and knights; and seems to breathe the spirit of chivalry and warm affections." Mary argues with Fanny—"I grant you the name is good in itself, and *Lord* Edmund or *Sir* Edmund sound delightfully; but sink it under the chill, the annihilation of a Mr., and Mr. Edmund is no more than Mr. John or Mr. Thomas" (211). I think Mary Crawford would have misquoted Juliet—"a *Lord* by any other name would *sound* as sweet."

In a society where formality of manners and naming was valued, it is rare to find any nicknames. In fact the original meaning of the word nickname was "a name given in contempt or in sportive familiarity." Sportiveness immediately brings to mind Elizabeth Bennet and it is interesting to note that she is the only heroine to have a nickname.⁵ Lizzie to her family, she is Eliza to her Meryton acquaintance. To Mr. Darcy she is Elizabeth—his "dearest, loveliest Elizabeth" (369). We can only wonder if, in the "comfort and elegance of their family party at Pemberley" (384), he eventually comes to call her Lizzie. Somehow, I hope not. I feel, however, that justice would be done were Mrs. Elton to be known as "Gussie" within the confines of the vicarage. Jane Austen never follows her male characters into the privacy of the billiard room, so again we can only speculate as to whether or not Charles Bingley ever called his friend "Fitz" when they were in there together. As for Captain Wentworth, I sincerely hope that no-one ever referred to him as "Fred"!

Nicknames generally seem to be something that characters shake off as they grow older. Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* has a younger sister known as Sally, "or rather Sarah (for what young lady of common gentility will reach the age of sixteen without altering her name as far as she can?)" (19). Perhaps Kitty Bennet is a late developer, but will in a year or two shake off the Kitty in favour of Catherine. It certainly strikes a jarring note with the reader when Mr. Price calls Fanny "Fan"—he still thinks of his eldest daughter as the child she was when she left his house at the age of eight.

The rules and regulations attached to naming were much stricter in Jane Austen's day than they are in our own. People were expected to know the rules and behave accordingly—transgression meant minor social disgrace. Prospective lovers conversing in a ballroom used formal modes of address—it is partly because Mr. Knightley has always called Emma by her first name that she is so slow to view him as a lover. Often "sir" or "madam" were used instead of a name. Some characters struggle with the formality—the easy-going Crawfords are an example. As soon as Mary thinks that Fanny will become her sister, she writes to her as "My dear Fanny," "to the

infinite relief of a tongue that has been stumbling at *Miss Price* for at least the last six weeks" (303), while Mary's brother causes Fanny to "draw back, displeased" when he calls her "dearest, sweetest Fanny" (344). This is too great a liberty to take with the woman who still calls her own cousin *Mr. Bertram* after living ten years in the same house with him! However, in many cases the formal names were eventually used so often as to become almost informal and there are married couples in the novels who continue to use one another's surname or formal name in informal situations. I have already mentioned Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, but other couples include Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, Squire and Mrs. Allen, the Palmers and many more. Mr. Knightley tries to remove the formality—"Cannot you call me 'George' now?" he asks Emma when they are engaged. "Impossible!" she replies, "I never can call you anything but Mr. Knightley" (463). The formality has grown dear to her, and to us, as readers. Like Emma we find it quite impossible to think of Mr. Knightley as "George."

Authors of the present age frequently turn to the telephone directory as a useful source of surnames for their characters, but Jane Austen had no such resource. So where did she find surnames for her characters? When she creates families with any pretensions to gentle birth, she almost always endows them with names belonging to actual British families, sometimes with an extinct title of nobility, sometimes with a living one. Darcy's name combines those of two great Yorkshire families—the D'Arcy (with an apostrophe) Earle of Holderness family, whose title became extinct in 1788, and the Fitzwilliam, Earls Fitzwilliam family.⁶ Darcy's name thus combines money, manners, ancestry, influence and arrogance to such an extent that the reader can hardly expect him to rejoice in a connection with the Bennet family. Eventually, however, the middle class Bennets and Gardiners force the noble Fitzwilliams and Darcys to take them seriously.

The genealogical data of *The Peerage of England* (London, 1756) was a useful naming source for Jane Austen. It shows that one Robert Wentworth married a great heiress Emma Woodhouse in the thirteenth century. The senior line of the Wentworth Woodhouse family achieved a baronetcy under James I. A sister of the first baronet married the heir of the D'Arcy's. Eventually the family estate descended to the children of Anne Wentworth, who had married a man from the Watson family, and finally the fortunes of the Watsons, the Wentworths and the Woodhouses all devolved on the Fitzwilliams.⁷

Another source of names was British history. It was a Sir John Hawkins who first introduced the slave trade to Britain, and it was from Bristol that the first British slave-ships set forth. Mrs. Elton, who was a Miss Hawkins of Bristol, is very quick to assure others

that she is “a friend of the abolition,” but I am sure that Jane Austen had the Sir John Hawkins connection in mind when she named Mr. Elton’s bride. Visits to art galleries familiarised Jane Austen with the work of the contemporary artist Henry Morland and many of the other names she used came from her reading of fiction and drama. The original version of *Lovers’ Vows* (the Kotzebue version, not Mrs. Inchbald’s) had in it a Bertram and a Fairfax.

Jane Austen also found names from within her own family and its associations. In 1813 she wrote to her brother Frank asking if she could use the names of two of his ships for her novel *Mansfield Park*. Frank was happy to comply with her request and so H.M.S. *Canopus* and H.M.S. *Elephant* are duly mentioned as being docked at Spithead near William Price’s ship *The Thrush*. As I mentioned earlier her six brothers had their names used in her novels, so did her father, most of her sisters-in-law and almost every single one of her numerous nieces and nephews. Neighbours provided a supply of names too—one bossy, over-bearing woman who had lived near Godmersham, was a Lady Catherine Burghill. Jane Austen knew families with the surnames of Russell, Taylor, Evelyn, Middleton, Crawford, Osborne and Palmer. Her father’s parish register contained a William Collins and a Mary Bennett [*sic*].

Finally I would like to turn to *Sanditon* and look at whether or not Jane Austen’s art of naming takes “a new direction” in this unfinished work. There is no doubt that names continue to be a very important aspect of style, characterisation and plot. The story begins with a carriage accident which has only happened because of confusion over names. Mr. Parker, convinced he is in Willingden has ventured onto dangerous roads. Of course he is in Willingden, but it is not the right Willingden for his purpose. He should have been in Great Willingden or Willingden Abbots which “lies seven miles off,” but, had he not been confused over names, he would never have met the Heywoods and the story would have been forced to start in some other way.

When we look at the characters themselves, we find that Jane Austen has remained faithful to her policy of naming established country characters from her usual list of first names—Charlotte, Mary, Thomas, Edward and Harry all appear yet again. But *Sanditon* is a new place which consequently attracts rootless and fashionable characters, and this “newness” is reflected by a greater number of characters with more unusual first names—a hero called Sidney, and his brother Arthur, women called Diana, Esther, Letitia and Clara. These are all names which Jane Austen is using for the first time in her fiction and we know from this that she has now left her “three or four families in a country village” behind her.

Place names are very important in *Sanditon* and I have already discussed Mr. Parker's awareness of the vital importance of the fashionable naming of streets and houses. Because the town's position on the English coast is a large part of its attraction to visitors, we get more references to its placing than we do with the settings of the other novels, such as *Highbury*. References to *Brinstone* (a place name which always raises Mr. Parker's blood pressure), *Tunbridge Wells*, *Eastbourne*, *Worthing*, *Brighton* and *Hastings* all help to place *Sanditon* very securely on the maps of our imaginations. This is deliberate on Jane Austen's part because *Sanditon* itself is as important as any character within the novel. I conclude that while *Sanditon* is a new direction in setting and theme for Jane Austen, her naming continues to fulfil the same structural needs and it continues to reflect fashion and assist characterisation. Naming in this unfinished novel is still about social, financial and familial influence and names continue to reveal the dynamic interplay of these forces. The art of naming remains, in this last work, a vital part of her fiction.

It is sad that Jane Austen never lived to see Oscar Wilde's masterpiece *The Importance of being Earnest*, a play which revolves around the power of a name. Its two heroines are both desperate to marry men named Earnest because "there is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence." I think Jane Austen would have enjoyed Gwendolen's denunciation of the name Jack—"there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. Besides Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a John!" When one thinks of John Thorpe, John Yates and John Willoughby, one can only agree. Wilde (whose full name, Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wills Wilde, must be one of the most wonderful in literature) undoubtedly shared Jane Austen's interest in names.

Other novelists have shared her fascination, but few have used the power of a name with such subtlety. Trollope, with his Mr. Quiverful, Mrs. Proudie, Dr. Fillgrave and a lawyer called Haphazard, is far more lumbering and intrusive in his naming techniques. Dickens too can be clumsy with his Steerforth and Gradgrind, as can Thackeray with Crawley, Becky Sharp and Lord Steyne. Such names jump off the page and hit the reader with their obviousness. This is never the case with Jane Austen's art of naming. In her novels, names are handled with the same delicate care, the same discretion and the same cleverness with which she chose every word in her writing.

As a young girl Jane Austen wrote three mock marriage entries in her father's parish register and these imaginary lovers cover the whole gamut of her naming repertoire. The Steventon register re-

corded first the announcing of the banns of marriage between Henry Frederic Howard Fitzwilliam of London and Jane Austen of Steventon, but something must have happened to this imaginary lover, for soon afterwards Jane recorded herself as actually wedding Edmund Arthur William Mortimer Esquire of Liverpool. Perhaps owning such a grandiose title proved to be too much for Mr. Mortimer, for his "wife" went for something much simpler in her next marital venture. The next entry announces the solemnizing of a marriage between Jack Smith and Jane Smith late Austen, in the presence of two witnesses called Jack Smith and Jane Smith. What fun Jane Austen must have had inventing these marriages! There is no doubt that her interest in names was with her at this early age and never left her—from the juvenilia to *Sanditon* it is an integral and fascinating part of her genius.

"What's in a name?" asks Miss Capulet of Verona. Romeo, from the depths of the garden, ought really to have called out to her, "Go and ask Miss Austen."

NOTES

All quotations from the novels of Jane Austen are from R. W. Chapman, ed. *The Novels of Jane Austen* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956).

- ¹ *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 288, Letter 115.
- ² The information about the spelling of Ann(e) comes from Leslie Dunkling and William Gosling, *The Everyman's Dictionary of First Names* (London: Everyman, 1983).
- ³ The information about "Fitz" being used for royal bastards comes from James Pennethorne Hughes, *How You Got Your Name* (London: Phoenix House, 1959).
- ⁴ *Jane Austen's Letters*, p. 10, Letter 6.
- ⁵ The name Fanny is an abbreviated form of Frances and therefore a nickname, but I am not counting it as such in this paper because she is never referred to as Frances in the novel.
- ⁶ The information about the D'Arcy family and the Fitzwilliam family comes from Reeta Sahney, *Jane Austen's Heroes and Other Male Characters* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1990).
- ⁷ The information from *The Peerage of England* is taken from Reeta Sahney, *Jane Austen's Heroes and Other Male Characters*.