

## **A Rose by Any Other: Reflowering First Names in Jane Austen's Literature**

Amanda Biederman  
English Department  
Salisbury University  
1101 Camden Avenue  
Salisbury, Maryland 21801 USA

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lucy Morrison

### **Abstract**

By repeating names across her novels, Jane Austen draws connections between seemingly unrelated characters that can then be studied further through their etymology, as well as their Biblical and historical connotations. Austen fundamentally warps her readers' impressions of similarly named characters by modifying their situations in life as well as her use of narrative voice. Austen's subtle connections across her texts display her power to warp her readers' impressions of her characters, using her narrative voice to completely shift their perspective, and thus challenging her readers to go beyond fixed character interpretation. Elizabeth Elliot and Elizabeth Bennet seem to possess completely different temperaments, yet their family situations and sense of pride reveal they are very similar. Elizabeths are associated with strength and power, but also with the failure to fulfill the role of an older sister. Mary Bennet, Mary Musgrove and Mary Crawford are forced to surrender their own best interests so that they can each assume a woman's proper place in society. Austen uses Marys to critique gender expectations, arguing that society's pressure can negatively influence a woman's goals for her life. Catherine Morland and Catherine Bennet hold vastly different senses of morality. However, they are both curious and impressionable, and they both tend to hold an overly romanticized view of the world. A Catherine is moldable, and is therefore drastically affected by the level of parental guidance she receives. Jane Bennet and Jane Fairfax are very similar characters; both are patient, caring and beautiful, and both are ultimately rewarded for their kindness. In the eyes of the narrator, Austen's Janes appear flawless. Austen's name choices have been noted by others; however, the name-parallel analysis I undertake has not previously been studied in such depth.

**Keywords:** Jane Austen, Names, Perspectives

### **1. Introduction**

Jane Austen left a legacy of six novels filled with the stories of more than 200 diverse and memorable characters, but she appears to have quickly run out of names for them. Austen frequently reuses names within and between her works. In *Jane Austen and Names*, Maggie Lane argues that although some of these identically-named characters share basic similarities, they are generally completely unrelated in personality and literary significance.<sup>1</sup> However, I propose that many of Austen's name repeats are deliberate and meaningful, even between certain characters that seem to share little in common. Austen connects her characters by recycling their names, illuminating several unifying themes on relationships and personal identity. This analysis focuses on four female names and four male names. Some of these character sets appear dissimilar on a first read; however, they are intricately connected in subtle ways that reveal Austen's central themes. Austen effectively recreates the same characters within genders, connecting them by their names. These parallels are distinct between genders but intricately related through their common themes. It is from these name pairings that Austen illuminates four central philosophies on relationships

and personal identity: She is calling her readers of both genders to marry for love, to be independent, to stay true to their moral values, and to remain committed to their families.

## 2. Mary and Charles – Marriage, Love and the Social Norm

### 2.1 Mary Bennet, Mary Crawford, Mary Musgrove

Austen's Marys and Charleses come from a wide range of backgrounds and temperaments, but are similar in their surrenders to the social norm by marrying for someone else's satisfaction, rather than for love. They represent the pressure that all Regency members felt to marry into wealthy families. Karin Jackson argues marriage is a central theme in Austen's novels because marriage was a central part of Regency life: "Society coalesces around the well-matched couple."<sup>2</sup> Thus the theme of marriage encompasses a wide range of characters.

Austen's Marys do not appear closely related at a first glance. Mary Bennet spends her time studying morality; Mary Crawford is a rude and immoral woman who pursues a relationship with a man whose moral nature she never truly accepts; Mary Musgrove rushes into marriage for which she is not prepared to gain her father's approval. Lane says Austen used this name for wide range of women because the name was so commonly used and held a "prominence in reality"<sup>1</sup>. In addition to their common name, many of Austen's Marys experience a dilemma that was universal to nearly all Regency women: the pressure to marry a man of consequence.

Austen's Marys are a representation of the pressure women felt to establish their place in society. Mary Crawford and Mary Musgrove both pursue marriage. Austen's Marys strive for profitable marriages because, as women, they have few other options. Mary Bennet is an exception to the rule, and she goes largely unnoticed by men "in consequence of being the only plain one in the family."<sup>3</sup> Mary Burgan argues Mary Bennet uses music and accomplishment as an alternative method of earning recognition, as an indicator of "the extent to which musical accomplishment could be part of a young woman's dowry and public identity."<sup>4</sup> Mary Bennet seems independent from the influence of marriage; however, the skills she works hard to achieve are effectively the attributes that make a woman desirable for marriage: basic reading, penmanship, history, art and domestic skills.<sup>5</sup> Mary Bennet works to obtain basic, non-comprehensive skills that make her into the ideal woman, effectively, the ideal wife. Although she does not marry, Mary is a product of the marriage-based Regency culture.

Austen uses Marys to critique the expectations society places on women, demonstrating that the pressure can compromise their sense of reason. Mary Bennet tends to regurgitate what she reads, and she is not artistically talented<sup>6</sup>. Mary makes a fool of herself. Mary Musgrove pursues a role in life that does not suit her temperament, which negatively impacts her children. She frequently pushes childcare onto her older sister, claiming that she herself is "more unfit than anybody else to be about the child."<sup>7</sup> Twenty three-year-old Mary Musgrove is not prepared to be a mother. Mary Crawford compromises her happiness by pursuing Edmund. Joseph Duffy explains that Austen uses Mary and Edmund's relationship to examine society's institution of marriage: "Whatever their tempers may be, however they are educated...men and women must marry although they need not and probably will not fall in love."<sup>8</sup> Mary Crawford feels the pressure to marry as soon as possible, so she decides she will marry Edmund before she really knows who he is.

A Mary's life has been instilled in her by those around her, and she follows a set path without questioning whether her goals truly suit her temperament. Because women are forbidden from being self-sufficient, Marys are pushed by society into the security of money and marriage. Thus, they are unable to reach true independence.

### 2.2 Charles Bingley, Charles Musgrove

Unlike her Marys, Austen's Charleses hold a measure of control over their lives. As men, they do not rely on marriage for social and financial security. Ironically, the name Charles means "free man"<sup>9</sup> and although Charleses are more free than Marys, they are still tethered to the expectations of Regency culture. For men, marriage was a fulfillment of a duty to society.

Charles Bingley, whom Sir William describes as "wonderfully handsome [and] extremely agreeable," quickly gains the neighborhood's approval.<sup>10</sup> James Sherry says Charles Bingley seems to stand as the epitome of "everything a sociable man could be."<sup>11</sup> Charles Musgrove is similarly pleasant. He is "the eldest son of a man, whose landed property and general importance were second in that country, only to Sir Walter's, and of good character and appearance."<sup>12</sup>

Both Charleses have fallen in love with a woman who matches their temperaments and dispositions. However, both are willing to abandon their feelings and tolerate another woman out of duty. Bingley has fallen in love with Jane Bennet. Even after only a fortnight, Elizabeth and Charlotte cannot overlook their undeniable attraction: “It was generally evident whenever they met, that he *did* admire her and to *her* it was equally evident that Jane was yielding to the preference.”<sup>13</sup> While many of Austen’s character relationships are based on wealth, the affection between Jane and Bingley seems genuine. Charles Musgrove’s affection for Anne Elliot seems comparably sincere. Anne turns him down, preventing a pairing that Austen suggests would “have given more consequence to his character, and more usefulness, rationality, and elegance to his habits and pursuits.”<sup>14</sup> Anne and Mary both possess the same family connections, yet he would have been happier with Anne. His affection seems to transcend the social hierarchy of marriage.

Yet both men are willing to sacrifice their happiness by following society’s expectations and marrying a more proper woman of consequence. Charles, despite having formed a relationship with Jane, abruptly leaves town under the influence of his sister. Sherry says that “Bingley’s sisters...are cast in the role of the ‘blocking society,’ holding out for wealth and connections against true love.”<sup>15</sup> Caroline does everything in her power to prevent him from forming a relationship with Jane, who is of lower class. Darcy tells Elizabeth that “To convince him, therefore, that he had deceived himself [of his feelings for Jane], was no very difficult point. To persuade him against returning into Hertfordshire... was scarcely the work of a moment.”<sup>16</sup> Bingley has allowed his family and friends to assume the influential role of society and power to reject an unprofitable, but affectionate marriage.

Charles Musgrove is initially prevented from love by rejection. He proposes to Anne, who turns him down. Charles chooses to marry her sister not because he loves her, but because she comes from a wealthy family. The Musgroves actually form a model for this parallel, as two individuals who are not suited for a marriage together but have chosen to pursue the pairing because it fulfills a social obligation. Charles marries Mary because her name enhances his family’s status, and Mary marries Charles because her wealth is useless to her without a marriage attached to it. Mary and Charles have fulfilled their obligation to society but are somewhat discontent: “Though there was very often a little disagreement...they might pass for a happy couple. They were always perfectly agreed in the want of more money, and a strong inclination for a handsome present from his father.”<sup>17</sup> This statement is the central point of Austen’s commentary on Regency marriage.

Austen, who famously turned down a marriage proposal, maintained her belief in affection between spouses. She urged her niece not to marry for social convenience, stating that “Anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection.”<sup>18</sup> Austen works her criticisms of wealth-based marriage into her novels by drawing parallels between critical characters, whose fates illuminate her beliefs on the issue. By contrasting Bingley’s unconventional, but happy marriage with Musgrove’s unsatisfying and predictable pairing, Austen is calling her readers to look beyond societal expectations and consider their own wishes in regards to life and love.

### 3. Catherine and William – Influence and Independence

#### 3.1 Catherine Morland, Catherine Bennet

Like her Marys and Charleses, Austen’s Catherines and Williams are weak characters; they mold their lives around the influence of others. Rather than change their lives to fit society, Catherines and Williams operate primarily through imitation of authoritative individuals. Austen’s Catherines, who appear as the second youngest Bennet sister and the self-proclaimed heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, are naïve and blind to the reality of love and life. A Catherine cannot see the world as it is because she is blocked by her own desire to imitate what she views as desirable.

Catherine “Kitty” Bennet creates an identity in her younger sister Lydia’s troublemaking shadow. She is flirtatious and rebellious, spying on soldier George Wickham from her window. Kitty fails to find true love because she is silly, and the men she finds most attractive are only interested in lust. Kitty’s parents are forced to be strict, limiting her interactions in society. It is only under strict parental guidance that Kitty is able to develop a sense of morality and good behavior.

Catherine Morland seems to stand at a polar opposite to Kitty, because she tries to be a moral heroine. Yet Catherine falls swiftly under John Thorpe’s corruptive influence. It is not until she is guided by her mother that she realizes the impropriety of her actions and seeks to better herself. Blinded by the alluring romance of fiction, Catherine Morland cannot reach a state of morality without the guidance of her elders.

Both women embody the meaning of their name, “she who is pure.”<sup>19</sup> Catherine Morland is sweet-tempered and kind-hearted. Yet Catherine is extremely naïve. Although Catherine does not truly trust Isabella’s brother and finds

his carefree manner disagreeable, she still compromises her morality to please him. Catherine is reluctant to reject John Thorpe because she insists on trying to find a sense of decency within him, even after it becomes evident that he is crude and dishonorable.

Conversely, Kitty is silly and thinks only of herself. However, like Catherine Morland, Kitty has seen little of the world. Kitty has never traveled far from her home, generally venturing only a few miles to shop, call on her aunt and flirt with the regiment. Kitty's limited life experience has made her vulnerable to men; given the chance, she would have fallen into the same disgrace as her younger sister. Yet the fact that Kitty is not invited to Brighton is what saves her from this disgrace, maintaining her purity. Catherine Morland and Kitty Bennet both possess the same temperament and ignorance, yet it is the Bennets' poor parenting that causes Kitty to lack a sense of morality. It is only under strict parental care that these young women are able to imitate the model of proper moral behavior.

### 3.2 William Collins, William Price

Austen's Williams are similarly dependent on their external environment, molding their character and personalities around figures of authority. This parallel is evident through William Collins. Collins approaches the Bennets with the good intention of helping them stay in their home after Mr. Bennet's death. He is a member of the clergy, which Austen seems to admire in many of her other characters. However, Collins is portrayed as pompous and silly. Before long, it is evident that Collins has become excessively proud under the influence of his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. From his first letter, the Bennets can see the deep respect he holds for her: "Mr. Collins was very eloquent in her praise. The subject elevated him to more than usual solemnity of manner."<sup>20</sup>

Collins has grown up with a sensible father, who endowed him with humility. However, he is weak. Collins is so flattered by Lady Catherine's attention that he naturally begins to imitate her, and blindly takes her advice: "The respect which he felt for her high rank, and his veneration for her as his patroness...made him altogether a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility"<sup>21</sup>.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh has assumed a pseudo-parental role in William Collins' adult life. This relationship further connects Austen's Williams to her Catherines. Like her younger counterparts, the proud and wealthy Lady Catherine is unable to make clear judgments; she is blinded by her own pride. Lady Catherine cannot accept the idea of her nephew marrying someone of inferior class. The 'pure' Lady Catherine resists connections to a lower class, failing to consider her nephew's happiness.

Austen also draws parallels between William Collins and William Price. Both Williams have been favored in their families through chance fate: William Price is the favorite child, while an ignored young Fanny is sent away from home; William Collins is the heir to the Bennets' assets, and the family will be forced out of their home upon Mr. Bennets' death. Both Williams have been absent for most of the heroine's life, although this absence is perceived differently in the novels. Fanny misses her brother, but continued to love him "better than anybody in the world."<sup>22</sup> While the rest of the Prices lose contact with Fanny entirely, she and William continue to exchange letters.

William Collins, though a cousin of the Bennets, has not kept in contact with them. While Fanny continues to hold deep affection for her brother, the Bennets resent Collins. Both Price and Collins have 'stolen' something from their relatives; William Price holds his mother's affection and is allowed to remain at home. William Collins will inherit the Bennets' money upon Mr. Bennet's death, assuming a position at their home. The perception of Austen's Williams stems not from their characters, but how they are perceived.

Both men try to be honorable by returning to their families: William Price returns to visit Fanny and brings her home under Sir Thomas' suggestion. Mr. Collins intends to rekindle his relationship with the Bennets and has the opportunity to become redeemable in Mrs. Bennets' eyes: "Mr. Collins' letter had done away much of her ill-will."<sup>23</sup> However, Collins reflects Lady Catherine, and cannot be the honorable man he attempts to become.

Like Collins, William Price is a product of his environment. While Catherines are primarily affected by their parents, Williams have allowed themselves to become influenced by authoritative figures within their professions. William Price chooses to join the navy. The military is based on courage and honor, and, at least in Fanny's mind, William is just that. Fanny's relatives cannot help but notice his "clear, simple spirited details [of his journeys] with full satisfaction, seeing in them the proof of good principles, professional knowledge, energy, courage, and cheerfulness."<sup>24</sup>

William Price and William Collins are both reflections of the influence of their superiors. In a desire to fulfill a certain role, they have molded themselves to imitate what they most admire. However, William Price possesses better discretion in choosing his model for behavior and is thus viewed as a strong, moral character. Ultimately, all of Austen's Williams and Catherines look to others in forming their own identities.

## 4. Jane and Edward/Edmund – Adversity and Honor

### 4.1 Jane Bennet, Jane Fairfax

While Catherine and Williams base their identity on others, Austen's Janes and "Eds" stay true to their personal convictions, even after facing a life of unfavorable circumstances. After being abandoned by Charles Bingley, Jane Bennet sinks into a deep depression, but eventually wins him back and becomes his wife. Jane Fairfax ultimately knows she must pursue a position as a governess, yet accepts her fate with dignity and resolve, with only her "own good understanding to remind her that all this [luxury] might soon be over"<sup>25</sup>. However, by catching the romantic interests of Frank Churchill, Jane is able to reverse her fate of poverty. Both Janes have resigned themselves to an unfavorable future, but manage to escape it at the last minute; they are ultimately rewarded for their kindness and patience.

Jane Bennet and Jane Fairfax are both reserved and dignified. Because Jane Fairfax is not outspoken, Emma believes her to be proud and removed. Emma seems to feel she is constantly compared to the accomplished and well-behaved Jane, and believes that the young woman's quiet manner means she must be hiding something: "She was, besides, so cold, so callous! There was no getting at her real opinion. Wrapped up in a cloak of politeness, she seemed determined to hazard nothing. She was disgustingly, was suspiciously reserved."<sup>26</sup> Emma seems to view Jane's reserve as a personal snub, while others recognize it as a simple token of her politeness. She becomes frustrated when she suspects Jane's romance with Mr. Dixon, but cannot obtain the desired information.

Jane Bennet is portrayed as similarly reserved in her romantic feelings, although her character is evaluated through the eyes of her closest sister, Lizzy, rather than through those of a jealous rival. Jane Bennet seems to confuse those around her; Darcy and Charlotte mistake Jane's quietness for a lack of feeling. It is Lizzy who recognizes that this reserve is simply a part of Jane's natural disposition: "[Elizabeth] considered with pleasure that [Jane's love for Bingley] was not likely to be discovered by the world in general, since Jane united, with great strength of feeling, a composure of temper and a uniform cheerfulness of manner which would guard her from the suspicions of the impertinent"<sup>27</sup>. Only Elizabeth, who tells Jane, "All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in your life"<sup>28</sup> understands Jane's nature. Unlike many of Austen's outspoken characters who are prone to casual gossip, Janes avoid discussing their personal lives.

Another similarity between Austen's two Janes is the manner in which they are perceived by their acquaintances. Both Miss Bennet and Miss Fairfax tend to socialize with higher-class women, speak appraisingly of them but view them with an air of arrogance. Ultimately, these acquaintances are proven to be superficial and insincere. Jane Bennet is greatly admired by her acquaintances: "Mrs. Hurst and [Caroline]...admired her and liked her, and pronounced her to be a sweet girl."<sup>29</sup> However, Caroline eventually snubs Jane and ends the friendship. It is clear that although Caroline is initially polite to Miss Bennet, she continues to view herself as superior.

In a similar manner, Jane Fairfax is universally adored by Emma's neighbors. They eagerly await her letters and consistently speak of her with affection. However, Jane seems to receive little actual respect from them, as it seems most view her primarily with pity. Mr. Knightly tells Emma she should be kinder to Jane because "she is a sort of elegant creature that one cannot keep one's eyes from. I am always watching her to admire, and I do pity her from my heart."<sup>30</sup> It is also notable that Emma's neighbors constantly worry over Jane's health, an attitude which parallels the attention that Jane Bennet received when she became ill after a dinner party at Netherfield, as she is kept in bed there until she recovers, left under the care of her devoted friends.

Out of over 200 characters, these are the only two to whom Austen grants her own name. Lane says Austen "seems to have used her own name for fictional characters without identifying with them in any way," noting that Austen is more closely associated with Elizabeth Bennet.<sup>31</sup> Yet Austen seems to have chosen their name for a reason. Herbert Barry notes that the Janes' beauty, kindness, and "feeling of inferiority" reflect Austen's desire to live through them.<sup>32</sup> Jane means "God is gracious"<sup>33</sup> and Austen, the Creator of her own writing, has been gracious to these characters. If the narrator looks upon a character with no criticism, the two have stemmed from the same mindset. Austen grants her Janes a special regard that is not found in most of her other characters.

### 4.2 Edward Ferrars, Edmund Bertram

Austen's similarly named Edward Ferrars and Edmund Bertram serve as the male counterparts to her honorable Janes. Like the Janes, these two men have found themselves caught in seemingly hopeless situations. While the Janes lack marriage prospects, Edmund and Edward both seem destined to marry immoral and dishonest women. Edmund has secretly entered into a long engagement with the social-climbing Lucy Steele, whom he no longer

loves; and Edward has begun to enter into a relationship with Mary Crawford, who does not respect his profession or moral values.

Furthermore, both of these men have been overlooked by their families. Edward is the firstborn, but easily replaceable in the eyes of his mother, who prefers his younger brother. Edward is largely overlooked because of his reserve: "But Edward had no turn for great men or barouches. All his wishes centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life. Fortunately he had a younger brother who was more promising."<sup>34</sup> While Edward is the firstborn, but inferior son, Edmund is literally the second son. He is denied the family fortune, which is destined to be passed onto his older, but less responsible brother Tom. Both of these young men are the most reasonable young men in their household, but are largely disregarded in favor of their louder, more reckless counterparts.

Like the Janes, Edward is very reserved in his feelings. The tender and emotional Marianne cannot understand Edward, because he hides his emotions: "Edward is very amiable, and I love him tenderly. But...his eyes want all that spirit, that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence...how spiritless, how tame was Edward's manner in reading to us last night!"<sup>35</sup> Although the sensible Elinor can still sense Edward's emotion, she does not quite understand him, or his love for her, because it is so repressed. Like the Janes, both Edward and Edmund remain honorable, despite their less than ideal situations. Edward clearly possesses feelings for Elinor Dashwood, but remains reserved around her to prevent dishonoring his intended wife. He refuses to break his engagement, and tells Elinor that he will marry Lucy, despite the fact that marrying her will cause his mother to disown him. In the end, Lucy proves her own dishonor by leaving Edward for his brother. This leaves Edward free to be with Elinor. This determination to keep an engagement is similar to the Charles' resignation to marry outside of love; however, the difference lies in their motivations toward this act. The Charleses will marry to satisfy society; Edward will marry to fulfill his own moral standard.

Edmund is not engaged; however, he does remain true to his own morals in a corrupted household. When Fanny, who is clearly uncomfortable in the new house, is disregarded by the rest of the family, Edmund replaces her brother as her companion. He goes on to remain close with her into her adulthood, remaining her only close confidant at Mansfield. Edmund begins to falter from his moral compass under the influence of Mary Crawford. However, his intentions remain pure, and he continues to do what he believes is right, attempting to see goodness in every person. However, he does not falter from his resolved dedication to the church. Edmund recognizes Mary's immorality and realizes his love for Fanny. Interestingly, the women in this parallel are rewarded with love and riches, while the men are simply rewarded with love. However, as men, the Eds were able to pursue professions to earn their wealth. Notably, both men become clergymen and like Edmund, Edward does not seem to mind his fate. Conversely, Jane Fairfax and Jane Bennet marry influential men who will never need to work for a living. Regency women were completely dependent on marriage for wealth, so it makes sense that Austen would reward her Janes in this manner, while the hardworking Eds do not seem to mind their financial fates.

## **5. Elizabeth and John - A Failure to Serve**

### **5.1 Elizabeth Bennet, Elizabeth Elliot**

Elizabeths and Johns serve as a model of selfishness and family disloyalty. For Elizabeth "Lizzy" Bennet, this characterization is unconventional. Lizzy is perhaps one of the most beloved literary figures, and there seems to be little connection between Lizzy and Elizabeth Elliot, the cold eldest sister of Anne Elliot. This Elizabeth is proud and looks upon her sister with disdain. Tess O'Toole contrasts the two sisters, arguing that Elizabeth Elliot goes against Austen's theme of sisterly affection: "Anne Elliot is denied the sort of sisterly companionship enjoyed by Jane and Elizabeth Bennet...both Austen's narrator and Lady Russell are appalled by Elizabeth's preference of Mrs. Clay over her own sister."<sup>36</sup> The Elizabeths appear to stand in direct contrast to one another.

Yet it is through their common name that Austen connects these characters. The name Elizabeth has long been regarded as a name connected to wealth, power and authority with Elizabeth Tudor, the Queen of England in the sixteenth century. The meaning behind the name "Elizabeth" even has powerful connotations; it means "oath of God."<sup>37</sup> An Elizabeth holds strong connections with a higher power, and Austen's Elizabeths are all closely connected to the most powerful "being" of their everyday lives, the head of the family. Both Elizabeths have strong relationships with their fathers. When speaking about his daughters' marriage prospects, Mr. Bennet declares that "They are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of a quickness than her sisters."<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Bennet and her father hold each other as anchors for survival in a chaotic family.

Like Mr. Bennet, Sir Walter Elliot looks down on most of his family. He replaces his deceased wife with Elizabeth, “to all that was possible, of her mother’s rights and consequence; and being very handsome, and very like himself, her influence had always been great, and they had gone on together most happily.”<sup>39</sup> Sir Walter dismisses his other daughters as inferior: “Mary had acquired a little artificial importance, by becoming Mrs. Charles Musgrove, but Anne...was nobody with either father or sister.”<sup>40</sup> By connecting herself to the authoritative figure in her life, Elizabeth Elliot has isolated herself from the rest of her family.

In a way, this comparison shines a somewhat negative light on Lizzy Bennet. She is the central heroine in *Pride and Prejudice*, so her relationship with her father seems endearing upon a superficial analysis. However, Anne is the main character in *Persuasion*, and thus the negative effects of parental favoritism are evident, as she is “neglected and ill-used” by her family.<sup>41</sup> By cherishing their relationship too highly, Lizzy and Mr. Bennet have in a sense neglected their family, particularly in regards to the youngest Bennet sisters. Throughout the book, Lizzy does not display a particular closeness with Mary, Kitty or Lydia; Austen almost never records any intimate discourse between them. When her youngest sister leaves to follow the regiment, Lizzie does express concern but does not actively try to warn her about the consequences. Like Anne, Lydia is neglected by an Elizabeth, left to look after herself.

## 5.2 John Dashwood, John Middleton

Two of Austen’s Johns from *Sense and Sensibility* can be compared to her Elizabeths in their failure as family members, although their means are accomplished in a slightly different manner. John Dashwood, the half-brother of Elinor and Marianne and “not an ill-disposed young man,”<sup>42</sup> proceeds after his father’s death with the intention of keeping his extended family in comfort and wealth for the rest of their lives. Yet he ends up virtually turning them out of their home and, his wife quickly talks him into abandoning them. The narrator comments that “had he married a more amiable woman, he might have been still more respectable than he was.”<sup>43</sup> John’s lack of support forces the small family to rely on another relative, who also happens to be named John, for financial support. In this sense, these two Johns stand as foils of one another; two men who are both inclined to be generous.

John Dashwood intends to set his half-sisters up with a regular sum of three thousand pounds. When Dashwood’s wife has talked him out of supporting the women, they move to live on John Middleton’s property. Similarly, Sir John welcomes them with open arms, possibly at the slight reluctance of his wife, Lady Middleton. Middleton never fails as a generous host; however, it becomes clear that these men are controlled by their wives. Like Lizzie, who is more concerned with her feelings for Darcy than the well-being of her younger sisters, and Elizabeth Elliot, who puts her friends above her sister,

Johns have formed an unfortunate relationship that will forever prevent them, at least in Dashwood’s case, from being kind and generous. By giving them the common name of John, Austen may be suggesting that these men effectively possess the same temperament, but have simply happened to differ in chance circumstances. Like Elizabeths, both Johns greet their family with good intentions, but may be easily inclined to fail due to a tie with another, more powerful family member.

## 6. Conclusion

Deliberate and meaningful, Austen’s choices within her literature are more than they might appear on a superficial reading. Her deceptively simple love stories employ underlying symbolism to give deeper meaning to her works. In addition to highlighting central themes, Austen creates an intricate network of characters that shed light on the complexities of human nature. This is why it is so important to analyze the significance of her characters’ names; they were not randomly chosen. Austen’s repeated names draw connections across her books. In this sense it might appear that Austen writes the same characters into her novels over and over again. Yet Austen’s system is more complex than simple repetition. She seems to recreate the essence of certain characters across her work, inspiring the comparable personalities and parallel lives. Often, Austen differentiates her paralleled characters primarily through the perspective in which they are presented. A cross-analysis provides a new perspective on her inspired themes. For instance, connecting the two Elizabeths provides insight into Lizzy Bennet’s flaws, but could also redeem Elizabeth Elliot, suggesting that the story could have seemed different had Anne’s older sister been chosen as *Persuasion*’s main heroine. By manipulating the narrative voice, Austen creates a range of different characters through her parallelism. Her ability to completely change a character simply by switching the perspective sheds light on human nature, suggesting that one individual can simultaneously be perceived as good, immoral, kind, cruel, inappropriate

and proper, because there are so many individual perspectives within humankind. She is calling her readers, like a Catherine, to step away from their own limited perspectives of the world and recognize that there is another way to analyze what they believe to be fundamentally true. Austen uses her repeated characters to show that many people who seem different on a first judgment can be connected by common themes on life, love and personal identity.

## 7. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Lucy Morrison for her endless support in helping me with this project and encouraging me to expand my research beyond the assignment for her semester-long honors class.

## 8. References

1. Lane, Maggie. *Jane Austen and Names*. Bristol: Blaise Books, 2002. 12. Print.
2. Jackson, Karin. "The Dilemma in *Emma*: Moral, Ethical and Spiritual Values." *Persuasions On-Line* 21.2(2002): n. pag. *JASNA*. n. pag. Web. 27 Oct. 2012.
3. Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Ria Press, 2012. 62. Kindle file. Web. 30 May 2012.
4. Burgan, Mary. "Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction." *Victorian Studies* 30.1 (1986): 51-76. *JSTOR*. 60. Web. 15 Sept. 2012.
5. Swords, Barbara. "Woman's Place in Jane Austen's England." *Jane Austen Society of North America* 10 (1988): 79-80. Web.
6. Burgan, 60.
7. Austen, Jane. *Persuasion*. Ria Press, 2012. 37. Kindle file. Web. 30 May 2012.
8. Duffy, Joseph M. "Moral Integrity and Moral Anarchy in *Mansfield Park*." *English Literary History* 23.1(1956): 81. *JSTOR*. Web. 6 Nov. 2012.
9. Arthur, William. *An Etymological Dictionary of Family and Christian names*. New York: Sheldon, Blakeman & Co., 1857. 94. Print.
10. Austen, *Pride* 612.
11. Sherry, James. "Pride and Prejudice: The Limits of Society." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 19.4 (1979): 612. *JSTOR*. Web. 08 April 2013.
12. Austen, *Persuasion* 18.
13. Austen, *Pride* 28.
14. Austen, *Persuasion* 28.
15. Sherry, 614.
16. Austen, *Pride* 178.
17. Austen, *Persuasion* 28.
18. Woolsey, Sarah Chauncey. *Letters of Jane Austen*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1892. 278. Print.
19. Arthur, 96.
20. Austen, *Pride* 68.
21. Austen, *Pride* 71.
22. Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*. Ria Press, 2012. Kindle file. 21. Web. 30 May 2012.
23. Austen, *Pride* 65.
24. Austen, *Mansfield* 243.
25. Austen, Jane. *Emma*. Ria Press, 2012. Kindle file. 138. Web. 30 May 2012.
26. Austen, *Emma* 142-43.
27. Austen, *Pride* 28.
28. Austen, *Pride* 22.
29. Austen, *Pride* 24.
30. Austen, *Emma* 135.
31. Lane, 68.
32. Barry, Herbert. "Inference of Personality Projected onto Fictional Characters Having an Author's First Name." *Psychological Reports* 89.3 (2001): 705-6. Print.
33. Arthur, 295.



34. Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. Ria Press, 2012. 195. Kindle file. Web. 30 May 2012.
35. Austen, *Sense* 211-24.
36. O'Toole, Tess. "Reconfiguring the Family in Persuasion." *Persuasions* 15 (1993): 200-6. *JASNA*. 200-06. Web. 27 Oct. 2012.
37. Arthur, 97.
38. Austen, *Pride* 11.
39. Austen, *Persuasion* 2.
40. Austen, *Persuasion* 3.
41. Austen, *Persuasion* 23.
42. Austen, *Sense* 35.
43. Austen, *Sense* 41.