



Wherefore Art Thou Juanita? The Life of a Spanish Name in Newfoundland

Ainsley Hawthorn

Independent Researcher

ans-names.pitt.edu

ISSN: 0027-7738 (print) 1756-2279 (web)

Vol. 70, Issue1, Winter 2022

DOI 10.5195/names.2022.2377



Articles in this journal are licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



This journal is published by [Pitt Open Library Publishing](https://pittopenlibrarypublishing.com/).

Abstract

The name *Juanita* should have been an unlikely candidate for popularity in a place like Newfoundland, where only 0.1% of the population of half a million speaks Spanish as a mother tongue and 0.4% identifies as having Spanish, Latin American, Central American, or South American ethnic origins. Nonetheless, the name is a well-established member of the Newfoundland onomasticon. Drawing on archival research, census data, and other primary source materials, this study seeks to uncover how *Juanita* was introduced to Newfoundland and what determinants precipitated its widespread acceptance. The author proposes that the early adopters of *Juanita* were inspired by a nineteenth-century ballad of the same name and that *Juanita* was ripe for incorporation into the Newfoundland onomasticon because of its phonetic resemblance to girls' names in already common use in the region, including *Anita*, *Rita*, and *Zita*. As a result, *Juanita* had the benefit of novelty, an increasingly important factor in name choice in English-speaking countries in the latter half of the nineteenth century, balanced by a familiarity, leading to what Berger and colleagues (2012) call "optimal innovation."

Keywords: anthroponymy, given names, Newfoundland, Labrador, Spanish, English, intercultural studies

Introduction

Juanita is a popular woman's name in Spanish-speaking communities the world over. Originally a hypocoristic of *Juana*,¹ the feminine form of *John*, the charming *Juanita* eventually became a given name in its own right. Less clear is how this name gained a foothold in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador, where only 0.1% of the population of half a million speaks Spanish as a mother tongue² and 0.4% identifies as having Spanish, Latin American, Central American, or South American ethnic origins.³ Despite the small percentage of residents with a Latin background, there are currently 136 *Juanitas* listed in the phone directory for Newfoundland and Labrador.⁴ By way of comparison, there are a similar number of listings for the Greek name *Andrea* (135), the Welsh name *Megan/Meghan/Meagan* (135), and the English name *Wendy* (133), all of which are commonly given to girls in English-speaking communities.

The prevalence of *Juanita* in this region is not a recent development. The name was firmly established on the island of Newfoundland, then a British dominion, by 1945, when 70 *Juanitas* were enumerated in the census conducted that year ("Newfoundland Census, 1945").⁵ The eldest of these, *Juanita Wiseman* of Musgravetown, was born in 1902, but the name had grown in popularity over time. The 1945 census listed 2 *Juanitas* born in the 1900s, 3 in the 1910s, 11 in the 1920s, 26 in the 1930s, and 28 in the 1940s, this last decade being only half over at the time of the census. Earlier censuses conducted on the island confirm that the increase in the incidence of this name was not a result of mortality. The 1935 census recorded 23 *Juanitas* and the 1921 census only 5 ("Newfoundland Census, 1935"; "Newfoundland Census, 1921").

Drawing on archival research, census data, and other primary source materials, this study tracks the introduction of the name *Juanita* into the Newfoundland onomasticon and examines its usage on the island in the first half of the twentieth century. Based on the lack of evidence for substantial influence from Spanish speakers, the timing of the name's debut, the broad geographic, ethnic, and religious distribution of its early usage, and contemporary developments in popular culture, I propose that the adoption of *Juanita* by Newfoundlanders was inspired by an English ballad of the same name published in 1853 and was predicated on the phonetic similarity of *Juanita* to girls' names already in use in the region.

Newfoundland's First *Juanitas*

The first *Juanita* attested in Newfoundland appears to be Emma *Juanita* Bradbury, who was born in Bay Roberts, on the north shore of Conception Bay on the island's Avalon Peninsula, on February 1, 1888, and baptized into the Church of England by the Rev. W.C. Shears on April 27 of the same year ("Newfoundland Vital Statistics, 1753-1893", vol. 40: 136, entry no. 2). The ethnicity of Emma *Juanita*'s parents, Joshua and Rachel Bradbury (née Parsons), is listed as English on the census of 1921 and their religion as Methodist ("Newfoundland Census, 1921", Harbour Grace: 279, entry nos. 26-27).

There is no evidence that any other member of Emma *Juanita*'s immediate family had a Spanish given name. Her parents have Biblical names – Joshua and Rachel – her four attested brothers were given English and Scottish names – William Stanley, born 1882; James, born 1884; Malcolm, born 1893; and Robert Parsons,

born 1895 – and her two attested sisters were given gemstone names – Pearl, born 1899; and Ruby, born 1904 (“Newfoundland Vital Statistics, 1753-1893”, vol. 40: 103, entry no. 11; 117, entry no. 4; “Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949”: certificate no. 62001-634463, entry no. 38; certificate no. 600041-660119, entry no. 31; “Newfoundland Census, 1921”, Harbour Grace: 279, entry nos. 28-29).

In the decade that followed, at least five other girls born in Newfoundland were named *Juanita*.⁶ Like Emma Juanita Bradbury, all have English surnames, making a linguistic or cultural basis for the appearance of *Juanita* in the dominion unlikely. There is no clear relationship amongst the families that might indicate direct transmission of the name from one to another, no shared surnames amongst the parents nor any apparent kinship ties. Neither do the families share a common faith: Emma Juanita Bradbury was born to Methodists, three of the other Juanitas to Anglicans, and one to Roman Catholics.⁷

The births occurred, furthermore, in four geographically discontinuous areas of the island. While Emma Juanita Bradbury was born in Conception Bay, located on the eastern side of Newfoundland, the next child, Mary Juanita Furneaux, was born in Twillingate, off the island’s northeastern coast. The following two girls were born in Fortune Bay, on the southeastern shore of Newfoundland, and the last two in Tilt Cove, on the Baie Verte Peninsula in the north-central region of the island.

Work in the fishery and other mobile trades would have taken at least some Newfoundland men of this period from one community to another – temporarily, if not permanently – and it’s possible that the name could have been transmitted between families in this way. Joshua Bradbury’s profession is noted as “planter” in the birth records of some of his children, and the census of 1921 indicates that by that date he was living off a private income (“Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949”: certificate no. 600041-660119, entry no. 31; “Newfoundland Census, 1921”, Harbour Grace: 279, entry no. 26). The designation “planter” indicates that Bradbury owned fishing premises or his own vessel (Poole 1993: 332). Through his work in the fishery, Bradbury may have travelled to or hired fishermen from other regions of Newfoundland. Jacob Fiander, father of one of the other early Juanitas, who lived in English Harbour West approximately 170 km from Bay Roberts as the crow flies, was a fisherman according to his daughter’s birth record (“Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949”: certificate no. 634464-639686, entry no. 15). The fathers of the infants born in Tilt Cove, a mining community, however, had more settled professions: miner and mining engineer (“Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949”: Delayed Births 1890-1913, Box 13-15; certificate no. 600041-660119, entry no. 23).

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, before *Juanita* began to rise significantly in popularity, the name recurred in two regions where it had first appeared during the late 1800s: Fortune Bay and Twillingate.⁸ Among these, there is one clear example of the name being reused within the same lineage, in the Hynes family of Bay L’Argent, Fortune Bay (“Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949”, Deaths 1911-1914, vol. 6: 454, entry no. 4; “Newfoundland Census, 1921”, Fortune-Hermitage: 39, entry no. 4). Apart from these two pockets of usage, however, there is no consistent pattern to the distribution of the name in Newfoundland during the 1900s and 1910s. Baby girls are dubbed *Juanita* in the Western (Curling), Central (Carmanville, Gander Bay), and Eastern (Catalina, Clarenville, Port Blandford, Sandy Cove) regions of the island.⁹ The available records do not attest to the name being used twice in any one community during this period. Further, the name is not exclusively associated with a single religious denomination but is equally popular amongst Anglicans, Catholics, and Methodists.¹⁰

In sum, despite the fact that *Juanita* was a foreign-language name and a new addition to the Newfoundland onomasticon, the relatively few instances of the name between 1888 and 1919 – on the order of one usage every 1.5 years – are widely dispersed throughout the population of the dominion. There is no indication that the name was introduced in one community and gradually spread outward from there; rather, it appears that families in various regions of the island began using the name independently of one another around this time. If there is no genetic relationship between these instances, how did Newfoundlanders across the island learn the name, and what inspired them to give it to their daughters?

In Newfoundland, *Juanita* clearly did not follow the same path of development as it did in the Spanish-speaking world, arising initially as a hypocoristic of *Juana*. Only one Juana is attested on the island prior to 1946: Juana Barnes, born ca. 1875 in the Trinity region, which is not one of the areas where the name *Juanita* first appears (“Newfoundland Census, 1945”, vols. 21-22: 92, entry 34).¹¹ Instead, *Juanita* appears to have been adopted wholesale with no antecedents.

Ports of Entry

Newfoundland’s seafaring culture offers one means by which the name could have reached the island. Newfoundland sailors could have met or heard of women named – or nicknamed – *Juanita* in Spanish or Latin American ports and brought the moniker back to their communities with them. Weighing against this possibility, however, is the fact that we don’t see the borrowing of other Spanish women’s names that were common at the turn of the twentieth century, like *Consuela*, *Esperanza*, *Francisca*, or *Pilar*. Certainly Newfoundland sailors visiting Spanish-speaking ports would have been exposed to these names as well. Why,

then, would a swath of different individuals have become enamoured of the name *Juanita* and none of these others? Moreover, if the name were adopted as a result of incidental exposure, how would all the families that used the name in Newfoundland at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century – or, alternatively, the priests and government officials who recorded the births – have known how to spell it correctly?

If the name was not brought to the dominion by Newfoundland sailors returning from abroad, it might, conversely, have been introduced by Spanish-speaking visitors to the island. There is evidence of Spanish and American ships named *Juanita* making their way in and out of St. John's harbour during the latter half of the nineteenth century (for instance, "Shipping Intelligence" 1853; "Marine List, Port St. John" 1856; "Shipping Intelligence" 1883; "Local and Other Items" 1889). Notably, however, none of the early uses of the name *Juanita* in Newfoundland occur in St. John's, as one would expect if the name were introduced by ships making port in that city. Furthermore, while the possibility that the name was heard by Newfoundland sailors abroad raises the question of how they would have known how to spell it, the possibility that Newfoundlanders read name on the hull of a ship in St. John's port or in the local shipping news raises the question of how they would have determined the correct pronunciation. Indeed, most living Juanitas in the province use an anglicized version of the Spanish phonology,¹² pronouncing the name with an initial syllable [wə] or [wɪ] rather than the initial [dʒu:ə] we might expect if the Newfoundland pronunciation were based solely on the spelling of the name, interpreted through the lens of English phonetics.

Finally, *Juanita* occurs in at least two items that were published in Newfoundland newspapers in the late nineteenth century, before the first recorded use of the name in the dominion. In 1881, *The Evening Telegram* (St. John's) reprinted a short piece from *The London Daily Telegraph* on a couple in Cabaceiras, Brazil, named Joaquim and Juanita Marreiro who were about to celebrate their eightieth wedding anniversary and boasted hundreds of living descendants ("A Prolific Family" 1881). Three years later, *The Twillingate Sun* ran a serial fiction featuring a Cuban character named Juanita Diaz ("Paying the Penalty" 1884). This Juanita was a seductress and a poisoner who contrived to murder the wife of the man she had fallen in love with. These short publications printed on the last page of newspapers that appeared four years or more before Emma Juanita Bradbury was born seem unlikely to have sparked the naming trend. This is particularly true given that the lengthier of the two pieces, "Paying the Penalty", which was published over several issues of *The Twillingate Sun* at the end of 1883 and beginning of 1884, depicted a malicious and conniving Juanita who would have made an unappealing namesake.

Juanita: A Name of Spain?¹³

Instead, I propose that Newfoundland's first Juanitas were named for a song. Sheet music for "Juanita," composed by British author and social reformer Caroline Norton, was published in London in 1853. In the lyrics, the narrator entreats a young woman named Juanita not to leave as the sun begins to rise on a night of romance:

Soft o'er the fountain,
Ling'ring falls the southern moon;
Far o'er the mountain,
Breaks the day too soon!

In thy dark eyes' splendour,
Where the warm light loves to dwell,
Weary looks yet tender,
Speak their fond farewell.

In the final chorus, the narrator asks for Juanita's hand in marriage:

Nita! Juanita!
Let me linger by thy side!
Nita! Juanita!
Be my own fair bride!

"Juanita"'s sentimental verse and straightforward musical arrangement made the melody ideal for performance in middle-class drawing rooms (Swafford n.d.). The song was published at the tail end of a British fad for pseudo-Spanish music that was sparked by Great Britain's participation in the Peninsular War from 1808 to 1814, and "Juanita" was in many ways the culmination of that craze (Scott 2001, 65). The description of a Hispanic paramour in the verses, combined with ornaments and broken chords in the piano

accompaniment inspired by Spanish guitar styling, lent a marketable sheen of exoticism to what was otherwise a standard English ballad, making the tune unfamiliar enough to be novel but classic enough to be acceptable to traditionalists. As a result, the song was wildly successful, becoming “the first ballad by a woman composer to achieve massive sales” (ibid. 65-66).

Joanne Swafford (n.d.) has argued that the tune was also quietly subversive, challenging the institution of marriage and the restrictive gender norms of the Victorian period through the reversal of gender roles while maintaining a veneer of propriety. Although the lyrics express romantic love for a woman and, therefore, in a heteronormative society, suggest a male speaker, the melody was written for a woman’s soprano voice and, according to the first edition of the sheet music, was premiered by celebrated female vocalists Annie Lascelles and Elizabeth Poole, the latter of whom the press referred to as “the most effective ballad singer of the present century” (Gänzl 2018, 561). It was not unheard of at the time for women to sing ballads written from a male perspective, but such songs were typically premiered by men (Swafford n.d.).

In the context of the middle-class drawing room, the transgressive effect of the piece would have been subtle but profound. Per Swafford, “as parlor performances primarily enabled young women to prove their marriageability by performing their domesticity and talents, this song undermines that project: it lets a woman, while passively being pursued, become the pursuer” and “enables women to sing of love for other women while appearing to prove their love for men” (ibid.). This covert critique of sexist social institutions reflected Caroline Norton’s political activism, which resulted in significant reforms to British child custody, marriage, and divorce laws (Norton 1854; Chedzoy 1992).

It’s unlikely that the average listener or performer would have been aware of the song’s defiant undertones – if they were, it would never have achieved such popular success (Swafford n.d.). Rather, most would have enjoyed it for its pseudo-Spanish flair, memorable melody, poetic language, and romantic theme. These appealing features ultimately propelled the song across the Atlantic to North America. In his memoir, a Newfoundland sea captain named Morris Barnes describes a day he spent getting to know the unmarried daughter of a fellow sailor in New Brunswick in 1873, when he was 23 years old:

After tea—Elma could play the piano nicely—she played and sung for me and I sung some songs, too. I could sing pretty good them days and I could sing a lot of songs that I’ve forgotten now altogether. We sung “Juanita” and “By the Sad Sea Waves” and all of them. (Barnes 1930, 87)

Twenty years later, the song was performed at a soiree of the Sons of Temperance in St. John’s (“A Splendid Success” 1894). The singer was one Mr. Gippson, demonstrating that the ballad was at least occasionally performed by men.

Other evidence attests to the melody’s popularity in Newfoundland at the turn of the twentieth century. St. John’s musician and proprietor of Hutton’s Music Store, Charles Hutton, published a book of 62 “old favorite songs” in 1906.¹⁴ Alongside seven tunes of local origin, like “The Banks of Newfoundland” and “Dear, Old South-Side Hill,” Hutton printed religious hymns, patriotic odes, and parlour songs. Music historian Glenn Colton calls the songbook “an invaluable record of Newfoundlanders’ popular tastes in the late nineteenth century, preserving for posterity the music that helped define an emerging Newfoundland society” (2014, 35). The collection shows a substantial international influence on the musical life of the dominion and includes British, Irish, Canadian, and American tunes. Among these is the ballad “Juanita.” Corroborating the fame of the song in the late 1800s is an article published in a Newfoundland magazine in 1918 that describes “Juanita” as a favourite melody of “the old folk” (“Old Songs and Memories”).¹⁵

Factors in the Adoption of *Juanita* in Newfoundland

For centuries, there was very little change in which names were popular in Western nations; it was only in the late nineteenth century that individual names began to rise and fall significantly in popularity (Liebersson 2000, 36-41). In the United Kingdom and the United States, there was a steady decline in the percentage of births represented by the nations’ most popular given names (Galbi 2002, 276; Tucker 2009, 52-55). In 1860, 68.3% of baby girls in the U.K. received one of the top 10 given names; by 1880, that proportion had dropped to 53.8% and, by 1900, to 38.5% (Galbi 2002, 277). Parents had begun to deliberately avoid popular names for their children, with the result that the most common names gradually represented a lower and lower share of the overall population – a pattern that has continued into the twenty-first century. These changes in naming patterns occurred alongside the transition from agricultural to industrial economies in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, which provoked sweeping changes in income, social networks, the information economy, and the social context of personal activity (ibid., 283).

The choice of a baby’s name is multi-determined. As Mary V. Seeman expresses it, the decision is “motivated by a number of wishes and associations which may not all be available to conscious recall” (1983,

237). Stanley Lieberman divided the influences on personal naming patterns into two categories: external social factors and internal taste mechanisms (2000, xiii). External forces include migration, religion, and popular media. The rise in secularism in the United Kingdom during the 20th century, for instance, correlated with a decline in the use of Biblical names over the same period (Bush, Powell-Smith, and Freeman 2018). Taste, which encompasses aesthetic preferences and other values, is an internal determinant of group behaviour. Prevailing tastes shift gradually over time, leading to long-term trends in naming practices, trends that need not be nation- or society-wide but may show considerable variation between groups with varying socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds (Bloothoof and Onland 2011, 39-40). As an example of taste-driven changes in naming patterns, during the 1970s adding the prefix *la-* to a name ending in *-a* became a popular method for naming baby girls in the African-American community, leading to the rise of names like *Latoya* and *Lakeisha* (Lieberman 2000, 123-24). Girls' names have been more susceptible to the influence of fashion than boys' names, which tend to vary less over time (*ibid.*, 36-41).

Mass media, which became a significant cultural force during the same period, can introduce new names, promote rare names, and alter the connotations of well known names (*ibid.*, 223ff.; Vandebosch 1998, 243-47). A name's connection with a celebrity or beloved fictional character creates positive associations that can lead to a naming craze: a sudden, and often short-lived, surge in a name's popularity. Cleveland Kent Evans calls this faddish pattern a "tsunami curve", where a name's use rapidly increases, peaking within three years and declining again thereafter (2007, 337). The reverse also occurs. A name that belongs to a criminal, a villain, or a buffoon can experience a precipitous drop in use. So the name *Donald* fell out of fashion when Disney introduced Donald Duck at the end of the 1930s (Lieberman 2000, 131).

Rarely, however, does the appearance of a name in the popular media have this kind of immediate, large-scale effect on naming practices. More often, a few pioneering parents become the early adopters of a name and usage snowballs from there, as in the case of the name *Madison*. As a woman's name, *Madison* first popped up in the 1984 movie *Splash*. A mermaid played by Darryl Hannah decides to adopt the moniker after hearing the New York City street name Madison Avenue. Her romantic interest Allen Bauer, played by Tom Hanks, objects, saying: "Madison's not a name!" When Hannah insists, however, Hanks concedes: "Madison it is. Good thing we weren't at 149th Street." What began as a joke in a romantic comedy, however, quickly took on a life of its own, and *Madison* appeared on the Social Security Administration's list of most common baby names in the United States the following year, at 625th place (Evans 2007, 336). It increased gradually in popularity thereafter, peaking at second place in 2001 and 2002. Evans contends that "names that reach the very top [of the Social Security Administration's list] do so only after having been used regularly enough for long enough that most parents will not see them as eccentric" (*ibid.*).

In the case of *Juanita*, usage of the name in Newfoundland was limited between 1888 and 1919, suggesting sporadic adoption by experimentative parents. The ballad "Juanita" was the likeliest inspiration for this naming innovation – not only because it was well known during this period and because the dreamy woman addressed in the lyrics would have made an appealing namesake, but because this origin would explain how Newfoundlanders knew both how to spell and how to pronounce a name that followed Spanish phonetics. As a parlour song, "Juanita" was distributed to the public in the form of sheet music, to be played and sung by household members and their guests as after-dinner entertainment. Since it was intended for English audiences, some copies of the music include a note explaining that *Juanita* is "pronounced 'Waneta' placing the accent on e" (Norton n.d., 3). Compared to the stories featuring *Juanitas* that appeared in regional newspapers, mentioned above, sheet music for the ballad was distributed over a wide geographical range, actively used for years within the dominion's households, and reprinted many times in the decades that followed its initial publication, both globally and locally (e.g., Hutton 1906), which explains how the name *Juanita* could have surfaced sporadically in geographically disconnected communities over a period of thirty years.

In the 1920s, the name's prevalence began to increase. By then, the oldest Newfoundland *Juanitas* would have been in their thirties, and their presence in local communities would have contributed to disseminating and normalizing the name, making it a socially acceptable choice for more conservative name-givers. The release of a recording of the song "Juanita" for Victrola in 1919 by American baritone Emilio de Gogorza may also have played a role in the name's rise around this time.¹⁶ *Juanita* continued to grow in popularity until 1945, the last year for which data is available.

The receptivity of Newfoundlanders to the name *Juanita* in particular may have been mediated by the prior existence of similar-sounding names in the Newfoundland onomasticon. In their analysis of 280 million births in the United States between 1882 and 2006, Jonah Berger et al. (2012) demonstrated that given names are more likely to become fashionable when they share phonetic attributes with other names that have recently been popular. As we grow more familiar with a set of sounds through repeated exposure, that phonetic grouping becomes more appealing to us; at the same time, however, sound groupings that are used time and again risk becoming oversaturated and stale. Because they blend recognizability with novelty, new baby names that share phonetic traits with names that are already well established provide what Berger and colleagues call "optimal

innovation”: “They are similar enough to evoke the warm glow of familiarity, but different enough to feel fresh” (ibid., 1071).

Prior to 1888, a number of girls’ names with phonetic structures similar to *Juanita* were in use in Newfoundland, including *Anita*,¹⁷ *Ita*, *Leta*, *Marguerita/Rita*, and *Zita*. Further, the name *Winifred*, as well as variants like *Winfred*, *Winiford*, *Winifreda*, and *Winnie*, was given to infants in Newfoundland from the eighteenth century onward, with hundreds of Winifreds born by 1887. *Winifred* has an initial syllable phonetically similar to *Juanita* in some dialects of Newfoundland English. The pervasiveness of these names would have laid the groundwork for *Juanita* to sound original yet acceptable to Newfoundland ears: tinged with exoticism as a result of its Spanish etymology and musical legacy, its phonetic makeup was nonetheless compatible with the selection of girls’ names in circulation on the island in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By way of comparison, it is less likely that a contemporary Spanish name discordant with the existing Newfoundland onomasticon, like *Consuela* or *Pilar*, mentioned above, would have been adopted by parents in the dominion, even had either name featured in popular music of the same period.

As the name *Juanita* caught on in Newfoundland, it spawned a number of variants. These include the alternate orthographies *Wanita* (attested from 1914), *Waneeta* (attested from 1932), and *Waneta* (attested from 1941), which more closely reflect English phonetics, and the name *Junita* (attested from 1911), which appears to have been coined by overlapping the names *Juanita* and *June* (“Newfoundland Census, 1921”, Twillingate: 589, entry no. 2; “Newfoundland Census, 1945”, Twillingate: 51, entry no. 5; “Newfoundland Census, 1945”, Twillingate: 2, entry no. 37; “Newfoundland Census, 1921”, Trinity: 248, entry no. 28). The given name *Nita* (variant *Neta*), a shortened form of *Juanita* or *Anita* that notably also occurs in the lyrics of the ballad “*Juanita*,” was given to infant girls in the dominion beginning in 1885 (“Newfoundland Vital Statistics, 1753-1893”, vol. 26: 40, entry no. 2). More recently, the name *Kwanita* – a variant of *Juanita* coined among the Zuni, an Indigenous Pueblo people based along the Zuni River in Western New Mexico – has made an appearance: this name was given to a girl born in Newfoundland in 1997 (Norman 2003, “North American Indian Names” s.v. “Kwanita”; Kwanita Drew, personal communication, June 25, 2020).¹⁸

Conclusion

Juanita the name enchanted Newfoundlanders for the same reasons as “*Juanita*” the ballad. Both were novel variations on well established patterns, giving them an attractive blend of freshness and familiarity. Parents choose names for their children not only as statements of group belonging but also of individuality. Per Bush, Powell-Smith, and Freeman (2018), “each name carries connotations—personal, societal, cultural and religious—and may be considered a symbolic expression of parental expectation”. In the Newfoundland context, “*Juanita*”’s recognizable sonic qualities affirmed group belonging while their unusual arrangement expressed originality. At the conceptual level, through its ties to the ballad, the name evoked traditional values of female aesthetic appeal, heteroromantic partnerships, and marriage as the consummation of love. It also provided a safe means of accessing the exotic: through the act of name-giving, an enticing but potentially destabilizing Latin womanhood was comfortably contained within a white, Anglophone female body. The appeal of the name, like the appeal of the song, lay in the illusion and not the reality of foreignness.

Notes

¹. *Juanita* is formed by the addition of the feminine diminutive suffix *-ita* to the name *Juana* (Lang 1990, 103-4).

². 595 of 515,680 people, excluding institutional residents (Statistics Canada 2017).

³. 2,030 of 512,250 residents, based on a 25% sample of the population living in private households (Statistics Canada 2017).

⁴. According to <http://www.canada411.ca>. Only two of these individuals have family names of Spanish origin.

⁵. This includes those entries where *Juanita* is recorded as an individual’s middle name.

⁶. Mary Juanita Furneaux, born 1890 in Twillingate (St. Peter’s Anglican Cemetery); Juanita Monk, born 1890, likely in the Fortune Bay region (“Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949”, Marriages 1909-1912, vol. 6: 411, entry no. 12); Juanita Fiander, born 1894 in English Harbour West (“Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949”: certificate no. 634464-639686, entry no. 15); Helena Juanita Bartlett, born 1895 in Tilt Cove (“Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949”: Delayed Births 1890-1913, Box 13-15); and Juanita Clara Roberts, born 1895 in Tilt Cove (“Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949”: certificate no. 600041-660119, entry no. 23).

7. The religious affiliation of Helena Juanita Bartlett and her family is unclear because her birth was registered by a family member, rather than through a parish priest, and religious affiliation was not requested on the registration form ("Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949": Delayed Births 1890-1913, Box 13-15).
8. The name is given five times in the communities of Fortune Bay between the years 1900 and 1919. There is also one instance of the name being given by a family from Jenkins Cove, Twillingate, to a daughter born in 1906 in Sydney, Cape Breton ("Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949": Delayed Births 1906-1906, Box 25). The family appears to have later returned to Twillingate, where the daughter was baptized as an adult in 1928 (*ibid.*).
9. The birthplace of one Juanita born between 1900 and 1919 is unclear. At the time of the Newfoundland census of 1935, a Juanita Nangle, born ca. 1907, was a resident of St. John's. *Nangle* is a married name and the census gives no particulars in regard to her birthplace ("Newfoundland Census, 1935", vols. 33-35: 539, entry no. 16).
10. Six Juanitas born during this period were members of the Church of England, six were Methodists or members of the United Church, and four were Roman Catholics.
11. Another Juana is attested in Labrador: Juana Anderson, born ca. 1922 in Hebron ("Newfoundland Census, 1945", Labrador: 114, entry no. 21). Like *Barnes*, *Anderson* is a married name.
12. The initial syllable in *Juanita* is pronounced [xwa] in Latin American Spanish and [χwa] in Spain.
13. Despite its British origins, early copies of "Juanita" were variously subtitled "A Spanish Ballad" and "A Song of Spain".
14. The front cover of the songbook indicates a copyright date of 1906. Mercer, however, suggests the book was published "around 1902" (1979: 32).
15. Note, however, that this article was reprinted from *The Etude*, an American music magazine.
16. The song was also recorded by Corinne Morgan and Frank C. Stanley (1905), Jim Reeves (1958), and Bing Crosby (1961), among others.
17. *Anita*, also of Spanish origin, was in use as a given name in a number of European-language communities by the latter half of the nineteenth century, possibly as a result of the fame of Brazilian revolutionary Anita Garibaldi (1821-1849) and her celebrated romance with husband Giuseppe Garibaldi. *Anita* is first attested in Newfoundland in the 1860s ("Newfoundland Census, 1945", St. John's East: 38, entry no. 17).
18. According to Kwanita Drew, the woman in question, her mother had wished to call her *Juanita*, but the name had already been given to a niece (personal communication, June 25, 2020). Her parents came across *Kwanita* while perusing baby books at the hospital and appreciated that the name "was still a version of Juanita with a Zuni Indian spelling and pronunciation" (*ibid.*). Drew and her parents are Mi'kmaq, a First Nations people indigenous to the Northeastern Woodlands region of North America, and their affinity for the name may have been mediated by its Indigenous origins and its resemblance to Mi'kmaq orthographies. The consonantal combination *kw-* occurs in the Mi'kmaq written language, unlike in the English language.

Bibliography

- Barnes, William Morris. 1930. *When Ships Were Ships and not Tin Pots: The Seafaring Adventures of Captain Morris Barnes*. New York: Albert & C. Boni.
- Berger, Jonah, Eric T. Bradlow, Alex Braunstein, and Yao Zhang. 2012. "From Karen to Katie: Using Baby Names to Understand Cultural Evolution." *Psychological Science* 23, no. 10: 1067-73.
- Bloothoof, Gerrit, and David Onland. 2011. "Socioeconomic Determinants of First Names." *Names* 59, no. 1: 25-41.
- Bush, Stephen J., Anna Powell-Smith, and Tom C. Freeman. 2018. "Network analysis of the social and demographic influences on name choice within the UK (1838-2016)." *PLoS ONE* 13, no. 10: e0205759. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0205759>
- Chedzoy, Alan. 1992. *A Scandalous Woman: The Story of Caroline Norton*. London: Allison & Busby.
- Colton, Glenn David. 2014. *Newfoundland Rhapsody: Frederick R. Emerson and the Musical Culture of the Island*. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Evans, Cleveland Kent. 2007. "The Tsunami Curve and Popular Culture Influences on Given Names." *Names* 55, no. 4: 335-42.
- Galbi, Douglas A. 2002. "Long Term Trends in the Frequencies of Given Names." *Names* 50, no. 4: 275-88.
- Gänzl, Kurt. 2018. *Victorian Vocalists*. London/New York: Routledge.

- Hutton, Charles. 1906. *Newfoundland Folio of Over Fifty Old Favorite Songs*. St. John's: C. Hutton.
- Lang, M.F. *Spanish Word Formation: Productive Derivational Morphology in the Modern Lexis*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Lieberson, Stanley. 2000. *A Matter of Taste: How Names, Fashions, and Culture Change*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- "Local and Other Items." 1889. *The Daily Colonist* (July 17): 4.
- "Marine List, Port St. John." 1856. *The Reporter* (September 25): 3.
- Mercer, Paul. 1979. *Newfoundland Songs and Ballads in Print 1842-1974: A Title and First-Line Index*. St. John's, NL: Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- "Newfoundland Census, 1921." Database with images. *FamilySearch*. <http://familysearch.org/>: 14 June 2016. St. John's, NL: Department of Tourism, Culture, and Recreation.
- "Newfoundland Census, 1935." Database with images. *FamilySearch*. <http://familysearch.org/>: 14 June 2016. St. John's, NL: Department of Tourism, Culture, and Recreation.
- "Newfoundland Census, 1945." Database with images. *FamilySearch*. <http://familysearch.org/>: 14 June 2016. St. John's, NL: Department of Tourism, Culture, and Recreation.
- "Newfoundland Vital Records, 1840-1949." Database with images. *FamilySearch*. <http://familysearch.org/>: 4 June 2015. St. John's, NL: Provincial Archives.
- "Newfoundland Vital Statistics, 1753-1893." Database with images. *FamilySearch*. <http://familysearch.org/>: 14 June 2016. St. John's, NL: Provincial Archives.
- Norman, Teresa. 2003. *A World of Baby Names*. Revised Edition. New York: Perigee.
- Norton, Caroline. 1853. "Juanita." Sheet music. London: Chappell.
- . 1854. *English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century*. London: J. Wertheimer.
- . n.d. "Juanita: Spanish Ballad." In *The Bouquet: A Collection of Beautiful Songs by Various Authors*, 3-5. Sheet music. Baltimore: Henry McCaffrey.
- "Old Songs and Memories." 1918. *Colonial Commerce* 27, no. 10: 31.
- Poole, Cyril F. (ed.) 1993. *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, vol. 4. St. John's, NL: Harry Cuff.
- "Paying the Penalty." 1884. *The Twillingate Sun* (January 4): 4.
- "A Prolific Family." 1881. *The Evening Telegram* (February 2): 4.
- Scott, Derek B. 2001. *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour*. Second edition. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Seeman, Mary V. 1983. "The Unconscious Meaning of Personal Names." *Names* 31, no. 4: 237-44.
- "Shipping Intelligence." 1853. *The Courier* (October 10): 3.
- "Shipping Intelligence." 1883. *The Evening Telegram* (August 6): 4.
- "A Splendid Success." 1894. *The Evening Telegram* (January 26): 4.
- St. Peter's Anglican Church Cemetery (Snelling Cove, NL). Mary Juanita Furneaux headstone.
- Statistics Canada. 2017. *Newfoundland and Labrador [Province] and Canada [Country]* (table). *Census Profile*. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017. Accessed April 27, 2019. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>
- Swafford, Joanna. n.d. "Subversive Singing: Role Reversals in Caroline Norton's 'Juanita'." *Songs of the Victorians: An Archive*. Accessed May 13, 2019. <http://www.songs-of-the-victorians.com/Norton/analysis.html>
- Tucker, D. Kenneth. 2009. Increased Competition and Reduced Popularity: US Given Name Trends of the Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries." *Names* 57, no. 1: 52-62.
- Vandebosch, Heidi. 1998. "The Influence of Media on Given Names." *Names* 46, no. 4: 243-62.

Disclosure Statement

The author published a general-interest article based on this research – "All the lovely Juanitas: How did a Spanish name find such popularity in Newfoundland?" – through CBC Newfoundland and Labrador on July 21, 2019.

Notes on Contributor

Ainsley Hawthorn, Ph.D., is a cultural historian based in St. John's, Canada, whose research interests include etymology, corpus-based lexical analysis, and historical sociolinguistics. Hawthorn holds a doctorate in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations from Yale University and is a past fellow of Distant Worlds (Munich) and the Advanced Seminar in the Humanities (Venice). She co-edited the volume *Distant Impressions: The Senses in the Ancient Near East*, and, as a public scholar, she blogs for *Psychology Today*, is a columnist with the CBC, and has contributed to various publications, including *The Globe and Mail*, the *National Post*, and the *Newfoundland Quarterly*.

Correspondence to: Dr. Ainsley Hawthorn, Email: <mailto:ainsley.hawthorn@aya.yale.edu>