

NAMING

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## Abstract

Naming is a narrative strategy that serves to explicate the conceptual model the strategy is drawn from. Through a close reading and examination of the narrative strategies in David Malouf's short stories "Jacko's Reach" and "Blacksoil Country" and his novel *Remembering Babylon*, and Jack Hodgins' short stories "Separating" and "Spit Delaney's Island" and his novel *Innocent Cities*, my thesis proposes that names are stories and naming is storytelling. This thesis offers a model of forward/lateral thinking as a structure that performs, self-consciously, the layering or embedding of stories within names. Further, this thesis also contains critical engagement with similar layerings in the work of Fred Wah, Anne Carson, Laurie Ricou, Thomas King, Don McKay, Denis Lee, and Tim Lilburn. Taken together, these diverse writers' thinking on naming and storytelling respond in my thesis to Ecocritical and Postcolonial theoretical modes of textual address and analysis.

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## Dedication

I would like to thank Laura Moss for her humour, confidence, and advice;

Laurie Ricou and Kevin McNeilly for their close reading;

Bill New for gifting me “lateral” and “parallax” and helping me to  
think through the art of teaching;

Travis V. Mason for listening and laughter;

My family, Christia, Sam and Hans;

My cat, Otis;

and Kristina, the most, and always.

Definition 0.5<sup>1</sup>**namely** [NAME *sb.* + -LY<sup>2</sup>.]

1. Particularly, especially, above all.

Prologue/Foreword/Forward

**On Approach**

To give him a name would name the rest.

- Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*, 56.**THE STORY OF FORWARD/LATERAL**

Naming in literature functions as a narrative strategy but to contradictory ends. Although naming is a narrative strategy for excluding and including, representing and repressing, subverting and liberating, constructing and deconstructing, embracing and dismissing, suppressing and magnifying that which is named, naming is not just, as postcolonial theory would have it, a politics of resistance. Naming is invention, imagining. Naming is mediation, inbetweeness, a “noisy hyphen” to use Fred Wah’s term (*Diamond* 176). Naming is story and storytelling because “that’s all we are” as Thomas King says (*Truth* 2). Naming is filing and categorization, but for Laurie Ricou that same filing is “clustered according to some shifting set of associations,” “winding and stringing”<sup>2</sup> (*Arbutus/Madrone* 2). Naming is negation, for Don McKay “name as epitaph” (*Vis* 89). Naming is assertion, negation as assertion.

Jack Hodgins and David Malouf employ naming as a textual strategy. My thesis will suggest a way of reading and unpacking their strategies. I have chosen these two authors because although they are separated by considerable geography, history, and

<sup>1</sup> Chapter entry definitions are from the Oxford English Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> “File” is from the Latin *filum*, meaning thread or string.

culture, and although they both write out of and about their different respective geographies, histories, and cultures, they both employ naming as a narrative strategy. Each author employs different textual strategies under the rather large umbrella of naming proper; however, their naming functions to mobilize the fact that how we name mediates our interaction in and with the world. Both of my writer's works are also particularly conducive to close reading; close reading activates the theory. How is Jack Hodgins in his short stories "Separating" and "Spit Delaney's Island" (*Spit Delaney's Island*), and how is David Malouf in his short stories "Jacko's Reach" and "Blacksoil Country" (*Dream Stuff*)—or rather, and importantly, how are their texts—writing and thinking about naming? How does "Jacko's Reach," a place name, gesture towards different realizations for different characters – for some, anecdote, for others communication, history, map, the romantic, a place for games, rumour, invention, wilderness, and progress. The name Jacko's Reach contains all of these possibilities. What does Spit Delaney's progress through self-awareness in "Separating" and "Spit Delaney's Island," a naming of self written through a measuringly more accurate naming of self and other(s), reveal about naming as narrative strategy and naming as drawn from a cognitive model that guides engagement with the world?

[P]olitics evaporates before aesthetics.

- George Elliott Clarke's *Whylah Falls*, xxiv.

Malouf and Hodgins are always already aware that any attention to naming in texts articulates a politics of resistance<sup>3</sup> to

<sup>3</sup> I have been asked to define "politics" in this context. A politics of resistance is a reading of naming in a text so that the textural aspects of the text itself—naming as a narrative strategy—are ignored in favour of a immediate interrogation of the text's socio-political implications. I believe that moving directly to the larger context of a text—historical, social, cultural, political (in its governmental sense)—tends to ignore the strategy within the words themselves. I authorize close reading in order to avoid watershed pronouncements of a texts political functioning.

certain colonial practices of naming. *Laterally*, Geoff Ward writes in his essay on/called “Poetics” that his “essay is not a rebuttal of theory but rather a reminder that the practice of writing poems does itself and of necessity signal a theoretical dimension” (*Glossalia: An Alphabet of Critical Keywords* 227). Malouf and Hodgins, when writing about naming, when employing a strategy that employs naming, signal *multiple* theoretical dimensions, instead of “a” theoretical dimension. The writing, the crafting, the strategy in the choice in the writing and crafting is readable and theoretical, which is to say is reflexive about how the writing is read. My priority is to attend to the textual strategy first.

Hodgins’ novel *Innocent Cities* (1990) and Malouf’s *Remembering Babylon* (1993) are ancillary characters in the story I write about naming’s texture. *Remembering Babylon* is about<sup>4</sup> how a community reacts to, and co-exists with, the intrusion of an outsider, and how the outsider’s very presence (whose name is Gemmy) forces the individuals in the community to engage with their own naming practices. *Innocent Cities* is about how community is constituent of individuals interacting by naming, and how their strategies of naming come to be foregrounded. That both authors belong to a canon of postcolonial writers suggests that they follow the conventional postcolonial approach to write in such a way that the writing seeks to act as a corrective to past writing strategies by writing back to them in such a way that the writing simultaneously resists *and* proposes alternative reading strategies, the *and* a taught connector. However, I

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<sup>4</sup> I use the preposition “about” while recognizing that it is problematic. It suggests the distillation of text into a singular essence; it proposes synthesis, a limited focus, and linearity when Descartes has long ago passed away. W. H. New begins the follow-up publication to his 2004 Sedgwick lecture by attending to the “about” (“...About Irony...”) in the title of his talk. He writes, “the lead preposition in my title hints at a *non-linear* challenge: so I will be non-linear in what I have to say, by intention. *About*: from OE *onbutan*, “on the outside.” I do not want simply to repeat what critics and theorists have said about irony in general, but to look at what some specific literary examples suggest about the function of subject, strategy, and tone” (11).

believe that Malouf and Hodgins are rendering a naming-as-narrative-strategy that gets at a different complex, a complex which includes yet reaches beyond the naming as resistance, naming as strategy for resisting the colonial/imperial singularity, a singularity that limits analysis of the incredibly rich textual and textural strategy of naming. The limitation here, I think, is the tendency to place the text's socio-political implications and ramifications before, and at times in exclusion of, a close reading of the text itself, examining how the words on the page enact certain strategies of approach, that carry tone, texture, and the tactile.

Laurie Ricou's *The Arbutus/Madrone Files: Reading the Pacific Northwest* (2002), Thomas King's *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (2003), Don McKay's *Vis à Vis: Field Notes on Poetry & Wilderness* (2001), Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* (1996) and *Faking It: Poetics & Hybridity* (2000), and Anne Carson's *Economy of the Unlost* (1999) are atypical theoretical texts. First, they tell good stories, engage in storytelling. Second, they offer ways for reading, are theory.<sup>5</sup> I am interested in the ways these texts—texts that do not read as self-consciously theoretical, texts that propose theory hesitantly, humbly, dialogically, that contain both the creative (formally, narratologically) and theoretical, and that write about negation, filing, storytelling, hyphenation, and a post-subject-position-thinking—offer a way in to (and out of) the naming in Malouf's and Hodgins's texts. All the texts also present thinking about naming itself. This intertextual, inter-idea, nested-layering approach allows each secondary text to guide but not dictate, allow but not demand, suggest but not insist, provide entry but

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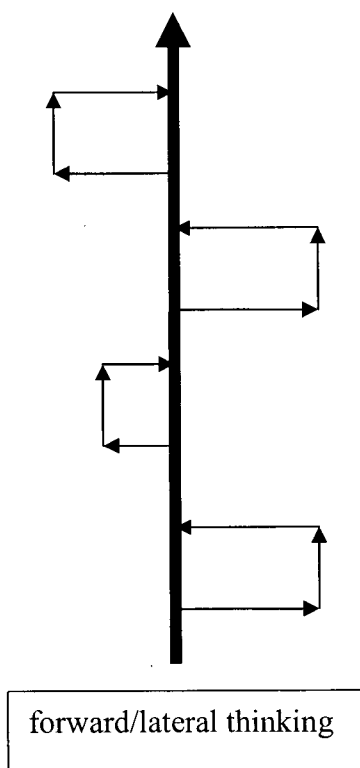
<sup>5</sup> I suggest that these texts are theoretical because they all reflect on the writing process. They all engage with how words on the page produce meaning. They also all allow specific close readings—readings of the hyphen, of linguistic negation, of how stories are structured and told—to offer ways of thinking about what the close readings themselves posit about the way language mediates our interaction in and with the world.



not contract the frame or narrow the funnel/focus or thicken the lens. In other words, the engagement I am interested in, the approach I want to accede to, is one that attends to my authors' writing of naming *laterally*, or as Dennis Lee writes in "Body Music: Notes on Rhythm in Poetry," with a "forward/lateral" action (41).

Thinking laterally contains traces of certain chords in tangential thinking. Lee is talking about forward/lateral rhythm as it generates meaning in poetry, a rhythm that allows a "coherence [that] is local, provisional, [and] contingent on the flux" (41) – through a listening (and in my case, reading) engagement, the text becomes sonic, the writing conveys "the world as it *is*... not consecutive, but overlaid" (43). The concept of forward/lateral thinking informs my approach.

The central, thicker, arrow in the conceptual diagram to the right denotes the progression through argument and assertion towards conclusion(s) or process, a movement that contains the texts I look at, and the naming as narrative strategy that leads to complexity in those texts. The lateral segments/thinking – either inspired by the ideas/thinking in my secondary texts that help to explicate naming as complex in my primary text, or the instances of naming in my primary text (as evidence) that lead me into the ideas in my secondary texts as reflective/refractive of my reading of the primary texts – further the argument, refuse to categorize, reinforce the structure of the intertextual writing in the thesis itself, allow naming to be more than resistance, at once. There is also an implied progression, momentum, buildup. While the laterals vary in length, they are also balanced.



Forward/lateral thinking is important to me because it mimics not only how naming itself functions, but how I write: names contain definitions stabilized momentarily in time; time moves forward and names acquire different definitions, definitions that are either mutations of previous definitions or wholly new. I write in such a way as to leave room for my reader to attach laterals to the laterals I propose.

By way of “cracking the perfect, smug egg of possibility” (“To Begin, To Begin” 333), I offer the following questions:

- If naming categorizes, and as categorization confines, frames, announces limits and boundedness, in what ways do Malouf’s and Hodgins’ writing of names and naming counteract these inherent/assumed properties, how do they muddy the “precision”?
- How does controlled intertextual structuring work to destabilize that very structure and how is that structure linked to naming?
- What is leaking out of naming?
- How do Malouf and Hodgins get at the texture within naming?
- In what ways are Malouf and Hodgins authorizing a different approach to naming, an approach that attempts to move past the inherent (always already) politics of naming?
- How do writers create a complex out of a requirement for representation, and in such a way that the focus is more on the engagement with the fact of creating/seeing/glossing/attending (the writing thereof, the language, the aesthetics, the strategy) rather than on subject position?
- How is exploring and controlling the hyphen’s ambiguities, assumed transparencies, and implicit possibilities analogous to my approach to the study of naming?
- Can naming be story? Can naming be storytelling?
- How is a study of naming as strategy of approach pedagogical?

- How are Malouf and Hodgins *not* using naming economically? Which is to say how are their approaches to naming revealing an expensive engagement with, and attention to, the world?<sup>6</sup>

I propose to allow these question to mobilize reading closely. My forward/lateral approach, my theoretical texts that tell stories first, the questions I ask, and my close reading of short stories and their necessity, as a result of economy, to include strategies that refract meaning, all force me to stay close to the text. I want my thesis to engage my reader because I move through the text while reaching out and gesturing towards the implications born of the text itself. My movement within the naming in stories and the momentum the movement generates in the form of an engagement with tone, texture, and strategy, I hope, will mobilize my reader as well.

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<sup>6</sup> While these questions are not sequential, the interrogatives are controlled by two threads: one, the primary texts that the questions will be applied to, and two, they all ask questions about how naming functions.

## Definition 1

**nameable** [f. NAME v.<sup>1</sup> + -ABLE.]

1. That *admits* of being named, or being called by a certain name.

## Chapter 1

### Placing Emphasis: Texturing Text

The magic of... literature... is not in the themes of the stories – identity, isolation, loss, ceremony, community, maturation, home – it is in the way meaning is refracted by cosmology, the way understanding is shaped by cultural paradigms.

- from Thomas King's *The Truth About Stories*, 112.

### THE STORY OF “THERE ARE NO NAMES BUT STORIES”

To name. Both David Malouf's “Jacko's Reach” and Jack Hodgins' “Spit Delaney's Island” contain apostrophes, possessives: one implies disparate location (“reach” – to project, to extend), one implies the bordered and contained (islands are geographically framed by their beaches and by water); one's possessive is embedded in the place name itself, one's possessive implies ownership, the belonging to a named individual. Both possessives are ambiguous. A named place can not rightly own itself; Spit Delaney does not own Vancouver Island. Both names, then, tell stories about namers, the embedding within the name itself, framing, and the practice of naming imbued in a concept of ownership, a concept that unpacks the hierarchies in subject-object power dynamics in order to examine the hierarchies imbedded<sup>7</sup> in particular cognitive schema, which are, in turn, revealed through an examination of the schema's naming strategies/practices.

<sup>7</sup> Embedded, imbedded. Rather than the double spelling suggesting a lack of focus, it suggests an initial ambiguity in the syntax of naming. Embedded is used consistently from this point on.

Phew! A long sentence, I know, full of strategy, approach, text, texture, story, storytelling, names, naming, and (perhaps) other things I have not named. A complicated system. A complex system. A system that is a complex, awaiting engagement (complex [n. 1]: a whole made up of... interrelated parts).<sup>8</sup> A shorter sentence might read: naming is a narrative strategy that serves to explicate the conceptual model the strategy is drawn from. This thesis then is as equally about narrative strategy as it is about conceptual models. In fact, they run in parallel, or more accurately in parallax. Recognition of the workings of naming as a narrative strategy and the subsequent workings of the cognitive schema the naming draws on posits a post-postcolonial approach.

And here I must name it, post-postcolonial that is, or at least propose its difference engine. I believe, as does Laura Moss in her discussion of "The Politics of Everyday Hybridity" in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, and as does Robert Budde in his discussion of the "Politics of Form" in Fred Wah's prose poetry, that the post-postcolonial contains some sort of always already moment. Moss "want[s] to go beyond seeing Hybridity as an in-between space [as Homi Bhabha renders the third space created in the contact zone between two cultures] or as the articulation of the necessarily ambivalent interaction between colonial authority and the colonial subject" (*Wasafiri* 12). Pursuant to her desire, Moss asks the question that she believes *White Teeth* is attending to, "what happens to the subject who is not 'in-between' two cultures or races... but who simply is?" (13) Robert Budde believes that the form of Fred Wah's fragmented poetry is always already political in that it transgresses "linearity, narrative cohesion... the Cartesian ego... and the integrity of the word" (292). Budde believes that "critics have failed to recognize... the dual function of [Wah's] writing both as oppositional and as [an] 'agent[] of rearticulation'" (288). As

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<sup>8</sup> All definitions are derived from Merriam-Webster (unless otherwise stated).

postcolonial writing, the form of Wah's poetry attends to resistance to dominant modes of discourse, the form is always already resisting and therefore political; after the political moment, Wah's poetry acts as a reagent for suggestions for the creative claying of language, and focuses on the way language makes meaning from the inside out.

In this rubric, a writer's strategies, the pedagogy of their aesthetics,<sup>9</sup> are given primacy over postcolonialism's singular attention to the politics of opposition and resistance. Is it possible to envisage Budde's list of poetics—resistance, interference, improvisation, colour, disjunction, new way of knowing, homemaking, interruption and insurrection, redress, feminism, emancipation, language entanglement/estrangement/stranglement (293-4)—without fast-tracking straight to their political connotations? What happens if we move beyond the certainty of starting and concluding with the "Politics" in the titles of both articles just discussed? Don McKay writes, "a human perspective is impossible to escape" and therefore it is not about the product of our attention, but the strategies with which we attend: not *should* attend, but *do* attend. What happens when the following question is proposed: what is happening in texts both before and beyond the noise of the political?<sup>10</sup>

However (or but, big but), in the conversation before you there is much work to do with the embedded steps in-between, much engagement with the processes at work in the naming narrative strategy itself. As a model, storyteller-theorist Thomas King locates his approach to storytelling in the approach first. For example, his interest in N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, what makes the novel "special," is not that it won the

<sup>9</sup> What is at stake here in regard to education and teaching is a student's ability to read: read the words on the page, their strategies, and have their strategies activate thinking about how language mobilizes thinking about *how* language not only describes but mediates and prescribes interaction.

<sup>10</sup> I write fiction, tell stories, name with stories; stories come first, reading the political in stories is for the reader; writing metaphor, plot, characters, dialogue is for me. Don McKay removes himself from the city to a cabin to write ecopoetry, in part, because it removes him from noise, from the hum of progress. Removal from this noise allows him to hear and write out of the ecology that surrounds him. I propose that sometimes socio-political readings of texts are so noisy that they drowned-out the song of the text itself, the way the language speaks, thinks through its own strategies.

Pulitzer Prize nor that it is written by a Native writer, but “the questions that it raises and its concern with narrative strategies.” Narrative strategies, for King, are “starting points” (102).

King starts with strategy, with approach, with an engagement with the cognitive model itself.

King and I propose, name that is, to approach the way writers approach rendering text.

#### THE STORY OF RESPONDING TO RESISTANCE.

First and foremost, “Jacko’s Reach” by David Malouf is a story. But, “Jacko’s Reach” is also a story about its title, about a place name, and even more specifically about a named place’s multiple stories, which is a complication of certain binaristic,<sup>11</sup> simply referential naming practices. The named place is, in Malouf’s story’s case, many stories happening simultaneously, or, as Kim Stafford renders the idea in his poem “There Are No Names But Stories,” “a story happening many times” (11). First notice how I write the subject of the previous sentence “named place” rather than place. Second, notice the embedded construct, complex: multiple stories, one place. “Jacko’s Reach” also formally embeds stories. It contains a story about eight-year-old Jimmy Dickens finding the buried body, or rather the stockinged feet thereof, of a murdered bullocky<sup>12</sup> on the Reach. “Jacko’s Reach” is also a story about the “real story” (95) of an older Jimmy’s retelling of the story catalyzing the transportation of “Old Jimmy” back into young Jimmy’s shoes, and of the listener of the story, as a result of the imagining in the act of listening, seeing both Jimmys before him, the paradox both an expansion and contraction of time. “Jacko’s Reach” then, as a name, “evokes”

not just the dusty tracks with their dried leaves and prickles that your bare feet  
had traveled a thousand times and whose every turning led to a destination

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<sup>11</sup> The place is one half of the binary, the name is the other.

<sup>12</sup> A homonymic shift of bullocky into bull-cocky, and the tall-tale or tall-telling, is another layer of the story implicated in the name.

you *knew* and had a *name* for, but a *place*, enticing, unentered, for which the *old name*, to remain appropriate, had to be *interpreted in new way*. (96, emphases added)

The constellation created by *name*, *place*, *old*, *interpretation*, and *new* offers alternatives to pure topographies of place, to the mapping of names, to names as latitude and longitude. To name evokes knowledge. Names, as stories, as parables<sup>13</sup> in fact, require cognition, require interpretation, require reinterpretation with each successive telling. Names repopulate with stories resulting in renaming: the new stories or old stories interpreted newly rename the name. The name is always “old” as a result of the making “new” in the retelling. The name is the place, a metaphor. The place is the story, another metaphor.

Another way of rendering what the evocation recognizes is by positioning “response” in opposition to “resistance,” appositionally parallel. I find Ben Okri’s statement “stories are always a form of resistance” (121) incomplete, inadequate in that its thinking about the function of stories frames an oppositional and binary feedback loop. Political resistance eschews communication.<sup>14</sup> Theses promote

The desire to know the world behind its names is the death of knowing which is objective, ordering, communicable and of the apparently secure life that rests on such knowing.

- from Tim Lilburn’s *Living In The World As If It Were Home*, “How To Be Here,” 13.

antitheses; oppositional constructs and competing discourses rarely engage in dialogue. In this sense, filtered through the approach I outline in my introduction, resistance offers little forward and much lateral: resistance also does not always necessarily lead to an alternative. Response, however, functions more like conversation: response re-acts, mobilizes the teller

<sup>13</sup> Chinua Achebe writes: “Until the lions produce their own historian, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter” (73). Achebe calls this parable, this story, a “metaphor.” Some of the parable’s pedagogical power is in its metaphorical capability, in the story it names and more importantly the prescriptive power of the story it names.

<sup>14</sup> Perhaps “doesn’t necessarily include” instead of “eschews” is better here. Or perhaps the sentence should read “political resistance doesn’t necessarily constitute dialogue.”



as re-agent: stories result in response, stories offering recognition and alternative. Response connotes storytelling, a forward/lateral approach.

Put another way, Tim Lilburn's approach to naming hopes for a "refus[al] of posturings justified by the old hierarchies" (21). Mobilized by recognition that a forward progression (alternatively named process) requires that all hierarchies become "old hierarchies" and that nothing remains fixed or immutable, for Lilburn the old becomes new and the new becomes old because as a poet he believes his gaze should be "rooted in a posture of deference and attention" (22). This "posture," inspired by the failure of names, recognizes the need to watch without names. Watch things' "namelessness" (11). Allow things their "hectic complex[ification]" (22) instead of simple nomination that hides description and essence, that doesn't allow the named to name itself. The poet's strategy is contained by a poetic attention mediated by metaphor. For the storyteller Malouf, the old becomes new and the new becomes old when mobilized by the requirement for a name's necessary restorying, an interpretive act that necessitates the making of new stories.

#### THE STORY OF PROXIMAL AND DISTAL.

In the rubric of "Jacko's Reach" names as stories are located *in* place, framed by place. Before I get much further I must attend to place, after all "Jacko's Reach" is a place name, and much naming is place specific. The stories that arise out of the place are framed by the place. In this sense, and in most senses, frames imply contained creation in the same way that names imply storied referents. Located paradox. In fact, Laurie Ricou's "Region, Regionalism" (948-953) entry in the *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* begins by stating that the two terms "direct[ly] atten[d] to the ways writing and criticism use particularizing features of place and space to shape an understanding of story and culture [and, to a degree, are a function of the ways in which] place and identity interrelate" (948). Further, and

significant to my study, conceptually “regional writing concerns naming, and, therefore, constructing a ‘home’ in language” (950). While a discussion of naming as discursive strategy for constructing ideas of ‘home’ sits outside the scope of the current discussion, two of Kim Stafford’s poems offer entry into my naming as storytelling discussion, a response to resistance politics which places primary focus on the strategies of storytelling and the naming therein, rather than on their geopolitical implications or sociopolitical ramifications. Stafford’s poems, “There Are No Names But Stories” and “If We Shed Our Names” attend to the ways in which people can and do name, the ways in which naming contains textual strategy of approach.

There are no names but stories. “Without a name,” Frank Neussal writes, “no linguistic means of reference is possible” (Neussal 2). Fair enough, but incomplete. There are two Vancouvers. Relative degrees of proximity and distance dictate how speakers identify which Vancouver they are calling on. In Australia, a citizen of Vancouver, Washington, U.S.A. would say just that. In Vancouver, Washington, a citizen of Vancouver, British Columbia might say “I am returning to another Vancouver” in order that the located speaker from a similarly named place gesture towards the place elsewhere. The concept of more than once place with the same name requires more naming and storytelling. The opening lines of “There Are No Names But Stories” tells the story of how the Kwakiutl<sup>15</sup> of the Pacific Northwest name. The lines read

When the anthropologist asked the Kwakiutl  
for a map of their coast, they told him  
stories: Here? *Salmon gather*. Here?  
*Sea otter camps*. Here *seal sleep*.  
Here we say *body covered with mouths*.

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<sup>15</sup> Kevin McNeilly writes that this name is no longer the accepted name of these people, Kwakwaka'wakw is (cf. next page). He also mentions that, interestingly, the name also derives from a narrative of misunderstanding.

### How can a place have a name? (11)

Stafford's alignment of naming and mapping (toponyms of place) and anthropology (the study of human beings through a taxonomy of origin, physical characteristics, environmental and social relations, and culture all located to a specific place) places two cognitive schema in opposition, that of the anthropologists and that of the Kwakiutl. The placing here is not rendered as resistance but response, the response is storytelling, as well as a response that engages with the colonial anthropologist's request who expects a certain definition of mapping, mapability, and the kind of naming they perform. First, for the Kwakiutl, no individual tells stories, "they" tell stories. The "they" signifies communal ownership. Second, the act of naming place, of mapping as it were, is the act of telling stories about place instead of naming resulting from a limited amount of white-space next to a dot or picture on a piece of paper. The Kwakiutl's assertion unpacks the assumptions in the apparent precision of located names. Third,

Native culture's place and ownership are more mobile and fluid concepts than in a non-Native system of individual title.... Traditionally, Kwakwaka'wakw names were based on the following: (1) physical characteristics ["flat place"] (2) use ["winter place" or "rocky place to tie up the canoe"] and (3) historical events ["Mink's burial place"]." (Powell and Webster, qtd. in Ricou 54-55).

If places are named for their functionality—descriptive functionality in need of more than one noun for what happens or happened in them—not only do multiple names locate each place, the same name locates different places. The necessity then, for names as stories becomes apparent, if only in order to describe the multiplicity of place, if only to reveal the types of human interaction with place through the naming of place.

I am asked the question, “where is your post-postcolonialism in the above analysis?” First, the *tone* of the response of the speaker in the poem is not one of resistance per se, or of “postcolonial literature as corrective in its resistance” (Moss, Intro 8). I don’t sense corrective in Stafford’s poem, corrective as agenda, as political. I read bemusement. I read response. I don’t read annoyance. I read the description of *a* system of naming, a naming that stories in response to the two-dimensionality of cartography’s naming. I do not read political project: you *will* become aware of the inadequacies of your own system of naming. I read the articulation of a question that creates a space for the anthropologist to entertain alternatives. Second, while postcolonialism focuses on the degrees to which those theorizing about postcolonial texts focus on the proximity or separation of the binaristic terms aesthetics and politics, the binary opposition of the terms is not inherently political. For example, a computer programmer could care less about the connotational hierarchies in the components of a base two numbering system—0s and 1s—in the political rendering of *off* worse than *on*, of *false* worse than *true*, or zero less than one, sadly missing something that one has. In computer language, zeros and ones function outside of politics, outside of the tension inherent in binary opposition. The indefinite article “a” in “how can a place have *a* name” gestures towards two meanings. The article refers to the number of nouns in a singular name for a singular place—“body covered with mouths” equals four—as well as the multiple names that name one place—“salmon gather” names the same place as “place of hiding repeatedly” and “one turned over covering another” (11). Imbuing the article with politics constructs a misreading of the poem: its multiple definitions are not prescriptive.

The introductory chapter of *Having Everything Right* elaborates on the opening lines of Stafford’s poem:

The Kwakiutl people of the northwest coast had a habit in their naming. For them, a name was story. We say "Vancouver," naming an island for a captain; we say "Victoria," naming a village for a queen. For them, a place-name would not be something that is, but something that happens. They called one patch of ocean "Where Salmon Gather." They called one bend in the river "Insufficient Canoe." They called a certain meadow "Blind Women Steaming Clover Roots Become Ducks." (3)

The "happen[ings]" of place calls on a specific type of subject-object interaction, a model of

"The Town of G is not so special," Rashid told Haroun as the train carried them towards that very place. "But the Valley of K! Now that is different. There are fields of gold and mountains of silver and in the middle of the Valley there is a beautiful Lake whose name, by the way, is Dull."

"If it's so beautiful, why isn't it called Interesting?" Haroun argued; and Rashid, making a huge effort to be in a good mood, tried to put on his witch-fingers act. "Ah—now—the *Interesting* Lake," he said in his most mysterious voice. "Now that's something else again. That's a Lake of Many Names, yes, sir, so it is."

- From Salman Rushdie's  
*Haroun and The Sea of Stories*, 25.

interaction that names with story rather than referent, and a model that "Jacko's Reach" offers as conclusion embedded in the final four sentences: "If there is only one wild acre somewhere we will make that the place. If they take it away we will preserve it in our head. If there is no such place we will invent it. That's the way we are" (100). These lines tend toward an articulation of something more global than local, more universal, in that the lines call on the practice of storytelling in naming; also, everybody tells stories rather than naming arbitrarily referencing when a select few name. Yes. Universal. I am not trying to suggest, as Chinua Achebe warns against, that a "universal civilization is in place already" (91).

Rather, how we locate ourselves in place through the stories in names, and examination of the storytelling rather than the place itself tends towards a universal versus a local focus.

Locations in the “Jacko’s Reach” mode, a reaching mode, rely less on the location itself than the texture of place, the fact that “you don’t lose something as palpable as a solid silver cigarette lighter, not to speak of your innocence, in a place that is purely symbolic” (99). Reaching relies on the experience of place that is less inspired by the place than the named place, the aesthetic in the name—an aesthetic both discursive and sensual—of the word “Jacko’s” itself: “just the word alone [that] fed your body’s heated fantasies” (96).

Names’ stories construct human interaction. Not in the power of the place, but the power of the

place name, the power in the “consonantal drift” of Jacko’s to Jago’s that “lurch[es the name] backwards into an earlier, not-quite-forgotten history” of other people’s ownership (94). The “we” who “will invent” in those final lines reads as people in general—storytellers, namers—which calls on a more disparate space than the one contained by Jacko’s reach. Stories travel, places do not. The “making,” “invention,” and attempt to “preserve” are also as equally aligned with naming as they are with storytelling as they are with un-located humans engaging in all three.

“There Are No Names But Stories” ends with a giving way to transliteration of the stories of place, which is in the poem to say the names of place. Another of Kim Stafford’s poems “If We Shed Our Names” describes an anthill while never naming it as such: it names acts of “build[ing]” and “home”-making, it names the hill as a “pyramid” and the home as a “labyrinth, ancient paradise / the size of a footprint,” it names what happens in the place as,

*place like smoke  
loon on roof  
small noise of clapping  
hollow of stopping  
having many canoe-cedars  
place of hiding repeatedly  
cedarbark bedding of cradles  
mink’s grave  
insufficient canoe  
sound of swans  
one turning over covering another  
going with tide  
hollow thing at rest  
hollow of the northwest wind  
having everything right*

- from Kim Stafford’s “There Are No Names But Stories” (italics are Stafford’s)

well, a place “to practice by sleight of hand and scent / intimate politics with juniper and rain” (36). Lilburn echoes in Stafford’s poem, doubly: a refusal to name that requires engagement with the story of place, an inversion of subject-object interaction; in collaborative echo with Don McKay writing that “metaphor’s first act is to un-name its subject, reopening the question of reference” (69). Neither echoes are necessarily place specific. Lilburn’s wilderness, although located in Saskatchewan’s Moosewood Sandhills, also calls on wilderness itself, a disparate wilderness—each of his successive essays are inspired by a different location; and if a nod to the diffusely located “Saskatoon” that inspires the “Epektasis; Under the Instruction of Things” essay can be defined as wild, wild describes, names more than just the named wilderness. Lilburn focuses more on the problem of language, on “language’s quickness to overcome the conflict between person and world [...] caus[ing] it to reduce being utterly to its names” (9). McKay locates an attention to the world inside metaphor, inside language, which is to say language outside of place.

#### THE STORY OF RESPONDING TO AN ECOCRITICAL MODEL.

With all this talk of subjects and objects and referents, it is important to note that I offer naming, in part, as a response to the ecocritical model, which is, namely and loosely, the practice of focusing on the local as a strategy to resist the homogenizing tendency of pronouncements of the global.<sup>16</sup> Some of ecocriticism’s mechanisms function similarly to naming. Both involve systems of interdependent interaction. As systems, both entertain studies of the system itself as an end-goal, rather than the constituent components of the

<sup>16</sup> I also provide the following, more precise, definitions of the ecocritical approach:

- Cheryll Goltfelty defines ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (*The Ecocriticism Reader*, “Introduction” xvii).
- Glen A. Love writes: “[E]cocriticism, unlike all other forms of literary inquiry, encompasses nonhuman as well as human contexts and considerations. On this claim, ecocriticism bases its challenge to much postmodern critical discourse as well as to the critical systems of the past” (*Practical Ecocriticism* 1).
- Susie O’Brien writes that “While the world, in postcolonial terms, comprises the political and economic structures that shape, and are shaped by, culture, ecocriticism focuses on the interface between culture and the physical environment” (*Articulating a World of Difference* 140)

system proper. Both complex (a verb). Laurie Ricou believes that the Pacific Northwest is a “complex ecology” (16). Naming’s effects work as a result of embedding, layering, and textual “compression” (91) as Ivor Indyk has noticed in Malouf’s work. Both posit structures embedded in located and locatable things: place (region) and name (textually or sonically rendered). Ricou’s rendering of “region emerg[ing] in a layering of stories” (24) runs in parallel with naming’s layering of stories. Both naming and region imply possession. Region’s latin root *regere*, means to rule (Ricou 100); namers can arrogate power over the named. However, while ecocriticism focuses on what is learned from an examination of the literatures arising from geographically located places, naming is interested in how cognitive schema detach from place as a result of their first being a linguistic form then a system; ecologies are not initially linguistic. Ecologies exist prior to naming, naming does not.<sup>17</sup> Or, as Fred Wah writes in his essay “Is a Door a Word?”, “the door and the word part of the title I hope reveal themselves for what they are: Language” (39).

Jack Hodgins’ *Innocent Cities* attends to the limitations of located naming. Logan Sumner’s return to his wife’s grave, to append and rewrite his own headstone’s epitaph, contains multiple recognitions, some by Sumner, some by me:

1. The geography of stone limits the number of words that can be written: more words require more stone: meaning arising from the geographically contained is not contained by that geography.

2. The limitations of space require strategies for small spaces meaning large, necessitates elision, revision, addition, expansion of form, contraction of prose, doubling, tripling, conjuncting, embedding.

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<sup>17</sup> Travis V. Mason points out, and I agree, that my resistance to the ecocritical model locating an engagement that arises from a specific place might be the same resistance I have to postcolonialist theory attaching itself to local and specific culture, history, ecology, and politics to resist the homogenizing and universalizing effects of colonial and imperial practices—to “validate the local in terms of its own history in response to the familiar notion that history happened elsewhere” (Moss 9) or happened everywhere.



3. Each of Sumner's successive changes are a product of a recognition of the incompleteness of his previous etchings, a fluid form of naming, naming that changes through experience, across time, where unnamings equals naming.

4. Sumner's addition of clauses, sentences, erasure and replacement of single words is a linguistic recognition, recognition that language tends to describe moments of stasis, not process.

5. Sumner changing "ALWAYS" to "OFTEN" embraces not only those instances when our guiding rubric fail, but allows the eventual, which is to say inevitable, failure of meaning and form.

6. Sumner's use of the conjunctive "BUT" and "AND" textualize a strategy of approach where the futility of static naming is revealed, a strategy of process and correction, of approach without arrival, explanation without certitude. Alternatively, David Malouf's and Tim Lilburn's "as if" narrative strategy is similar.

6a. The "as if" in Tim Lilburn's title (naming) of his essay "Living in the World as if it Were Home" expands and contracts meaning, reaches outward to contextualize an approach to living in the rather large world, and simultaneously brings close by defining the world as home. The "as," as simile, is aligned with metaphor. Lilburn is always already a poet; he articulates his "living in the world as if it were home" with a tool-box made heavy with metaphor, metaphor that is, once again, aligned with naming. "Let the way the golden bean, wolf willow, snowberry, the deer present themselves to you," Lilburn writes, "be seeing them" (21).<sup>18</sup> Let their names, as language, as written text, as text written by human,

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<sup>18</sup> A written response to "be seeing them": "is something wrong here?" The problem with Lilburn's approach is that it is foreign to us, smacks of gestures towards discourses of "being one with the pickle." I think Lilburn wants us to mute the subject-object binary (in much the same way that McKay does) and let how the flora and fauna present themselves to us, how they name themselves, their ecology, biology, etc. dictate our reaction to them. They create their own ontology. Here I note that the articulation of this approach is difficult as a result of

by poet, “assert and cancel itself, name the world then erase the name,” but more importantly, let a habitation “in [“namelessness(es)” (11)] restlessness [allow a] glimpse [into] that aptness of confusion before the ungraspable diversity of here” (15). And the “if,” as half of the conditional if/then, avoids closure. Lilburn is articulating a question (put a “?” after “home”). The answer – if indeed such a thing exists when “living in the world as if it were home,” when looking without the contextual baggage of subject position, when wrapping contemplation around the question “How To Be Here?” – is less algebraic than process, less conclusion than approach or “stance” (21), more contraction by way of expansion, more focus through “hectic complex” (22), more engagement with engagement as perpetual process.

6b. In *Remembering Babylon*, “as if” peppers the prose (26, 27, 35, 36, 43, 48, 63, 64, 106, 107, et al.). In each articulation, a previous naming is found incomplete; what occurs after the “as if” accommodates the change, glosses the shift, processes an expansion of the form, as well as allows that there may be alternatives to the modification. “In time his coming among them became another tale they told and [Gemmy] would listen to it with a kind of wonder, as if what they were recounting had happened ages ago, in a time beyond all memory, and to someone else” (27). As if conjoins Gemmy’s “wonder” and analysis of that wonder, authorizes the analysis, eschews stasis and singularities, allows imaginative interpretation, promotes the interdependence of stories.

An attention to naming in texts inverts the ecological approach; although they articulate different strategies towards the same enlightenment. Ecologies and the people who name them require an examination of the economical, industrial, geographical, or ecological components of place that are required when people “learn more names” (Ricou 84), which is

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the binary imbued in language itself: the construction of the sentence marked by the paradox of fragmentation gesturing towards wholeness.

to say learn more stories in place. The end-goal of an ecological mode is to learn more about place, subsequently learning about ourselves *in* place. The end-goal of a study of naming is to learn more about the narrative strategy itself, the aesthetics, text's textuality, and what naming as narrative *and* strategy says about us. Naming allows an examination of writing and storytelling, not necessarily a storytelling and naming linked to place, but a naming that applies to multiple places at once, that is cognitive rather than demonstrative. Although convincing, Ricou's observation requires glossing: "So even when we have learned all the names, we will, of course, not have learned a definitive word, but a set of limits and possibilities—possibilities that will exceed limits" (84). I believe that the stories in names not the learning of names themselves are what engender expansion, where naming facilitates an unclenching and assembles interaction. Naming as a narrative strategy offers entry into the cracking of a sign's crust, the digging into the conceptual models of the universe that inform the naming in order to allow the readers' reflection in the bottom of the well of a name to upwell.

Tim Lilburn authorizes an approach similar to Ricou's, one born of names in places: "we should learn the names for things as a minimum—not to fulfill taxonomies but as acts of courtesy, for musical reasons, entering the gesture of decorum" ("Going Home" 184). Tim Lilburn is a poet: names are musical, their sonic form rhythmically peaks and troughs beyond the sum of its filling of white space on the page, names' mezzo-rhythms are forward/lateral. But, as we have seen, Kim Stafford is able to create music about an ant hill without ever naming it as such. The music for Stafford is in the stories within names. Learning names can absolve the learning of names within stories.

For example, in *Remembering Babylon* Mr. Frazer asks Gemmy to teach him the Aboriginal names for flora. Mr. Frazer's interest is taxonomical, learning all the names to

write them down and order them. Gemmy, on the other hand, listens to what is behind the names. Gemmy believes that Mr. Frazer “translates” objects from a “dimension which was all effort, sweat and dirt, and grubbing with your nails” into “outlines on the page that were all pure spirit, the product of stillness and silent concentration” (66). However, the “entries in Mr. Frazer’s field notebook give no indication of the conditions under which they were made... do not suggest that what is being recorded belongs still to the untamed wilderness” (128). Gemmy’s reading of text as a distillation of an object’s form is both a reading and a reading into, one controlled by the way he interacts with the practice of naming. Naming for Mr. Frazer is not transformation, it is simple nomination, simple enumerative taxonomy. The world attached to names and the names themselves, for Gemmy, contains “light,” “energy,” “spirit,” and “shadow” (68). Seeing it as such requires a “sensitiv[ity] to this dealing between name and spirit” (67). Sensitivity: another name for awareness. Mr. Frazer knowing all the names does not allow him access to Gemmy’s set of possibilities in an object’s name. While neither Gemmy nor Mr. Frazer are aware of their strategies of naming, Gemmy’s strategy allows multiplicity, a name’s fuzzy boundaries, boundaries that include the possibility for the spirit world, an expansion across planes of realization, or at least beyond the seen.

I am uncomfortable with Lilburn’s “decorum,”<sup>19</sup> in fact, with propriety in general. An admission: I can not remember proper names. A form’s taxonomy eludes me. The people or things names attach to do not attach for me; they are not their latches of being.<sup>20</sup> For me to learn all the names is an insurmountable obstacle. I *do*, however, remember stories, the stories attached to people or things. I ask that all my students come to my office

<sup>19</sup> A more accurate definition of Lilburn’s “decorum” is a desire for an approach that requires respect and humility rather than an enforced propriety.

<sup>20</sup> Carson applies the metaphor specifically to adjectives. I use names in place of the adjective and people in place of the noun.

for a five minute meeting in order that I see their faces and attach their answer to the question “tell me something specific about yourself” to their faces. One has a fear of clowns, one rides uni-cycles down mountains, one came to Canada from Korea, whose capital city is Seoul, but she is not from Seoul. I know their faces; I know the stories that latch to their beings. I forget their names. Their possibilities exist outside their names, exceed the limits that any name describes or prescribes for them. Their strategies I remember—their stories name them.



## Definition 2

**named** [f. NAME v.<sup>1</sup> + -ED.]

a. Mentioned by name.

## Chapter 2

**Constellating: Parts of Speech in Parallax**

What is an adjective? Nouns name the world. Verbs activate the names. Adjectives come from somewhere else. The word *adjective* (*epitheton* in Greek) is itself an adjective meaning “place on top,” “added,” “appended,” “imported,” “foreign.” Adjectives seem fairly innocent additions but look again. These small imported mechanisms are in charge of attaching everything in the world to its place in particularity. They are the latches of being.

Of course there are several different ways to be.

- from Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, 4.

**THE STORY OF NAMING PARTS OF SPEECH.**

In “Jacko’s Reach” Malouf stories the same questions that I ask in my introduction: namely, “what is leaking out of a name and naming?” (besides the political) and “how is the texture within naming written and read?” and “can names be stories?” and the corollary question “can naming be storytelling?” “Jacko’s Reach” also proposes some interesting answers. Although the answer to the last two questions is a decided yes for Malouf (and Hodgins), at this stage the “how” and “what” questions function to textually locate the strategy—namely, examining and unpacking the stories in names—while simultaneously examining the function of the strategy itself.

To name a beginning. How do writers name? Or more accurately, what text in a story signals naming employed? The following inexhaustive list begins to locate naming’s ubiquity in well written stories:

1. Vocabulary employed that contains the root words “name,” “call,” “term,” and “know,” name.
2. Naming occurs in the referencing of self or the naming of else signaled by the verb “to be,” a verb that contains identity, sameness, algebraic balance, but also metaphor: for example, “I *am* [Name],” or “This *is* [article] [Name].”
3. Writing characters names those characters: for example, characters articulate difference, which is often signaled by negation, and named with the prefixes “un-,” “in-,” and the adverb “not”: for example, “I am not you/that” functions to name the character proper and name the character uniquely in opposition to something else.
4. Prepositions signal naming in that prepositions are spatial, relational.
5. Lists, as taxonomical structures, name, both in what they include and what they exclude.
6. Hyphens signal naming, or more precisely, the failure of naming: “mock-orange” (*Innocent* 370).
7. Naming is flagged in writers’ use of words that mean ambiguously, both denotatively and connotative, a perceived failure of naming.
8. Descriptive clauses name.
9. Nouns name, are names. Compound nouns muddy the precision of the act of naming: “maidenhair,” “blackberry” (370) “cottonwood” (371).

Recipes, with their lists of ingredients and instructional verb phrases for the combination thereof, rarely take into account the skill of the cook.

Adjectives muddy the precision again of a noun's, compound noun's name: "Oregon grape," "Jack pine," "devil's club" (371).

10. Structure names: for example, the ideas of framing and embedded framing.

11. Ambiguous demonstratives fail to name successfully: for example, "It is this, all this, that will go under..." ("Jacko's Reach" 99).

12. Italicization, bolding, underlining, surrounding with "scare quotes" are a setting apart that names.

### THE STORY OF THE VERB "TO RE-COGNATE."

Naming embeds stories in the same way that names/signs carry coextensive definitions. Put another way, names as frames, structural frames/containers, are both creative and controlling. The question then is how do authors make new out of restrictive structures? How do authors 're-cognate'? How do authors articulate and textualize their recognition?

### THE STORY OF A LATERAL STORY.

A lateral story. I was first introduced to the idea of the reality of controlling structures in Laura Moss's graduate course on South African Literatures. The apartheid régime in South Africa is not yet history in South Africa, the implications and memories of the atrocities perpetrated in its name are palpably present. Ingrid de Kok writes that "the apartheid state's discourse may have become so deeply introjected that its constructions and representations still determine the way we define ourselves now in space and time" (70). This is a definition that transfers into writing. Or, put another way, "given the totalizing and introjective power of apartheid, its social controls and binary emphases, is a postapartheid imagination even possible?" (de Kok, *Standing*) Put another way, in another context, Ben Okri writes that "we live by stories, we also live in them" (46). This pronouncement is



written in a chapter titled “The Joys of Storytelling I” and in a book called *A Way of Being Free* (1997). Okri continues about the power of stories to facilitate change,

One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted – knowingly or unknowingly – in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (153)

The joy and freedom is in the molding, crafting, agency in storytelling that changes lives.

À mes amis rwandais emportés par la  
tourmente

Émérita, André, Cyprien, Raphaël,  
Landouald, Hélène, Méthode

À quelques héros obscurs qui vivent  
tousjours.

Louise, Marie, Stratton, Victor

Finalement, à Gentille qui me servit  
des oeufs ou de la bière et dont je ne  
sais si elle est morte ou vivante.

J'ai voulu parler en votre nom.  
J'espère ne pas vous avoir trahis.

- epigraph to Gil Courtemance's  
*Un dimanche à la piscine à  
Kigali*, 7.

To my Rwandan friends swept away  
in the maelstrom

Émérita, André, Cyprien, Raphaël,  
Landouald, Hélène, Méthode

To a few unsung heroes still living

Louise, Marie, Stratton, Victor

Finally, to Gentille, who served me  
eggs and beer and could be dead or  
alive, if only I knew

I have tried to speak for you  
I hope I have not failed you

- Patricia Claxton's translation of  
epigraph to *A Sunday at the Pool  
in Kigali* (“nom” is not  
translated as such)

<sup>21</sup>Faced with the impositions on storytelling that South Africa exemplifies, that Ben Okri warns against, and that “Jacko’s Reach” attends to when it concludes “there has to be some

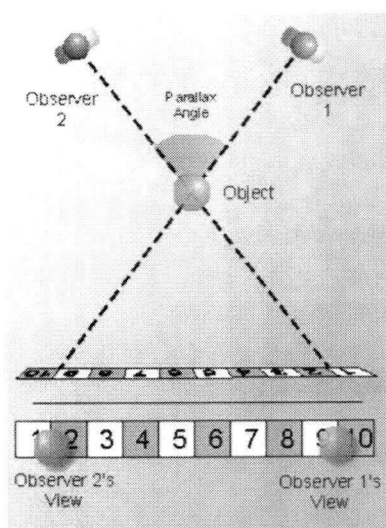
<sup>21</sup> To speak for someone is to speak in their name. Why? Accountability? To attach what is said to the speaker? To locate the source—the preposition “in” functions spatially. Perhaps “in” functions to elaborate by conjoining a more precise definition to the ambiguously rendered preposition “for”: “for” variously indicates purpose, constitution, being, suitability, representing, duration of time, and concerning.

place where that is possible,” the demonstrative encircling both the “preserv[ation]” and “invent[ion]” of stories because “that’s the way we are” (100), the following question arises: how do writers of stories write outside of framed attention, where is a storyteller’s agency, and how does one enact a naming that contains stories? I have been arguing that an attention to naming’s assumed transparencies and implicit, storied possibilities in “Jacko’s Reach” performs a re-cognitive function, makes certain occlusions visible. Naming in Malouf’s story, naming as story, is an alternative to binary structure (most famously articulated in biblical systems), reveals the indexing between binary pronouncements by articulating binaries in parallax, both paradoxically and in parallel. King suggests that writers like Momaday, and I argue Malouf and Hodgins, suggest “other ways of imagining the world”—notice both the story and schema leaking out the “imagining”—“ways that do not depend so much on oppositions as they do on co-operations” and the subsequent “tantalizing question[s]” this approach raises (King 110). One of King’s questions is “just how would we manage a universe in which the attempt to destroy evil is seen as a form of insanity?” (110). “Relax,” he says on the next page, “It’s only fiction” (111): his relax is a recognizing of the difficulty in attending to, which is to say the inevitable transformation of, one’s perceptual schematic.

#### THE STORY OF PARALLAX.

Relax, I say, I am only quoting somebody who employs irony when he calls his storytelling fiction. Irony reveals the tension process requires. Along with King’s theorizing about stories and storytelling (which is to say his telling stories about telling stories), I have found the idea of “parallax” to be helpful in conceptualizing how naming as story works as an alternative strategy, as an a-binaristic approach, which is to say contains less binaried thinking (object/referent) than indexable, complex, process, storied thinking. First, parallax

is an astronomical term and as such connotes constellations of meaning rather than linear meaning: a constellation that contains parallel, paradox, parable, perception, and praxis, five ideas not two. Parallax is defined as “the apparent displacement or the difference in apparent



*Observer 1's view of the object, with respect to the background, will be different from Observer 2's view. The further apart they are, the more pronounced the apparent shift of the foreground object with respect to the apparently fixed background.*

direction of an object as seen from two different points not on a straight line with the object” (Merriam-Websters). To make this definition more present for the reader, perform the following experiment: raise a finger six inches from the tip of your nose; close one eye and notice the position of your finger; close the other eye and notice how the finger appears to change its location; repeat steps two and three and your finger appears to move from side to side. The “perception”

in parallax’s definition is biologically controlled by the physics of depth perception: three dimensional space is seen as such as a result of a combining what each eye sees: engaging with the physics of sight forces the participant to

engage with the system that controls the seeing of an image through two eyes as one. The “perception” in parallax’s definition is also made full when connected to cognitive schema.

Further, parallax contains the vestiges of two words: parallel and paradox. Meaning production informed by a conceptual model is meaning production that runs in parallel with the model itself. Paradoxical meaning assumes separation, assumes that objects are bounded and cannot occupy the same space at the same time. When names name paradoxically, for example, when a name does not act as a single referent for a single story, or when a writer writes a word whose ambiguously constructed meaning draws on its multiple denotative and connotative definitions, a cognitive schema is also articulated, one in which storytellers as

namers and namers as storytellers are not “bound by the silly feeling that it’s impossible for two figures to occupy the same space at the same time” (King, qtd. in Ricou 43). Spit Delaney’s beloved “Old Number One” train and more specifically the railroad tracks it rides help to visualize parallel paradox. Railway<sup>22</sup> tracks run in parallel. Railway tracks running into the horizon seem to merge at their vanishing point. Recognition that the vanishing point is only an illusion requires a certain kind of knowing. Parallax is a re-cognitive approach. Recognition of textual parallax as textual strategy functions in much the same way that

*Riddles in the Dark*

“Does it guess easy? It must have a competition with us, my precious! If precious asks, and it doesn’t answer, we eats it, my precious. If it asks us, and we doesn’t answer, then we does what it wants, eh? We shows it the way out, yes!”

...but Bilbo simply could not think of any question with that nasty wet cold thing sitting next to him, and pawing and poking him...

“What have I got in my pocket?” he said aloud. He was talking to himself, but Gollum thought it was a riddle, and he was frightfully upset.

“Not fair! not fair!” he hissed. “It isn’t fair, my precious, is it, to ask us what it’s got in its nasty little pocketses?”

- from J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*, 79-84.

“Jacko’s Reach,” a single name for a singular parallel place, contains multiple embedded stories.

Chinua Achebe’s parable, then, about lions producing their own historians serves an epistemological and pedagogical function, requires recognition of the power of the stories in names to control perception. The cognitive moment refracts the reader’s conceptual model of the universe back at them, makes readers aware of how their doing, their praxis, is controlled by a set of constructed absolutes that are neither real, nor innate. And finally, praxis also clamors in the

polyphony of parallax. The doing in parallax is naming and storytelling in parallax, the writing (in my case) or telling (in King’s case) of names that are stories.

<sup>22</sup> Railroad, American nomenclature. Railway, Canadian naming.

To explicate further, a textual example. The prefix re- offers another site of parallax. The definition of re- is paradoxical. Re- has two co-extensive and co-existent definitions: that of "back [and] backward" and that of "again [and] anew." Re-, in this case then, and that I argue exists in the re- in re-cognition's case, betrays the tension between two cognitive systems, and attempts to articulate both in order to neither be controlled by the limitations of the former nor ignore the former in the articulation of the latter. Response, in the form of story, makes anew while recognizing and recasting the old. Malouf writes that the ability to "re-form" (98) requires the ability to see ghosts in people, and likens it to "having the power to see into someone's pocket" (99). Malouf writes of a particular type of reader, one who is aware of the "between" (99), aware of the texture and constellation in names, the story in names. Fred Wah's reading of a "re- ' poetics" is in its "incisive" qualities: its mandibles "cut[ing] into memory and image to recuperate, recover, and especially, re-insist on the presence of the terms of... contact" (*Faking It* 108). To make one aware of what is happening behind and in text itself: its strategies, its nuances, its textures, its terms. Attending to the lines "re / cognition" in Roy Miki's poem "history is we," Wah asks the following question, "can Miki's 're / cognition'... become the 'ignition' such a conscious poetic seeks to enact" (123). I argue that the stories within names function to tinder re-cognition.

#### THE STORY OF *TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS* AND FRAMING.

That there are metaphorical stories in names offers alternatives to, responds to naming's controlling framing. Lateral evidence comes in the form of a formal attention to *Tales of the Arabian Nights*. Sultan Schahriar marries a woman who "deceives" him—although an infidelity is assumed, the act of deception is never named. The Sultan decides to marry a new woman every evening and have her executed in the morning by his grand-

vizir. Along comes Scheherazade, the grand-vizir's daughter, who asks to be the next bride in order to stop deaths that are embarrassing the community: "If I fail, my death will be a glorious one, and if I succeed I shall have done a great service to my country" (www.arabiannights.org).

#### THE STORY OF *TALES OF A THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS* AND FRAMING.

On the morning after her wedding, the morning of her prescribed death, Scheherazade has asked Dinarzade, her sister, to ask her to tell her one last story before she dies. The Sultan complies with Dinarzade's wish in the form of Scheherazade's storytelling. The story of the "Merchant and a Genii," a story about a merchant who accidentally kills a Genii's son with a casually discarded date pit, and the Genii who seeks the Merchant's death, and a death which is stayed as a result of the Genii's interest in hearing "The Story of the First Old Man and of the Hind" leads, in turn, into other stories which must also be heard. Each successive story is born out of an uncompleted story. Each successive story is embedded in the telling of the previous story like a set of nested Russian dolls much like "Jacko's Reach" and "Blacksoil Country" embed multiple stories within the frame of their narratives. Structure in the form of a constellation of stories framed by one story, with one name, requires reading the complex as such, a complex interweaving and re-forming.

#### THE STORY OF *ALF LAYLA WA LAYLA* AND FRAMING.

Embedded narratives structurally break frames as a result of a telescoping into the frame. Names are polysemic. Names that contain stories, stories born of the name and other stories, telescope into the frame of the name. "Jacko's Reach" employs a similar framing and embedding strategy, one that arises out of Jacko's Reach's point of view. "Jacko's Reach" masquerades as the third-

My name is Gandalf and Gandalf means me.

- J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, 17.

person, with an embedded exception. Malouf's choice of point of view subterfuge is deliberate. The voice in the story is both that of the community and that of the reading of the significance of stories to the community. The absence of first-person pronouns and the repetition of the "our" (93) and "we" (100) plural pronouns convey an ownership more diffuse than individual ownership, an ambiguous ownership belied not only by the shared ownership in the shared populating of the name with stories, but by the shared access to the stories leaking out of the place name. Jacko's Reach was previously owned by a single person, "Miss Hardie of Pymble" (94). She is accused by the speaking "they" of selling the land "for a song" because she was a "Sydney'sider" (94), an outsider. Ownership in the community in the form of an investment in its stories and myths, and in this case the specific stories and myths both surrounding and emanating from "Jacko's Reach," would have precluded her from undervaluing the investment of multiple stories in place, in name. "Song" euphemistically and literally means "not very much money," but the undervaluing is a result of not being privy to the value of the songs in place names, the songs as stories, as texture. This is, in part, a failure to read names as stories. If Miss Hardie were to read "Jacko's Reach" I am certain she would up her price.

Before I noted an exception to the point of view. Near the beginning of the middle of the story Malouf writes a solitary "I": "When I was seven or eight years old we used to play Cops and Robbers there" (95-96). I am still confused by this pronoun, and I think that the confusion is part of the effect, part of its multiple effects. The story is meant for one speaker, the speaker who recognizes the strategies of approach in the communities stories at work. However, the single "I" is subsumed into the many articulations of "our" and "we," the "I" is embedded in the storytelling, the personal is embedded in the communal in much the same way that Kwakwaka'wakw naming muddies the concept of individual ownership. Stories are

myths, both experiential and constructed, to which the entire community has access equally. To close out the embedded frame an embedded story: an adjectival “my” is placed near the end of the middle of the story: “Every fellow of my generation knows Valmay’s name” (97). Not only is Valmay’s story embedded and surrounded by other stories in place, this story does not belong to the speaker proper, but his generation. The adjective connotes less ownership than membership. The membership allows access to not only the story proper, but the knowledge attached to the story arising from the name “Valmay.” The stories mute the telling, exist without a teller in much the same way that an object exists without a namer.<sup>23</sup> Also, the recognition of how naming works imbedded once again in the epistemological “know[ing]” of the name Valmay, which is to say the story of Valmay, is more pedagogical (instructs a field of participants) than individual in that it functions re-cognitively: her name’s story is added to the myth structure mutating it.

#### THE STORY OF THE TEXTURED TEXT OF NAMING’S APPROACH.

“Jacko’s Reach” begins with the sentence, “So it is settled” (93). The sentence doubly names some of the textual strategies in “Jacko’s Reach” and other stories, and my approach—structural, conceptual, textual—in that it names, which is to say contains, a story, subject, verb, and object rendered in parallax. The sentence opens out onto multiple meanings—denotative, connotative, conceptual—all of which draw on naming as a narrative strategy that is aligned with storytelling: the telling of stories about Jacko’s Reach as well as Jacko’s Reach as the place that “evoke[s]” (96) stories. A Jacko’s Reach that is multiple stories happening at once muddies the biblical and linguistic tendency for precise meaning, for the single word, single referent binary, for names that two-dimensionally frame.

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<sup>23</sup> Why does Microsoft Word not recognize “namer” as a word?



## THE STORY OF SO.

“So it is settled.” “So” signals analytical telling in a similar way that “Once upon a time...” signals quest narrative, and “It was a dark and stormy night...” signals either ironic or clichéd writing. The “so” breaks silence, a narrative technique transposed into written text from oral storytelling, opens up a sonic space that fills with “listen to me, I have something to say.” So begins a telling in much the same way that a name invites diving into its story pool. This “so” also evokes Thomas King’s examination of the strategies in and function of storytelling in his text *The Truth About Stories*: “the truth about stories,” King writes multiple times, “is that that’s all we are” (2, 32, 62, 92, 122, 153). At the beginning of each chapter<sup>24</sup> the same story is told, a story about the world sitting on a turtle’s back. The story changes both in the telling—in the “voice of the storyteller,” in the “details,” in the “order of events” (2)—and in the reaction of a listener—a girl laughs (2), a boy laughs (31), a woman smiles (61), a man takes notes (91), a woman “chuckle[s] and rock[s] her baby” (121). The telling of stories cooperates with the listening to stories, and vice versa. The emphasis is equally on the storyteller’s craft as it is on the listener’s receptivity and analytical prowess, analysis that understands that “how it is we imagine the world in the way we do, how it is we imagine ourselves [is] through our stories” (95). Stories implicate cognitive schema. King’s stories are also aligned with naming. For example, the term Indian. You see, Columbus didn’t find Indians in North America, the name mistakes North America for India. This linguistically nominal mistake was not rectified, which is to say restoried, until recently. King also talks about how envisioning a name devoid of multiple stories is a failure to name: “the panorama of cultures, the innumerable tribes, and the complex of languages made it impossible for North Americans to find what they most desired. A single Indian who could

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<sup>24</sup> “Lecture” might be a more accurate naming here as the chapters were initially written for the 2003 Massey Lectures aired on CBC.

stand for the whole" (79). What followed was an attempt to jam-pack the myth of Indians into a mythical name, to fit the idea of Indian into an already existing cognitive schema rather than letting the cosmic mistake inspire an awareness of the failure of the cognitive schema to incorporate new data, new people.

David Malouf's story "Blacksoil Country" contains two stories in parallax. First, however, the title connotes the impression of names in opposition. Blacksoil country is nested within the larger country of Australia, but nested in opposition: country comes from Latin *contra* against, on the opposite side. "Blacksoil Country" understories Australia's story in the same way that stories understory names. The precise imprecision of the place name title (the area is never geographically named, only located in terms of its proximity to another place "Double Bay" [120], a narrative strategy that betrays systems' relativity and relationality)<sup>25</sup> parallels the two stories the place name contains, two stories told by a single narrator. Storyteller Jordan McGivern introduces his telling as a "show[ing]" (116). He introduces himself by saying "Jordan my name is" (116). Yoda-syntax. Linguists refer to this structure as fronting. The fronting either presents the fronted material as "old," or gives a "new" interpretation of what is "left-ed" as conclusive, or both. His name is a transposed object. The subject replaces the object; the name is the object not the subject. The subject names the story embedded in his name. The name is the story. The reader is told initially that "blacksoil country [is] open, empty" as well as "crowded with ghosts, figures hidden away in the folds of it" (116), a both/and structure, a parallax structure. The storied land unspoken as a result of ghosts that do not speak but whose presence manifests as a sensing

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<sup>25</sup> Malouf uses this narrative strategy with *Remembering Babylon*'s unnamed town: the town does not have a street, it has an "area between" (5): "not yet a street [with] no name" (5). The town only has meaning in relation to other named places and all that they stand for: "Bowen," twelve miles off and the "Crown" (5) – "Brisbane," six hundred miles away and the "Law" (9) – the unknown and unnamable "Absolute Dark," that stands for "nightmare rumours, [and] superstitions" (3) – and "Comet River," the death of "nineteen souls" (42). These places, other places, act as referents.

that makes “hair crawl on [the] neck” (116). Ghosts are metaphorical in this case; ghosts are stories. The narrator in “Jacko’s Reach” talks about how watching involves a formal attention, a seeing of ghosts in forms, the forms of people in this case: seeing involves “re-form[ing], in a ghostly way” in order to see the “darker,” “deeper,” “submerged” (98), ghosted images within people, the ghosts as stories in their named selves. The ghosts in places, not the places themselves. Similarly, readers learn that the narrator of “Blacksoil Country” is a ghost. Jordan McGivern is killed as retribution for his father killing a black messenger in cold blood.

#### THE STORY OF IT.

“So it is settled.” The “it,” the imprecise pronoun reference gestures towards both *the place*, Jacko’s Reach as untilled, untamed, wild land, and the local council’s *decision* regarding the place, a decision to “clear [it] and buil[d]” (93) a shopping mall. The multiplication of meaning here, the controlled ambiguity in unspecific pronoun use gestures towards a refusal of simple teleologies. The pronoun, in substitution for certain perceived, multiple, precise nouns, allows that the pronoun could be replaced by other nouns—“storytelling,” “know[ing]” (97), “under” (99)—nouns whose meanings themselves need examination. Humans are uncomfortable with multiple definitions, with plural *it*, with undefined, unnamed *itness*. The ambiguously named mobilizes interaction. Alternatively, salal’s “very commonplace fecundity compels [Laurie Ricou’s] attention” (80). Naming employed a certain way eases, comforts. Naming incompletely employed satisfies the need for guaranteed meaning. Gemmy, the outsider child in Malouf’s *Remembering Babylon*, threatens the community not

In this awareness of things’ oddness and in your compunction over your separation from this is a letting-be-of-the-world while you are turned fully toward it.

- from Tim Lilburn’s  
“Living in the World as if  
it Were Home,” 22.

because he is violent but because his presence unintentionally subverts, calls into question the communities cognitive schema, forces self and world-reflexivity, forces an examination of their naming strategies. Visual difference (Gemmy is missing an eyebrow – “strange how unimportant eyebrows can be, so long as there are two of them” [8], he is also asymmetrical as a result of one of his legs being shorter than the other), interactive difference in the form

[T]here is no end to [the naming] language... The sea's name is inien, well and good. But what we call the Inmost Sea has its own name also in the Old Speech. Since no thing can have two true names, inien can mean only 'all the sea except the Inmost Sea.' And of course it does not mean even that, for there are seas and bays and straits beyond counting that bear names of their own... [T]hat what gives... power to work magic, sets the limits of that power.

- from Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, 51.

of not being socialized (“when he got excited he jerked about as if he were being worked by strings” [8]), and aural and linguistic difference (“the mere half-dozen words of English [Gemmy] could cough up [...] mismanaged and distorted” [40]) force the community to ask a “harder question”: “could you lose it? Not just language, but *it*. *It*” (40). The absence of familiarity breeds diagnosis, explanation, recognition of a reliance on the stories

in the conceptual schema that function to organize the interactions of the schema's members and interaction with the environment the members belong to.

An engagement with an object's quiddity, rather than its name, mobilizes engagement with its itness, requires recognition of the stories imbedded within it. What follows the “*It*” are several answers proposed by the taxonomist teacher Mr. Frazer and framed by an either/or logic, answers, as it were, relying on the faulty logic of phrenology. The either/or is ironically constructed as the first option requires ascribing veracity

#### Master Hand in the Court of Seeming:

Illusion fools the beholder's senses; it makes him see and hear and feel that the thing is changed. But it does not change the thing. To change this rock into a jewel, you must change its true name. And to do that... even to so small a scrap of the world, is to change the world.

- from Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, 47.

to a phrenological reading and the second option requires belief in linguistic phrenology, and the third option, a further irony, is written “or both of these” (40). The either/or is already both, option one is the same as option two, a singular both. The choice is the same. The oppositionality of an either/or structure composed of a singularity posits asymmetrical symmetry, although in this case the analyzer is unaware of this fact. W. H. New offers, instead, a both/and structure, or at least its recognition, and a recognition of its hectic complexity. New used to read the conclusion articulated in a story as “failure of nerve or desire” (*About Irony* 48). New changes his mind. He now believes that the relationship, or conflict, between two opposing identities “functions more effectively as a sign of the uncertainty of change as well as of inevitability of transformation. Not *either/or* but *both/and* [...] of interconnection *rather than but sometimes including* resistance” (48-49).<sup>26</sup>

I see New’s both/and recognition a component of understanding the storying of names: New breaks binary logic in favor of tertiary logic. Employing a similar logic, Malouf takes this realization a step further by using a series of linked sentences that begin with the conjunction “or,” an or that destabilizes the binary of the conditional either/or. Understanding occurs when the narrator realizes that “Jacko’s Reach” can’t be purely “symbolic” because there are other options: Jacko’s is also (*or*) a place where multiple, palpable events occur, either x (“a lost lighter”) *or* y (a “gash[ed] foot”) *or* z (“waiting” and “humiliation”) [99]. Multiple or-ings mutes the “either” half of the either/or binary by implying the potential for a series of unending ors: the conjunctive condition doesn’t prescribe a set of limits. Perhaps the perpetual or-ing’s approach is valued, a textual value leaking out of *or*’s aural homonymic shift into *ore*. To hear the transmutation, however,

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<sup>26</sup> The particular story does not matter—the strategy does: however, the story is Margaret Atwood’s poem “Migration: C.P.R.”

requires listening, listening to text and/or/or... how the text's strategies engage with meaning making, naming.

Mr. Frazer listens by half. Mr. Frazer is not *aware* of the limits that he places on himself as a result of his being wedded to the descriptive logic naming with an either/or structure engenders. Little else than the taxonomy of form leaks out of a name for Mr. Frazer. Awareness. Tricky business that. Perception. Tricky business again.<sup>27</sup> Parallax: stars' locations are perceived displaced, but only apparently so. When the field of experience is compared to the field of the schema and found lacking and inadequate, the experience is usually modified to accommodate the schema. If we require of ourselves that the schema can be flawed, process replaces the complacency in fixity. In other words, engagement with narrative strategies, or in this case strategies of approach in general, focuses us less on the positioning of our experiences in a particular schema—I am part of X schema and therefore this is how I name, how the schema authorizes the way I am authorized to approach 1, 2 and 3—than on what is learned about the assumptions embedded in and inadequacies of the guiding, explanatory principles in the schema itself.

When the narrator says that "it is this, all this, that will go under" (99) the shopping mall to be built on Jacko's Reach, "under" is synonymous with embedded, and the form of "it," its pronounal shape, "it" as transposed subject never defined, gestures towards multiple noun phrases, multiple conceptualizations—the stories, the system within which the stories are imagined, the stories imagining the system, the names that give rise to the stories, naming

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<sup>27</sup> For example, Thomas Kuhn's book *The Copernican Revolution* discusses the power of cosmologies. The Egyptians pictured the earth as an "elongated platter" (5) whose boundaries paralleled the Nile. The Egyptians believed that "circumpolar stars" (those which never dip below the horizon) "know no weariness" and "know no destruction" (6), a storying of stars. "Cosmologies," Kuhn writes, "supply both a psychologically satisfying world-view and an explanation of observed phenomena" (7). The implications for cosmologies that are both affectively prescriptive and phenomenologically descriptive is important to an understanding of form informing function. If, for instance, crops are harvested when the stars are in a certain configuration, it is very easy to project not only agency onto the stars themselves, but one's happiness as well.

as a narrative strategy the unpacks cosmologies, and so on. The repetition of the demonstrative, a repetition that reinforces the impossibility of complete, perfect demonstrability, perfect naming, echoes Lilburn's approach to the subject-object chasm that attempts to turn the human into object and the object into subject (a deer sees him "straight through... but [he] cannot say how [he is] seen" [4]). His strategy, so named, is a strategy of approach, approach which requires "quiet" (perhaps a quiet in response to the noise of the political, interaction stripped of inherent politics), "courtesy" (21), "curios[ity]" (18) and a "letting-be-of-the-world while [being] turned fully toward it" (22) in an examination of the "thisness of things" (21). Lilburn's approach requires immersion (rather than definition) in the story of object/place (its own story), rather than the overt storying of place: I will fit what I see into what I already know.

Perhaps the "remembering" in *Remembering Babylon* enacts an examination of the same kind of approach that Lilburn strives for and that the community in the novel largely fails at. Most of the community's engagement with what they see, describe, and know is controlled by, fit into, what they already know, what they remember. "Look at the furrow in his brow," the third person omniscient narrator continues an attempt to describe Gemmy's thisness, itness. "Was it a white man's thought that set it there, or the knowledge of something (they would not name it) that could hardly be conceived of in a white man's thinking... a thing you could *smell*" (41). While synesthetic description resists the subject-object separation required by syntax outside of metaphor, that "they would not name it" avoids diction. To choose the words that would name the inquisitiveness, puzzlement, concern, and questioning that Gemmy's furrowed brow implies, to order and to name the brow would require a reflexivity, a stepping outside of self and engagement with strategic inadequacies that the community is not yet capable of. Jordan McGivern synesthetic

knowing is different. He allows the “breeze” to “touch” him “like hands” (122). Jordan decreases the subject-object separation, allows the breeze agency over himself. Jordan’s listening translates into the granting of permission, a vulnerability required by the intimacy of touch. This vulnerability and intimacy, I think, requires response to schema that rely on “rightful boundaries” (122), a metaphorical response.

#### THE STORY OF IS, OF METAPHOR AND NAMING.

“So it is settled.” “Is.” The “is” is, as Don McKay and Tim Lilburn would have it, metaphor, metaphor responding to unambiguous, un-nuanced, normative naming. McKay believes that all naming translates; translation is imprecise; imprecision requires awareness of the fallibility of naming.<sup>28</sup> Mr. Frazer’s translation is just an-other name. Jordan engages with synesthetic translation, listens to translation’s touch. McKay writes that a recognition of the failure of names runs in parallel with a recognition of how metaphor works. “Metaphor’s first act,” McKay writes, and I have quoted before, “is to un-name its subject, reopening the question of reference” (69). Also embedded in McKay’s recognition is an attempt to revisit and revise a Western strategy of naming that privileges the namer over the named—“whatever name [Adam] gave to any living thing, that was its name” (Genesis 2:19)—and the irreconcilable, quantifiable, nameable difference manifests formally as separation, separation imbued with a metaphorical and tautological morality that eschews indexing for the polar, binaried, divisible and separable—“God separated the light from the darkness” (Genesis 1:4) and “God called the light day, and the darkness he called night” (Genesis 1:5). Jordan McGivern does not divide himself from blacksoil country in the way that his Pa does. It is his “sort of country” precisely because he “give[s] it a chance to show itself” (121-122) to him instead of imposing his own system of names on it.

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<sup>28</sup> McKay is drawing on, in part, Walter Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator.”



Catherine Martin's 1870 autobiography *An Australian Girl* reads Australia as a *tabula rasa*: "The unstoried blank stirs the imagination curiously with dim guesses at the chronicles which may be written of this land in days to come" (qtd. in Ryan 128). There is no recognition that the blank might have its own stories. The imposition is an active attempt to change through the storytelling in names: the imagination is informed by a previous place (England), not the place of which she is writing. Unlike Martin and unlike Jordan's father, Jordan is enamored with the sounds of the place and especially the sounds of a frog which he hears before he sees as a result of its chameleon ability to "take on" (122) the colour of what it clings to. Finding the frog, seeing through its chameleon form is analogous to seeing the stories in names. Jordan enacts frog, becomes a chameleon of place, lets the sounds of place whisper through him. The chameleon metaphor describes a blending with place, frog and human hidden in and by the fabric of place, as well as a taking on of (or listening to) place, letting the stories of place inform the patterns and colours that shape its inhabitance.<sup>29</sup> Also, when Jordan lets the breeze "touch him [like] hands" he engages in metaphor, metaphor that decreases subject-object separation, metaphor that contracts the name "wind" into the "happen[ing]" (Stafford, *Having* 3) of the "wind." And when Jordan hears day voices and night voices, he distinguishes the two not to enact difference, separates the two not to divide, but enacts individuality to immerse himself in their uniqueness, describes their sounds with a "liked" (122) quality (like, adjective, *alike*, similar) rather than named quantity.

Quantity and quality, tricky business them. In *Vis à Vis: Field Notes on Poetry & Wilderness*, McKay writes what he calls "A Small Fable" (89) and what is in actuality a

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<sup>29</sup> I also see a parallel here with Wah's articulation of the hyphen as "camouflage." To camouflage the landscape with names does not engage with how names perform. To let the oneself take on the camouflage of place is to learn through place, allowing a closer naming thereof.

response to Genesis, or rather a re-storying thereof.<sup>30</sup> Adam, after a day of naming vetted by his parent, wakes up in doubt, doubting his names' veracity, doubts the fact of "inexorable order inexorably ordering" (89). *Screech* owl, Adam realizes, is a "bonehead" name as a result of screech connoting ascension— cf., Adam stories again, a '58 Pontiac Bonneville's sharp braking into an accident—when really the "owl's voice fluttered down... like a little aluminum ladder" (90). The screech of the "little aluminum ladder of [the Screech Owl's] scream" calls "quality... forward," turns the "ladder into an act" (90). The ladder also functions to index a previously unindexed naming strategy. Considering asking his father to accept the "revision," Adam realizes the breaking of his naming strategy's economy, of "spending six words on what was after all one of Creation's smaller owls" (91). Ownership again, the ownership investing in naming. And vision, the vision in revision. Walking in the dark, poked in the eye by a branch, Adam wonders "would everything have to have a day name and a night name?" (91). The fable concludes with Adam almost realizing the failure of a name's naming: hearing little-aluminum-ladder on the night air and its failure to coalesce into "words" his feeling of a "gentle fatal presence," both the story of the name and the names failure to tell the story of his experience. Adam's engagement with the failure of his father's proposed naming strategy unnames, which is to say makes him uncomfortable with the ordering that naming occludes.

The Bible's narrative strategy articulates one system of naming. When McKay writes of a naming connected to "homage" and prefers "envisaging rather than naming" (101), he articulates a different strategy of approach, one that attempts to move beyond what he feels to be the closed system of a subject-position feedback loop that reinforces binary separation. McKay's approach proposes replacing the loop with emphases on response and

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<sup>30</sup> See also Thomas King's "One Good Story That One."

recognition, on the recognitive act that posits a new cognitive approach and the naming thereof, rather than the politics of naming itself. The ghosts in “Blacksoil Country” are also responses to the Bible in much the same way that the b’s in *Remembering Babylon* are.

Ghosts are not a part of Biblical teachings. The precisely contained realms (although not specifically located) of heaven, hell, purgatory and earth and the specifically defined bodies (both in quantity and quality) that they contain does not account for ghosts in the same way that biblical strategies of naming do not account for the stories that well up out of names.

There are many b’s, both bees and letter b, in *Remembering Babylon*.



The letter b. The title of the book contains three bs. Gemmy, discovered by some children of the settlement, mistakes a stick that a boy holds as a gun and stammers, “Do not shoot, I am a B-b-british object!” (3). Three more bs (plus the b in object itself). Stuttered bs—stuttering as failure of language, failure of the form to contain what the form defines. Malouf is interested in bs both as a response to the a, a response, in part, to an absence of the ambiguity implied by middling spaces in Revelation 22:13—“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”—as well as its affinity with the unexamined logic of indexable hierarchies, however arbitrary, in pronouncements (served here as definitions from



The story of the bee. Mrs. Hutchenson’s bees are not only metaphors for colonial rule—the singular, algebraic, meanings implied by a colonialism aligned with imperialism, the ranking of object as less than subject, an approach reinforced by the metaphors of bee-boxes and hives: boxes contain, package, limit, ‘boxify’, and hives connote the hive-mind, group thought in opposition to individuality, agency, creativity, and thinking outside the (bee)box—the bees

the OED) of the letter b as *either* the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, not the 1<sup>st</sup> (as in the *B-side* of an album or the *other* side), *or* as “abstract reasoning or hypothetical argumentation” (as in I *a.* walk to the bus, before *b.* getting on it). If syntax requires object follow subject, I think Malouf aligns the letter b with a naming of object and the tendency towards objectification that occurs in the “area between” (*Remembering* 5), and with the “question” of how does one go about “covering the space between [people,] recovering the connection” (33).

Besides the initial sonic “B-b-british object” (albeit a vocalization that opens a space for entertaining the possibilities in the idea of object in opposition to subject), in the opening pages of *Remembering Babylon*, Malouf writes object in relation to Gemmy multiple times: object as multiple parts of speech gesturing towards more than their definitions, definitions wrapped-up in strategies of approach: Gemmy’s “object” is “like any other creature’s... to stay in [the world] by any means he could” (25); at times “some object out of [Gemmy’s] old life would come floating back and bump against him” (27), objects meant to remind,

also attend to mobility, transformation, and an interactive approach. For Janet, daughter of the MacIvor family that takes Gemmy in, an experience with bees, or rather what she learns from this experience, “settles” her in the “business” of bees and “life” (141), bees that transform her life. She is settled by being unsettled. It is a “settling” produced by the unsettling inspired not by the bees as agent, as allegory for empire, but the turning towards herself, an examination of herself that carries a parallel realization about faith and belief and communicative acts.

Janet, farming bees, is swarmed; the bees cover her in a “crust” (142). Janet does not place herself in opposition to the bees, does not resist, rebut the

that need attention; in an attempt to fit in, to mute his objectivity in favor of becoming a subject in and of the community he is new too, Gemmy's "object... was to make himself agreeable" (35); the community attempts to identify the object of Gemmy's itness, to place him (although not necessarily include) in the index of their knowing.

Ordering objects in the hierarchy of being leads to comfort. To bring together onto a field of knowing means to create community, create a system of interdependency, of checks and balances, of certainty of forms. Gemmy mobilizes Jock McIver's changing way of being, way of listening and interacting, way of "see[ing] the world" (106); the change changes his field of knowing. He sees insects perched on blades of grass, describes them metaphorically (which destabilizes stable naming), and in relation to his changed self (cognitive self-refractivity): "the discovery of them, the new light they brought to the scene, was a lightness in him... like a form of knowing he had broken through to" (107). The form is "unnameable," simultaneously "disturb[ing]" and "exhilarating" (107). Jock's shift into a mode of interaction that allows, is

swarm. The shedding of the crust changes her. She sheds a particular meaning—named fear—of the experience and replaces it with another, more nuanced reading. The bees swarm her because of a mistake: the bees believe her menstruation to be honey: "they think it is honey," she realizes, and then, "it is," she concludes (142). The mistake mobilizes her understanding that to panic would be a mistake. Willingness to allow the bees their imagination contains a parallel realization, one that entertains the possibility of the transmutation of forms. In such an approach, inspired by bees "with a flair for geometry" (192) (rather than algebra, spatial complex rather than linear meaning), is the "Problem" she

comfortable with, the unnameable object contains the parallel shift in his cognitive schema, an ability to not require that his mode of engagement prescribe definition on the outside world. Seeing a bird “balanced on a round stone” makes him aware of his place of observation, of subject position, “sitting, himself, on a larger stone, also rounded” (107). Jock’s realization, in part a product of his realization insulating him from the group-thinking in his community, comes in the form of the inadequacy of words ability to accurately describe, to reduce objects to the “common”: “he could have found no form in which to communicate them, outside words” (108)—Jock’s turning towards language and all of its pitfalls and traps gestures towards the storied potential of naming. Jock finds balance when he turns towards language, which is to say he finds its communicative assumptions wholly inadequate. The conventions controlling the syntax of language, and the subsequent system that the syntax is born of, are found arbitrary, inadequate for describing the shift that has occurred in Jock’s approach to the world around him.

makes her life’s work, the “power... of *communicating*” (192). Janet, who changes her name, who becomes Sister Monica, allows experience to transform her: by reading Mrs. Hutchinson’s fear for her, Janet understands that it was her “belief” that had supported her. While her belief turns her towards a literal faith, Christianity, belief also names, is imbued with, “something” else: “something Gemmy had touched off in [her and Lachlan Beattie, who originally found Gemmy] was what they were still living... it would end only when they were ended, and maybe not even then.” (197).

I think the final pages of *Remembering Babylon* names this “something,” names it as a strategy of “approach” (200).

The name "axe" functions differently for two different people, Gemmy and Gracie Corcoran. In both instances *axe* is italicized, the italics signifying the reading of texture. For Gemmy, the word *axe* is a web of signification whose latching to the sign subsequently latches to himself: "meaning cling[s] to the [word/sound] image in the same way that the clothes he was wearing clung to the man" (30). The italicized *axe* brings other words back to Gemmy, other memories, other stories. *Axe* is the genesis for analogical metaphor; Gemmy reads the storied potential in the names of objects, a storied potential arising from a knowing of himself that is a turning toward the world, an inquisitive examination of the world as well as an attempt to reconcile images from his past into himself. For Gracie, Gemmy is "let... loose with an *axe*" (77), and as a result of the hand that grasps the *axe*, the word "assumed substance, took shape" (77). Gracie Corcoran's fearful perception of Gemmy with an *axe* is mostly informed by her perception of Gemmy, not of the *axe*. The stories attached to the name are imposed from outside the name itself, not inspired by imagination born of the italicization of the name,

Janet silently speaks: "let none be left in the dark or out of mind... as we approach prayer. As we approach knowledge. As we approach one another" (200). For the reader, the approach is learned through an engagement with naming as a narrative strategy.

Jock, Ellen, Janet, Lachlan, and Gemmy avoid rendering the world with a perceptual schematic that relies on constructing hierarchies to feel safe: instead, their difference engines structure their interaction by unsettling the sure world and their places within it. The third story, then, in the story of "b" is that of the verb *to be*, a metaphor of interaction. The way in which we name the world and the way in which we allow the world to name us relies on a strategy of

but an imposed reading that comes from outside the name. Gemmy can not just “chop” or “hew” wood, in their literal sense: there exists the potential for him, as other, to “chop” or “hew” or “dismember” other *things*. The imagination, in many cases, fuels perception: Gracie’s imagination is solely informed by an italicized fear: a “petrified” (78) fear that fossilizes the potential stories as explanations arising from Gemmy’s hand on *axe*. Alternatively, Gemmy is interested in the ossification of names, in the way they are structural bone.

be-ing, either settled or unsettled  
or both or/as if.



Ellen McIvor’s difficulty in talking about the death of two of her children occurs as a direct result of “there [being] too much space” in a “here” that is in front of the names etched on their gravestones, as much space “between words, even the simplest, as there was between objects” (111). “Here” is also a silence mobilized by grief, the failure of language, an inability to explain the death of one’s children. I wonder, here, how Jock’s realization coming from unnameable things applies to sadness and grief. I wonder if metaphor is enough, whether metaphor aurally fills the space, whether metaphor is a metonymic stand-in for grief. I wonder if the unworded grief between words is the same kind of space that exists between objects. Jock recognizes that the experiencing of the world exists “outside” words, is unnameable, in much the same way that Jock’s wife recognizes that grief is unnameable, exists “between” words. I do know, however, that those who will always engage with the world in a way that imposes space between objects, who avoid the process in description,



will widen the chasm, objectify, never question the “common” in othering. I can imagine that the death of one’s children is palpably similar to the space between words— explanations, as thrown stones, fall short of the opposite side of chasm, falling into an abyss of nameless grief. Ellen, although perhaps unaware of her strategy, is negating the nameable when she renders grief as chiasmic, and by doing so makes an assertion. The space “between” for Ellen is not the singular name “grief” (not name: un-name-able); instead the space is an accumulation of stories, “too” a quantity, an emotional mass, and quality, the texture within story that returns too much to the storyteller: the storyteller is unable to hide behind what texture the name occludes

#### THE STORY OF UN-SETTLING SETTLED.

“So it is settled.” “Settled.” The closure implied in a cursory reading of the sentence is found wanting after other definitions bubble to the surface. The settled synonymous with “solved” is only one meaning, one voice among a multiplicity. When Jacko’s Reach is settled, built upon, populated, named as such, it is solved, “resolve[d] conclusively,” but also “colonized,” “won for progress,” occupied with humans occupying themselves with “night tennis” and “skateboard ramp[s]” and shopping, clarified of “impurities” like winos, “feral cats,” “dumpers of illegal garbage... [and] Aborigines” in order that “security” and “safe” become synonyms with “settle” (93). When Malouf employs this word laterally, which is to say allows multiple definitions to arise from its reading, he articulates a strategy of naming that recognizes its storied potential. He unsettles settled naming.

“Blacksoil Country.” Settled country. Jordan says, “when we come it was to settle” (116). The verb shifts from present to past tense. The arrival is mediated and informed by an imperative from the past, both as strategy of approach and actual. Jordan McGivern is killed in retribution: to return balance. The story of the coming as well as what accompanies the

coming—the ways in which colonizers approach the places they colonize, the stories they attempt to impose on the places they colonize—originate an occurrence, a death. Jordan McGivern's story "becomes" his father's story. Although only ever named as Pa, the father's name is the same as his son's. Jordan McGivern names both father and son—Jordan McGivern is namer and nameling. "My" name is "his" name not in the same way that "the story" is "my story" "becomes his [story]" (128): the stories inspired by the same name are different. The story of Pa's son's death gives shape to both Pa and his son: turns Pa into a "figure" on the landscape, a previous "subservien[ce]" transformed into power by a name: "a name to whip up fear and justified rage and the unbridled savagery of slaughter" (130). The "becoming" is also ambiguous: the ghost still tells Pa's story, the narrator does not change. During the culling, Jordan McGivern lies "quiet in the heart of the country," his "sinking into" it "grain by grain" a "blending" (130). The story of Jordan blends with the story of Pa—Jordan's name names his grief, sanctions it, which blends with the story of his mother's which becomes the story of Jordan's bone blending with the sand. Jordan's mother, who, before Jordan's death "[n]ever raised her eyes to the country... just acted as if it wasn't there" (121), now "gazes into the "brimming heart of it" (130), searching, perhaps, for her son's name on and in it.

The unsettling of names, of the words that mediate predictable and safe perception and interaction. An unnamed member of the community to which Jock McIvor, and Gemmy, belong, protests Gemmy's otherness by writing a word in their own shit on a shed that Gemmy is building. Jock names the act of handling defecation an "abomination" (115). That the shit forms a "word" moves him towards "madness": "What word? He shook his head wildly to prevent it forming, to prevent the possibility of it getting in there, of himself giving it form" (116). I have always wanted to know the word, to fill, to fulfill the silence

enacted by the page, the strategy, and my own desire. The unsettling of guaranteed meaning here enacts a moment of self-reflexivity: why do I need to know? what space will knowing full-fill? why is knowing that Jock's reaction is in part a product of what he sees as a regression into a "darkness" that community and civilization, for which written language is a bulwark, "eradicated" (116), not enough? inadequate? incomplete somehow?

*What is that nameless word?* What insatiable desire has the unnamed word mobilized?



## Definition 3

**nameless** [see NAME *sb* and -LESS.]

1b. Not mentioned by name; left in obscurity.

5b. Having no name; unnamed.

8. That one shrinks from naming

## Chapter 3

**Negation, Hyphenation, Identity: Naming's Morphemes**

Both ontologies and goodness have ossifying effects. Ontology points you toward intelligibilities, "presences," your imagination places in the world: the practice this generates is that of the self addressing one of the many hand puppets the imagination wears. Goodness tips naturally into rectitude, its moral narcissism; perhaps all along it was simply rectitude's finest name. So both systematizing pursuits—the one reaching for an understanding of essence, the other for an ethics—produce solipsistic practices, ways of standing apart from the world.

- from Tim Lilburn's *Going Home*, 181-2.

**THE STORY OF HOKUSAI AND HIS MANY NAMES.**

I must begin this chapter with a story, the story of how certain names named an admixture that lead me causally to naming and negation and hyphenation—the story of the names Anne Carson and Hokusai. Anne Carson writes a poem called "Hokusai" in her collection *Men in the Off Hours*. Whole fragments from it go like this:

[...]

Hokusai aged 83  
said,  
Time to do my lions.

Every morning  
until he died

219 days later  
he made  
a lion.

[...]

Lions swayed  
and leapt  
from the crests

of the pine trees  
onto

the snowy road  
or crashed  
together

over his hut,  
their white paws

mauling stars  
on the way down

I continue to draw  
hoping for  
a peaceful day,

said Hokusai  
as they thudded past. (14-15)



**NISSHIN-JOMA: Daily Charm against Evil**<sup>31</sup>

The poem's parallax: Hokusai hopes for a peaceful (/ quiet) day while the lions of his own making clamor a symphony—"thud," "crash," "maul" (although one must imagine the sound of mauling)—outside. I introduce the poem here to tell the story of where it led me, unintentionally, laterally, when I wasn't looking, to naming (and negation).

Hokusai (1760-1849) was a painter. He is known to have had, and then shed (like plum blossoms at the onset of winter) many names. Born Tetsuzō, his next name was a gift, given to him by his namesake first teacher, Katsukawa Shunrō. He moved through his other names, acquiring, inventing, gifting, but always leaving behind, that is, until his death:

<sup>31</sup> From <http://www.book-navi.com/hokusai/art/joma1-e.html>.

Gunmatei, Magura Shunrō, Hishikawa Sōri (and combinations thereof), Hokusai Sōri, Hokusai (after gifting Sōri to one of his own pupils), Gakyojin Hokusai (literally meaning *Hokusai mad about drawing*), Hokusai Tokimasa, Tokitaro Kakō, Taito, Iitsu (after gifting Taito to his pupil Hokusen), and Manji,

which is not to mention his woodblock seals, of Mount Fuji, and the name/character Momo (*Hokusai* 370-371).

A man who has no permanent identity rooted in one name, and who gifts<sup>32</sup> his own name twice, might have a hard time imposing meaning on what surrounds him, a hard time practicing the ontology of naming, or subscribing to tautologies. Hokusai's many names informed his life and craft. Hokusai was also an impressionist painter: the real failed him: impressionism, painting-crafting stories, did not.

- 1779: Shunro
- 1781-1782: Zewaisai
- 1785-1794: Gumbatei
- 1795-1798: Sori
- 1797-1798: Hokusai Sori
- 1798-1819: Hokusai
- 1798-1811: Kako
- 1799: Fassenkyo Hokusai
- 1799: Tatsumasa Shinsei
- 1803: Senkozan
- 1805-1809: Kintaisha
- 1800-1808: Gakyojin
- 1805: Kyukyushin
- 1805-1806 and 1834-1849: Gakyo-rojin
- 1807-1824: Katsushika
- 1811-1820: Taito
- 1812: Kyorian Bainen
- 1812-1815: Raishin
- 1814: Tengudo Nettetsu
- 1820-1834: Iitsu
- 1821-1833: Zen saki no Hokusai Iitsu
- 1822: Fessenkyo Iitsu
- 1831-1849: Manji
- 1834: Tsuchimochi Nisaburo
- 1834-1846: Hyakusho Hachemon
- 1847-1849: Fujiwara Iitsu

- from <http://www.artelino.com/articles/hokusai.asp>

Death, naming, and Anne Carson herself led me to Carson's theoretical text *Economy of the Unlost*, a text wherein she talks about the ancient Greek poet Simonides (556-467 B.C.) and his craft, his ability to write eulogies in the form of epitaphs on gravestones, epitaphs that

<sup>32</sup> Kevin McNeilly asks whether "gives" or "bestows" is better here. I am thinking that "gift" here is a verb that belongs to a specific strategy of approach and is aligned with Don McKay's "Homage" when he writes that "we can perform artistic acts [including the naming of things] in such a way that, in 'giving things a face' the emphasis falls on the gift, the way, for example, a linguistic community might honour a stranger by conferring upon her a name in their language... homage is, perhaps, simply appropriation with the current reversed" (*Vis* 99).

required an economy of inscriptional form as a result of the geography of stone: “only an inscriptional poet has to measure his inspiration against the size of his writing surface... out of this material face... evolved an aesthetic of exactitude and verbal economy” (78): epitaphs on stone require the naming of person that expands past the boundary of stone in the same way that names embed stories, a breaking of the boundaries of form. Carson’s discussion is not limited to Simonides: Celan, monetary systems and value and gifting, memory, writing the dead (“the responsibility of the living to the dead is not simple. It is we who let them go, for we do not accompany them. It is we who hold them here—deny them their nothingness—by naming their names” [84-85]), time, and multiple readings of economy weave together to tease and tangle an exit strategy that attends to how linguistic negation (not, no, un-) is a strategy of assertion.

#### THE STORY OF NEGATION.

Negation is assertion. A tough nut to crack. Anne Carson writes that “the negative is a peculiarly linguistic resource whose power resides with the user of words” (102). The negative, then, tells as much about linguistic acts as the person who uses the negative. “Negation,” she continues, “depends upon an act of the imagining mind” (102). When I say, as I have been saying, that a name is *not* just a referent, I “bring together in my mind two pieces of data, one of which is present and actual [the name itself, the sign], the other of which is absent and fictitious [the other possibilities for what a name is, does, how it functions, as story].” Negation, then, “requires the collusion of the present and the absent on the screen of the imagination” (102). The differential diagnosis enacted by negation, and the imagination it requires, leads Carson to an observation: “a negative... posits a fuller picture of reality than does a positive statement” (102). I am particularly fond of the statement “I don’t disagree,” which is to say, “I agree,” and more. The *more* here gestures toward

context, propriety, incomplete analysis, ambiguity, naming with story. The *more* is also an inheritance for the speaker as reader, an inheritance of the ability to notice strategy, and to name it as such. Carson is fond of Simonides, in part, because he was fond of the double negative: "with cheeks not unwet by tears" (101). The economy of stone forced him into a strategy that carved as much content into the etchings to fill out, to make story of, the epitaph's naming.

### THE STORY OF HYPHENS ON GRAVESTONES

Gravestones, and epitaphs as a kind of naming, lead me to Jack Hodgins and *Innocent Cities* and Logan Sumner and his gravestone and the failure of naming. Sumner's gravestone reaches out beyond the boundaries of one gravestone: "the column of interlocking granite had grown so tall that it now seemed to have thrust up out of his still-empty grave like some sort of monstrous fungus, with the apparent intention of eventually puncturing the dark, overcast sky" (291). The inability of the gravestone to contain "his entire story" (291) is a failure of form, in part, as well as a failure for Sumner to be comfortable with the stories that will always exist in his name without needing to chisel them into stone; Sumner's gravestone is a failure to name naming.<sup>33</sup> And the failure to name, and Jack Hodgins, leads me to "Separating" and "Spit Delaney's Island" and Albert Delaney's multiple negations that name both himself (many times without knowing) and the world around him. Hodgins' two stories, and an attention the repeated textual strategy of naming with hyphen, leads me, by way of ending my story and this journey of discovery to Fred Wah's hyphen, a hyphen that is implicated in naming. Wah negates the hyphen's prescriptive and controlling rubric; instead, through metaphorical attention, the hyphen becomes an assertion of his own identity, a writer's identity, a critic's identity. I will begin with Wah's hyphen, its affinity with and his

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<sup>33</sup> Laura Moss points out that the gravestone is also a failure to make a name static or to stop story from progressing. Sumner doesn't change the names, he adds qualifiers to them.



response to imposed identity in the Chinese-Canadian that names him. Wah's hyphen mobilizes an examination of the hyphen in "Separating."

## THE STORY OF WAH'S POETICS

I think that the way Fred Wah talks about, envisions language, and poetics is aligned with naming as a strategy of approach. *Faking It: Poetics & Hybridity* is part of "The Writer as Critic" series of texts. I am enamored with the way that Wah envisions text as always already theoretical, how he places emphasis on strategy first, on how a poetics manifests as a result of the printed word first, not context. Geoff Ward is aligning himself with Wah (whether he knows it or not): Ward writes in his essay on/called "Poetics" that his "essay is not a rebuttal of theory but rather a reminder that the practice of writing poems does itself and of necessity signal a theoretical dimension" (*Glossalia: An Alphabet of Critical Keywords* 227). Wah's theoretical writing is saturated with other people's text, their poetry, their theorizing. Wah places large fragments of text amongst his own critical prose that is, at times, in itself poetry. Deconstruction for Wah takes the form of riffing, entertaining the possibilities in small bits of what he quotes, and setting his analysis alongside the thinking of others in order that the reader initiate a differential diagnosis.

Wah thinks that poetics is connected to linguistic attention in much the same way that I think naming is: poetics is a "way to be in language... the mouth of the word within the word... right there at the tips of our fingers, in the 'sniff' of the pen as it hunts the page" (*Faking It* 16). My pen sniffs the naming in the text in the functioning cognitive model. Wah believes that "to write in poetry is to move past the comfort of a ruled discourse; in order, to move on, beyond order, the complete thought spills over to an excess and residue of language" (20). Engaging with naming as a narrative strategy requires the isolation of said strategy from other strategies, which requires both recognition that alternative strategies exist

and the need for a micron-oscope: attending to the cellular in language, the hyphen for example. Engaging with the fact that language, the words on the page, is always already a kind of theory, Wah foregrounds strategy by writing that the Greek “‘KRINO, to pick out for oneself, to choose’ has been a useful naming” (21). Writers choose naming to get in/at something: the choice and the text both function, the choice and the text have utility. And finally, Wah “use[s] the term ‘poetics’ ... not in the theoretical sense of the study of or theory about literature, but in its practical and applied sense, as the tools designed or located by writers and artists to initiate movement and change. That is, ‘poetics as a sort of *applied poetic*, in the sense that engineering is a form of applied mathematics’ (Bernstein, “Optimism” 151)” (qtd. in *Faking It* 51). Wah focuses on the strategies that arise from the use of particular language over others, focuses on what is enacted by particular forms of linguistic attending.

Wah latches textual strategy to thinking, to re-cognitive moments, “when thinking manoeuvres the horizon by fragment rather than whole, by difference rather than by synthesis, we escape the prison of intention and denouement, of the assumed safety of settlement” (185). Here I hear an echo of Malouf’s unsettling. To take the rich soil left by the compost of Wah’s strategy of approach, naming as narrative strategy implicates a poetics, an unsettling of settlement enacted by playing with language.

Hyphens play with language. They latch things together to make new things—or the descriptions thereof—while leaving the latch visible. I think one way of accessing the strategy in the hyphen is by comparing it to the compound noun. “[B]uttercup” (*Spit* 9) and “sweet-pea” (11) function differently. Buttercup does not flash its naming; the compounding is textually invisible: no space, no diacritic, no hiccup for the eyes scanning the word. The hyphen is visible, a punctuation that enacts touching with the mind’s eye, a Braille moment,

three dimensional space: a *punctum* that requires focus—a moment of *puncture*, language that cannot elide itself as language, occlude its construction—a *pundit* for text's textuality, for a strategy of naming that makes strategies of naming visible.<sup>34</sup> Language needs the hyphen: the “don't-give-a-damn-what-you-think look” becomes mashed potatoes without it: the “don'tgiveadamnwhatyouthink look” or the “pausedinthemiddleeofachew smile” (216). Is it paused in or pause din; who is leo, and why isn't his name capitalized?; did somebody Achew!? Bless you. While a lack of separation alienates in the confusion of form, the hyphen functions as invitation into the act of naming, into the crafting of names, into language as a system of naming.

Ask questions, hyphen asks. Entertain multiple answers, answers as possibilities. Question: what about parataxis or serration? Parataxis means linkage; serration implies raw edges. Neither, like the hyphen, make what is *in* the point of cohesion visible. One of Wah's responses to the hyphen is parataxis, long strings of clauses without the conjunction's connective tissue. For example, “...rope, a little oriented anchor mediation, a taken token, yak-yak din of the Hermes draught caught from across the room, rattling of the mantic dice, the padded paws of adverbs, *punctum* of metaphor camouflaged into the leaves of the page...” (*Diamond* 121). Each successive clause is both modification and addition, gesture and retraction, meaning that hesitates towards closer meaning, naming and story. Parataxis has no beginning and no end; it marks a middle space, process. Rendering this strategy as serration, renaming it, initiates rhythm: dip of phrase to point of comma or pause into dip of phrase to point of comma and pause, as if rhythm is a synonym for story, as if story is diffusing out of the membrane of the *words* for *things*, as if the momentum and movement counteracts the stasis of names. More questions: what synapse is the hyphen performing, in

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<sup>34</sup> Punctum, Puncture, and Pundit follow Punctuation in *Concise's Oxford Dictionary*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition. There is no *so what* with this footnote; it is purely factual.

Wah, in Spit, in Logan, in Kate, in Zachary Jack, in reader? It looks taught, but how is it connected, how would we envision its edges? Serrated, raw, tentatively clotted? Which side are we to choose to believe, more? How is the act of separation (not) more precise?

Jack Hodgins' "Separating" contains multiple hyphenations. An inexhaustive list: "side-tilted look" (9), "paint-peeled sign" (10), "throat-phlegm" (11), "sweet-pea" (11), "wind-crippled spruce" (15), "Sea-Wolf monster" (15), "carved-out... piled-up... pimple-faced" (22), "red-faced... store-front... whistle-cord" (23), "once-in-a-lifetime... saved-up over-time... one-sided" (25), "home-safe" (28), "*god-damned*" (33), and "like that what-was-it right back there at the beginning of things" (27). The fact that nouns as names need compounding denotes the failure of naming, the failure of signs to describe. In the last example, the hyphen is modulated by the pronouncement of the vaguest noun on the planet: thing. The hyper-precision enacted by naming with hyphen is blurred by the retraction of a pronouncement of describability, an assertion of unknowing, of un-contracted subject-object separation, of the indescribable "madness" (*Innocent* 81) of "thing." Naming with hyphen destabilizes the precision that naming tends to both desire and occlude.

Spit Delaney, as the title implies, is *separated* from those *things* that act as identifying referents, referents that when placed in opposition to himself define his identity. His wife leaves him; his job of taking care of an antique train, "Old Number One," is taken away when the train is put to pasture; his comfortable world of answers crumbles when "the stupidest god-damned question he ever heard just popped into his head" (14), a question that makes him unsure of the guaranteed meaning that keeps him settled. "*Where is the dividing line?*" the question asks. "Between what and what?" he replies. "*Between what is and what isn't*" (14). Spit curses. The curse is a recognition of an unsettling of a requirement of the world, the requirement for bounded things, guaranteed meaning (however constructed); the

fact that things are arbitrarily bounded, arbitrarily named, that the boundaries are constructed, remain a necessary ignorance. Logan Sumner is much like Spit, albeit a little more civilized. Responding to the fact that Mr. Horncastle has two wives, Sumner does not curse, he apologizes, "I'm sorry, but it's all too confusing for me. I'm not accustomed to such a blurring of things" (166). Laurie Ricou writes that *Innocent Cities* is "most self-consciously concerned with the physical nature of language itself, with how meaning is produced" (93), both individual and based on consensus (widening out from the 'communiversal,' to the 'regioniversal,' 'countriversal,' and universal).<sup>35</sup> A corollary question is asked by Spit: "And what does it take to see it?" (*Separating* 17), what does it take to see the blurring. The shedding, the "uncoupling" (17) of a sign's guaranteed meaning mobilizes the beginning of a change in Spit, albeit one that doesn't reach the conclusion (of sorts) until the rigid line between the stories "Separating" and "Spit Delaney's Island" is blurred, a shift in Spit's perceptual schematic that carries an accompanying textual strategy.

The hyphens slowly disappear from the first story to the next, as if they become inadequate in textually describing Spit's transformation. Rather than outward codification belied by the act of hyphenation that performs an explanation of "sure" naming, "Spit Delaney's Island" directs Spit's attention inwards to a naming of self where hyphenation fails, falls short, in the same way that Chinese-Canadian is inadequate for Wah. The intermediate space between Delaney's acts of separating, of the hyphenated nouns that function as descriptors that place, that order, is filled with descriptions that muddy the precise separation: for example, "row[s] of yellowish seaweed" is "tangled" with other matter, the "continuous" is mediated by "uneven lines" (25) created by the tide. Spit's need to quantify quality is replaced with uncertainty. Responding to his wife's question, "do you think you

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<sup>35</sup> These words are my coinage.

can learn to cook,” Spit responds with hesitating negatives, “don’t,” “don’t,” “can’t” (30).

The negatives contain a cognitive moment; the negation begins to mobilize an assertion that recognizes the failure of naming: “there wasn’t a thing he could reach out and touch and be sure of” (30). The cognitive moment is incomplete, modally unpotentiated—“Spit cannot bear to think where [the Island tourist-hikers] are going, where their rides *will* take them.... He *could* follow them, in his mind, he *could* go the whole distance with them, but he refuses, slides back from it, holds onto the *things* that are happening here and now” (31 my emphases). Spit withdraws from the creative moment, from storying their journeys. His need for the immediate materiality and facticity of, as well as unmediated contact with, *things* persists.

Things again. Spit’s naming—naming that locks identity—tends towards turning objects into things. Things are not things as a result of a recognition that naming is inadequate to the stories leaking out of their forms, things are things because Spit doesn’t know how to engage with them, doesn’t understand them. From the opening pages of “Separating,” the ability to name accurately, to not avoid the storying of names, is connected to an

<b>Bert:</b>	Are there any cookies in the cookie jar?
<b>Ernie:</b>	Yes there are buddy Bert. I put a number of them in there a while ago. You can have them if you give me your teddy.
<b>Bert:</b>	[ <i>After giving Ernie his teddy.</i> ] Hey! There aren’t any cookies in here. You said you put a number of them in here.
<b>Ernie:</b>	Yeah, so, zero is a number.

- A scene paraphrased from Hossein Arsham’s website.

ability to “notice”: “people driving by don’t notice Spit Delaney” while “Hitch-hikers do notice” (9). The noticing is also connected to proximity and listening; locating oneself closer to Spit requires that you notice him as a result of his “muttering” (9). The hitchhikers hear and see Spit’s idiosyncrasies, the stories in his name, name the things that make him unique,

that upwell as story. “That was one more thing” (13), Spit thinks, literally referring to Stella his soon to be ex-wife, an unavoidable severing with hyphen, a severing that forces a transformation in him. At the moment of utterance, *thing* avoids the story he is about to be immersed in, the story of separating. When they take his beloved train away from him (the they an indeterminate pronoun referring to community and the takers-away and “the world out to cheat him wherever he turned” [25]), they tell him “you can’t expect *things* to last for ever” (17). The italicized object both names his obsession as a thing, devaluing it, negating the stories that latch to his being, that referent himself and force him into the task of repopulating the devaluing by hanging onto the memory of Old Number One: he commissions a four-foot oil of the train, hangs the number 1 off his door like a talisman, and “immortalize[s] on tape” the sounds of the train (17), the sounds of the whistle not named solely as such, the sound also an opiate that “cut[s] right through to his core” (23), and a crutch. Spit, albeit unaware, holds onto the objects that inspire the stories born of his history with his train, rather than the Old No. 1 so named. While the named object is taken away, the texture is not.

Things move naturally into no-thing-s. Thing equals negation, disinterest, turning away. What is a thing? Nothing until named. What is the hyphen? Nothing. It just is. Grammatical rules require it. Its functionality is singularly defined. The political definition of negation is an easy definition of negation, one that requires that its definition remain static. The double negative casts negative negation into doubt. A youth that Spit meets “denie[s] nothing” (26), a naked youth, “as if when he’d stripped off his clothes he’d also stripped off whatever it was that would make his face different from a thousand others” (26). Being stripped bare, stripped of the clothes that would name him, set him apart, identify him (name [trans. v.] 2. identify by name), allows the double negative. If one denies nothing, one asserts

everything, enacts possibility, enacts the breaking of form, allows agency to choose which side of the hyphenated identity to cultivate one's own form from. Or, as Wah writes, "the hyphen always seems to demand negotiation" (*Diamond* 137). Chinese-Canadian for Wah is a negation that inspires assertion. Call and response. Response negotiating call. Call recognizing response. Things with transparent meanings become nothing, ignorable, referents that do not need mediation. Know what that *thing* is, name it, thing it.

For example, conventional usage of the hyphen requires following the following imperatives:

2. Use hyphens with fractions used as adjectives;
5. Use hyphens with prefixes before proper nouns;
9. Use hyphens to prevent a word being mistaken for an entirely different word;
11. Hyphens are sometimes necessary to prevent ambiguity.<sup>36</sup>

But conventions and laws contain ambiguity. An attempt to provide the imperative that dictates interaction leads to an imperative that contains the word ambiguity. Laws function to dissolve ambiguity, as does naming. Ambiguity named results in more ambiguity. If a hyphen is necessary to prevent ambiguity, and the hyphen is used to more accurately name, the tendency towards accuracy betrays the mathematical inability for compound nouns to ever accurately name: "cord" is incomplete—"whistle-cord" ("Separating" 23) is more precise—train-whistle-cord would be even more precise, and so on. Language's ability to describe is limited: half the distance to accuracy leads to halving the distance in perpetuity.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> From *The Canadian Writer's Handbook*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2005, pp. 302-303.

<sup>37</sup> I am reminded of Jan Zwicky's thinking that "a proof in geometry is a gesture that allows other to see what we have seen... like a metaphor, it is a rhetorical strategy" (*Wisdom and Metaphor* 44), as is writing drawing attention to naming as a narrative strategy. She supplies one of James Robert Brown's Theorems on the opposing page,  $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} + \dots = 1$ . Using hyphens as a strategy locates the reader in the fact that naming with hyphens implies the infinite perpetuation of hyphens (as the ellipses in Brown's proof imply) as they are required for a solution of wholeness (or the whole number that the 1 on the right hand side of the equals sign denotes).



Can precision ever be named? Can naming's inherent ambiguity ever be named? Can what ambiguity implies ever be named?

In *Innocent Cities*, ambiguity forces its way into Kate McConnell's attending to the world. She tells Logan Sumner her story about Australia resonating her, unsettling her. It is worth quoting in full:

By the time I left Lilian's [Australian] plantation I realized that something disturbing had happened to me since I had first arrived on that continent. You must understand, Mr. Sumner, that when I left my childhood home in England I left behind a comfortable world of *things*, of real places and real trees and birds and buildings. But now I saw that I had exchanged it for a world made up of nothing but beautiful *words*.<sup>38</sup> The lovely, lovely sounds of the place had deceived me. When we'd first arrived on that continent I was charmed, I fell in love with the strangeness and beauty of their words, but in return<sup>39</sup> they pushed and jostled me aside in their greedy rush to germinate, it seemed to me, to sprout and burgeon and multiply, and throw out feelers and send up shoots. They intended to crowd me out!<sup>40</sup> Do you think this is a kind of madness? Listen! It is the fault of that old lunatic Adam who started it all, I think, and all his lunatic offspring males who became explorers and geographers and dictionary-makers – all of them wanting, I'm sure of it, to nail everything down into some sort of rigid identity in order to perpetrate some awful fiction upon us. That whole ancient worn-down flattened-out continent wished to strangle the breath out of me with the arms of its endless forest of *names*! (81-82)

The stories behind the names, and that Kate would be required to learn them and all their potentially uncomfortable implications, are what constrict the breath out of her. Kate refuses to embrace the challenge, to animate her agency as a listener to stories instead of a sieve for things, passing names through their precisely defined and small frames. Although Kate recognizes that she is a product of "lunatic Adam['s]" system, she is unable to extricate

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<sup>38</sup> Economy requires pasting words to things. We rarely have time to entertain the stories in everything around us. That words attach to things, that things are not described by the words that attach to them is a cognitive moment for Kate. Kate engages with language's arbitrariness, language's strategy of codifying in order to "comfort," to silence ambiguity.

<sup>39</sup> Re-turn. Turn again. Turn anew. The tension between these two moments is analogous to the hyphen's tension attempting to cohere two nouns into the same space. Two nouns occupying the same space creates a moment of parallax—the law of bounded space fractures.

<sup>40</sup> Egocentric structures of control, of definition, are replaced with an attention to the strategies in the structure itself.

herself from its controlling influences. Kate still requires that naming's strategies be invisible. And Hodgins requires that the reader be aware of the strategies that we require to remain invisible.

Fred Wah has made a career out of making what the hyphen occludes, visible, of taking the seemingly innocuous bit of punctuation and rendering its strategies, of making its silences, noisy, of living in its forest of names. I have been thinking past (or before) Wah's writing enacting a politics of resistance, attaining a "political writing stance" (38) when he aligns himself with other race writers. Fred Wah clays language; punctuation becomes punctum. Wah names the hyphen, the sign expanding to contain many metaphorical moments in much the same way that the sign of a name expands outward to contain many stories.

#### THE STORY OF WAH'S HYPHEN

The hyphen performs a certain kind of naming. The hybrid identity that the hyphen creates—not only the identity of people like in Chinese-Canadian, but the identity of objects like in "dog-eared" ("Spit" 202)—is both identity forming and performance: each can be imposed or desired. Both times, the performance is a strategy. The hybrid, the compound noun, and the hyphen implicated in both construct interaction. The hyphen articulates difference and "the business of separation" (207). Wah reads the hyphen in his own racialized identity; he responds to the identity that the name constructs for him by teasing out the metaphor hiding in the punctuation, by storying the hyphen. Fred Wah names the hyphen as punctum rather than punctuation, as moment for critical reflection on the way that language performs. The following story—"The Story of Wah's Hyphen"—is on the outside of Fred Wah's experience about being Chinese-Canadian (I am not), but turns inside out the strategy that Wah employs to make the story within the hyphen visible. The story is meant to

be spoken out loud, to be performed in order to make the punctuation that it talks about sonic, not silent. →

The hyphen. Chinese-Canadian. That seemingly innocuous piece of semiotic punctuation. Fred Wah is angry with it. He would like to crumple up the paper it sits on into a ball. He would like to remove its noose from his neck. He would like to blunt its two sharp points. Fred Wah is angry with the hyphen.

Fred Wah is inspired by the hyphen. The hyphen is his muse. Wah's hyphen does not "freeze" him as it does his "Dutch hyphen Canadian" (*Faking It* 92) colleague Aritha van Herk. Instead, I think, the hyphen's many ambiguities and tensions are formative for Wah, formative for both his Chinese-Canadian identity and writer identity. Wah's text coalesces into the metaphor that is leaking out of the hyphen. The hyphen, for Wah, inspires metaphor. Metaphor sits like a hyphen between Wah and his writer identity.<sup>41</sup>

Names and naming... indicate the camouflage possibilities of the name (both visible and invisible, both dash and cipher).

- from Fred Wah's *Faking It*, "Half-Bred Poetics" 79.

This textual and sonic performance-textualization inspired by the following question: how does Wah's complication of

the 'hyphen' affect our readerly apprehension of Wah's own written identity?<sup>42</sup> I propose that Wah is more complicit with than controlled by the hyphen in *Diamond Grill*.

The hyphen is visual when written: Chinese-Canadian. When spoken, the hyphen is a space, a slight pause, an easily forgotten silence: Chinese Canadian. The silence is different with Chinese/Canadian. The slash is sonic – it is punctuation that is more likely to be spoken: for example, *Diamond Grill*'s Swift Current is described as a "farmer [slash]

<sup>41</sup> Naming practices unexplored camouflage how we attend to the world; Wah and I want to wave the flag in naming's camouflage.

<sup>42</sup> The question was initially asked by Dr. Glenn Deer in his graduate seminar on Asian-Canadian and Asian-American texts.

working class town” (94). Fred Wah is importantly NOT Chinese SLASH Canadian. The slash separates, seems to offer choice: either/or it says, choose it says. The hyphen’s subtleties, ambiguities, and elisions is subsumed by its innocently smooth scansion, when the reading eyes move from left to right across it, over it, through it, without the typographical obstacle that a slash or even a virgule might provide. The act of naming with a hyphen can dissolve both the hyphen as component of naming strategy and what is implied by a hyphenated name or identity.

The hyphen is silence. The hyphen is a door: Chinese [*picture of door*] Canadian. A younger Fred Wah opens the café, alone. He writes of the silence in the café: “open up with a good swift toe to the wooden slab that swings between the Occident and Orient to break the hush of the whole café before first light the rolling gait with which I ride this *silence that is a hyphen and the hyphen is the door*” (16). Here he gestures towards two doors – the one into the café, and the one that separates the kitchen from the eatery, one that swings both inwards and outwards. The hyphen, as Wah has written it, sits between silence and door. Silence is... hyphen... is door. Or, perhaps, silence-door. Silence is mobilizing critique. The hyphen is mobilizing text. The door is mobilizing metaphor. The mobility in these three instances is ambiguous, incomplete, conditional, but wonderfully so. Fred Wah is more Chinese than Canadian [Chinese > Canadian] in a restaurant called Diamond Grill. Fred Wah is Canadian when he is picked for the Canadian-Anglo team in the school yard because he doesn’t look Chinese. The restaurant itself, one that serves mostly Canadian fare (whatever that may be), is Chinese-Canadian. Wah finds the hyphen’s “‘inbetweeness’... provocative” (*Faking It* 103). The mobility, the freedom, in the hyphen for Wah, I think, is the engagement with it that turns into metaphor in his own writing. This engagement is inspired both by the hyphen’s implicit elisions, its silence, it NOT speaking, and by it being a

door that swings both ways, a portal for the writer in Wah. Wah is drawing on a double identity when he writes – both Chinese  $\leftrightarrow$  Canadian are material for metaphor. The hyphen allows both identities to inform Wah's metaphors. The hyphen doubles the creative material/field in much the same way that a name's shortcomings inspires recognition of a name as a story, or of naming containing strategy of approach.

The hyphen is a doubling: Chinese + Canadian. Chinese(and)Canadian. There is also a doubling of meaning again, and perhaps a tripling and quadrupling, with metaphor. In "Half-Bred Poetics" the hyphen is written as, which is to say its function is analyzed as, a "property marker, a bounder post, a borderland, a bastard, a railroad, a last spike, a stain, a cipher, a rope, a knot, a chain (link), a foreign word, a warning sign, a head tax, a bridge, a no-man's land, a nomadic, floating magic carpet" (73). Wah's rendering of the hyphen into multiple, simultaneously functioning metaphors is analogous to a name's sign embedding multiple stories within it. Wah's strategy of rendering the hyphen into metaphor is textual; it

#### Patina

Sometimes it seems all surfaces  
are stubbled | the grassy knoll |  
the peach beard of promise just  
a grit shadow | manifest  
deceit | | sooner or later you kneel  
on pointed rhetoric and painted crevices |  
stumble | flail | | trouble is |  
wanting the map to mean before  
you've read it leaves out the dancing |

- from Bill New's *Raucus*, 42

mutates the restrictive definition that being named and categorized as Chinese-Canadian prescribes. That Wah employs a strategy that teases out the stories within the hyphen that keeps Chinese and Canadian together, authorizes the critical engagement with not only the close reading and writing about names as

textural but also as a narrative strategy of approach that tends towards storied potential and the problems with referentiality.

The hyphen is punctuation. Chinese ( Canadian. Chinese (parenthetical – an amplifying or explanatory word, phrase, or sentence) Canadian. Chinese (hyphen - a punctuation mark - used especially to divide or to compound words, word elements, or numbers) Canadian. As punctuation, the hyphen has an affinity with other punctuation. The hyphen is enamored with the parenthesis’ “provocative(ness),” or, at least, with half of it. Wah’s introduction of Garrett Brown’s *How to Beat the Game* on page 60 of *Diamond Grill* is followed by an open parenthesis. There is no closing parenthesis. Brown’s singularly racist reasoning-cum-analysis that follows is disallowed a definition that parallels the parenthesis’ own definition. Wah’s purposeful elision of the end parenthesis calls into question the “amplifying” or “explanatory” definitions for the paragraph that follows. Names, unexamined, neither amplify nor explain.

The hyphen is NOT a virgule. Wah is NOT Chinese | Canadian. The virgule is too physically present. It is too visually imposing – scansion stops at its wall. It is a wall, not a door. The wall more transparently signals meaning. Wah sees the resistance to the “hyphenated definition” (*Faking It* 92) manifesting more subtly in collegiate poets – one poet uses white space in the middle of lines between words; one poet plays with smaller, but more frequent, gaps, gaps of 2 or 3 spaces; one poet signals hyphenated meaning with her line breaks and enjambments. In these cases, the hyphen manifests as typographical absence, an absence that signals something more. W. H. New’s collection of poetry *Raucus* (1999) contains many virgules – noisy virgules, virgules as palpable presence. For New they are a strategy for amplifying meaning. For New they are “(a) a cadence stop (b) musical bar lines (c) geological claim lines, and probably (d) (e) and (eff too)” (*Email* 10/27/2003). For Wah, the hyphen’s invisibility is a strategy as well. The discovery of the virgules many amplifications is, in part, a discovery of absence, much as the search for stories in names

discovers the strategy absent in cursory readings of plot, character, and setting and the easily passed over “Jordan my name is.”

The hyphen is negation: Chinese NOT Canadian. In this rendering, subject position is imposed – Chinese are not, will never be, can not be Canadian because they are Chinese: See? Look?! Chinese! The visual in race requires, as Wah writes, “purity.” Purity is synonymous with “real” (54). Pure Chinese is *real* Chinese. But Wah draws attention to the fact that in Canada (and perhaps everywhere) there is no such thing as pure or real: “If you’re pure anything,” Wah writes, “you can’t be Canadian” (53). Wah resists an identity imposed through negation. “[S]top telling me,” Wah frustratedly writes, “what I’m not” (54). However, negation, the minus sign, the hyphen as negation, has also been additive for Fred Wah. It has allowed him to explore his own identity, his Canadian identity, his Chinese identity, his Chinese-Canadian identity, his “biotext” (ix) identity, his “faking it” (ix) identity, his poet identity, his fiction writing identity, and so on. Anne Carson writes in *Economy of the Unlost* that a negative statement “posits a fuller picture of reality than does a positive statement” (*Economy* 102). For example, when I say that the hyphen is not punctuation, I need to know what punctuation is/does, and further, offer my understanding of what the alternatives to hyphen as punctuation, or NOT punctuation, might be. Both the hyphen and the hyphen as negation have mobilized, to some degree, Fred Wah’s NOT silent text and analysis. The silence of names seeks a similar mobility: an engagement is required with what exists within the sign proper, and the implications of using naming a strategy to explicate how people strategize their approaches to the world through language.

Wah concludes with a noisy hyphen. Chinese ♪ Canadian. In the last fragment of *Diamond Grill*, Wah allows, Wah makes, Wah asserts that “the door clangs and rattles a noisy hyphen” (176). The final metaphor, the last hyphen in *Diamond Grill* is noisy, not

silent. Through an engagement with the noise Wah creates with his own treatment of the hyphen, the hyphen that connects a compounded noun also becomes noisy with the questions it inspires. Susan Hahn ends her poem titled “The Pity of Punctuation,” fittingly, with the period. She writes:

*...until finally the period did roll in so bleak  
and yet what a tiny thing it was  
as I began to feel the fade into  
the seamless midnight sky  
with my being given  
no choice but to curve onto the dot  
and disappear with it.*

The hyphen is NOT the period. Although Fred Wah is consumed by the hyphen, he does not disappear into it, or disappear with it. He explores and controls its ambiguities, assumed transparencies, and implicit possibilities. Wah, as Chinese-Canadian, is complicit with the hyphen’s noise. →

A similar exploration and attention is required when naming is employed, not only by Wah, and readers, but by Spit and Sumner.

## THE STORY OF SPIT’S RE-COGNITION

The shift that occurs in the occluded hyphen between the two stories about Spit involves a shift into complicity.

“Separating” and “Spit Delaney’s

Island” are written in different points

Attention is a task we share, you and I. To keep attention strong means to keep it from settling.

- from Anne Carson’s “Note on Method,” viii.

of view. “Separating” is told in the third person; “Spit Delaney’s Island” is in the first person. The marionette tense turns into the accountability tense. The objects that name Spit turn into objects that need storying. Guaranteed meaning turns into archeology when Spit makes a new story for himself, when, on a whim, he joins Phemie Porter (who calls her Albert Delaney, avoiding the moniker he hides behind, ignoring the spit of his judgment) on



a journey to the mountains. When in Phemie's company, "two big windows [are] divided into dozens of tiny panes" (224). Phemie teaches Spit that the outside frames of things are further divided into other frameable and readable things. The ability to read what is behind the names of things, what fragmentation makes up their stories, allows Spit to learn a self-reflexivity vis à vis what a system of naming instructs him about himself.

Spit's calls his train a "loci" (202). Locomotive, location, Loki (and Thomas King's coyote), and an oral emphasis of the letter i all exist in his naming. Perhaps a certain kind of madness of names, playful madness, Kate's madness, also exists in fracturing the *loco* from locomotive. Locomotive is easy. Location implies relational identity, one that accommodates both objectification and self-reflexivity. Loki is a trickster figure; maybe names are too: attached quietly like price-tags on garage-sale items, describing things so the cacophony of stories leaking out of them don't keep us up at night. Loki was also, as one website notes, a "Deconstructionist long before Derrida,"<sup>43</sup> a figure of boundary spaces, a player in the game of the boundedness of forms. When enunciated, loc-I returns to Spit, to an insistence of self-consciousness, of self-awareness, of Spit recognizing his life as "a story," an "offer[ing]" of "a bit of [him]self," an "expos[ure]" (232). Spit learns from Phemie about "going into yourself" (223). Phemie asks Spit a question: "Tell me a thing that you love and I'll tell you a thing about you"; Spit replies, "Old Number One," to which Phemie replies, "What? Old Number One? What's that? Do you mean yourself? Then you are a man who is trapped by your own limits" (229). Spit doesn't "correct" (229) her, the silence a negative space that admits partial complicity.

Loki playing with limits, with liminal spaces, reminds of Ricou's movement away from habituation, of learning "limits and possibilities—possibilities that will exceed limits"

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<sup>43</sup> <http://loki.ragnarokkr.com/pipindex.htm>.

(84). Exceeding reminds of Phemie's experience when American tourists laugh at her appearance—she experiences a feeling that “for just a split second [they] touched, [they] overlapped” (233). Phemie's moment reminds of Dennis Lee synonym for overlapped, and rhythms that attend to “the world as it *is*... not consecutive, but overlaid” (43). And overlaid reminds of the Arbutus' skin, and the shedding of that which contains us, names us, and moments of renewal and momentum. The act of reminding functions to enact complex, to name variously in order to name respectfully and interestingly.

#### THE STORY OF SUMNER'S RE-COGNITION.

Logan Sumner, by fits and starts and sweats, transforms throughout *Innocent Cities*. He is forced to attend to “blurring” (166). When Chu Lee decides against piloting Zach and Sumner's newest version of their flying machine, retreating to “several days of sulking in his own rooms in the labyrinth of Chinatown,” Sumner asks himself, “what sort of rooms?” (196). He doesn't know because it hadn't “occurred to him to wonder... it had always been enough to think of” (196) Chu Lee behind a “curtain” or “in a cupboard” in order that he not have to think about him. “Hadn't” here is mobilized into Carson's negation. A moment where Sumner entertains his own strategies of economy: the place named Chinatown is differentially diagnosed against Sumner's imagined (or not imagined) Chinatown and found inadequate—the discrepancy, the inadequacy reflects back onto Sumner himself, an inadequacy of his own approach and is annihilated with the negative “n't.” In this cognitive moment Sumner decides that he is more uncomfortable with the not knowing than the occluded knowing or not imagined knowing or imagined wrongly knowing and decides, in a re- moment mobilized by the failure of the sign/name “rooms,” that “certain things would have to be *reconsidered* all the way to their bottom” (197 emphasis added).

Logan's friend and partner, Zachary Jack, lives in a shack of words, of names: "*Bazaar... English Linen Billhead Paper... Zonder... Keatings Bon Bons or Worm Tablets... Fancy Goods*" (346), "FLOUR, DEZASSEIS, SIDE UP, WALKING" (193). The words are from boxes of supplies from trade ships dashed to pieces on intemperate West Coast shores; colonial ships destroyed leaving a series of uncontextualized names, names who've lost their utility, names used as siding for Zach's house. The named objects' utility is shifted. Zach doesn't have much use for locating names on their proper things. Zach is often jailed because of "disturbing the peace" (149), which is to say mis-naming. Mrs. Gristle, apparently, made apparent by a night behind bars, is a "lady" not a "squaw" (151). Zach calls a tree a "lahb," when in fact it's an arbutus, is "corrected," takes exception to the correction, and is thrown into jail. When Logan bails him out he asks, "this tree, what is the name a person has to use if he don't want to be tossed in that skookum-house again?" (149). The playful conversation that follows is all about naming and its arbitrariness, a conversation that Logan recognizes that Zack is "staging" (150). *Arbutus menziesii* (latin trees in Canada) it's called because it reminded someone of a European strawberry tree, a naming after. Zack asks, "why do the Yankees call the same tree something else right over there across the strait. 'Madrona.'," another naming after, maybe, by a Spaniard in California after "a cousin over in Spain with that name" (151). Logan replies, "maybe he [the namer] was born on this continent too, and thought he had the right to name the things he saw" (151), a right not extended to Zachary Zach. That Zach can *not* name is Zach's negation, a negation that also informs Logan's transformation. Zach's point here is that the power of naming should never be left implicit.

Logan, when the city council decides to demolish his monstrous tombstone, at first resists their reading of his tombstones as a "romantic and exaggerated fiction" (404):

Such excess of the individual imagination was both unseemly and uncharacteristic of the nation to which they now belonged [and] Sumner was required to demolish his ridiculous palace of fantastical words immediately, and to replace it with a stone as small and insignificant as possible, and to promise to confine himself... to the simplest historical facts, 'which, being *actual*, will be far more interesting to the visitor passing through the cemetery at some future date than this fanciful nonsense about a person who, frankly, never really existed.' (405)

Facts. Names. Named things. Economy. Quiet. Logan acquiesces because he can't "remember any more why the tombstone had been important" (405). He has a wife, a child on the way, a job that allows him to create architecture out of his imagination, "real" and "actual" architecture that will be "history." Logan Sumner does not need the tombstone anymore. Not: named as such it is both a recognition of the strategy that kept him alive (the irony of gravestones keeping one alive a good story), and a recognition that certain strategies transform into other strategies. Not: named as such it plays with the

Our nature lies in movement; complete calm is death.

- From Bruce Chatwin's *Songlines*, 163, from Pascal's *Pensees*.

*actual* in opposition to the *imaginative*, the conversation between the two, the fictions that are required and the fictions that we create. Not: named as such it returns to naming, to parallax, to the names for things as fictions, and the fictions or stories in the names for things. Not remembering his need means the naming he engaged in turned to story, story unlatched to place, stone, or name, but to self.

Ricou ends *The Arbutus/Madrone Files* with the *Anasayú File*, fragmenting again into "Tree Language," "Borderline," "Topographies," "Penumbra," and "Arbutus/Madrone." I have always wanted to replace the / in the title with a hyphen, a negation and replacement that joins, but that makes the joining problematic, occlusions in smooth scansion. Ricou's choice, however, is carefully accurate. They are two names, separate and unique, each with their own stories. But that they have stories makes them similar, the stories in names makes

them more proximal than distal. The point in the complex created by the many namings in Ricou's last file has to do with naming, with the language of shedding (bark), layering and embedding, arbitrary borders, vertices that respond to the setting-against-demarcation of horizontal lines, and locating oneself within penumbra space in order to locate self not statically but in movement and process. And with an examination of the minutiae in language, of the different names for different things, which is to say the different stories of different things, of the separate stories from a pool of storied attending. And with close reading of punctuation, reading that which should rightly not be read, that functions to assist words proper, to separate to mean, punctuation that should remain silent, that does remain silent for many, functional.

*Innocent Cities* also ends with silence, in part. Kate Horncastle and Norah Horncastle have identities not unremoved from their hatred from each other, inseparable and intertwined. They sit at opposite tables in the Red Geranium,<sup>44</sup> Tuesday after Tuesday, not speaking. The last paragraph of the novel: "I don't know exactly what's going on here, but I know that one of them is keeping the other one alive, and one of them is allowing the other to try it... they're trying to build some kind of new language between them, to build something out of silence that isn't death" (413). Their language in silence: the language of "despair and pleading, hope and reassurance, resentment and hatred, forgiveness and love, fear and calm" (413). They communicate without speaking. Their silence is a story that speaks. Listening to names, to their silences turning into stories and what stories communicate about naming, narrative strategies, cognitive schemas and ourselves is what is learned from Kate and Norah's communicative silence. That names name their stories if only we would look and

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<sup>44</sup> Why is it called this? I wonder.

listen is what we learn from naming as a strategy of attending. Naming's stories enact the crossing of formal boundaries, enact mobility.



## Definition 3.5

**namer** [f. NAME v.<sup>1</sup> + -ER<sup>1</sup>.]

One who, or that which, gives a name or names.

## Chapter 3.5

**Named Choices: Pedagogy and “directing the reader outward into the ongoing processes of pattern, story, and change” (*Dreams xi*)***duff* (n.)

1. *a boiled or steamed pudding often containing dried fruit*
2. *the partly decayed organic matter on the forest floor*
3. *fine coal*
4. *buttocks*
5. *an badly-hit, off-center golf shot*
6. *an Australian sheep thief*
7. *my name*
8. *what people call me*

**THE STORY OF MY DAD'S STORIES.**

I have patterned my telling on some of the best storytellers I know: Hodgins, Malouf, King, McKay, Wah, Carson, Ricou, New, and my father. My father told my wife a story the other day, a story about how he was saved by a pit-bull once. You see, he was dating this woman who was short on cash, which he didn't mind so much cause he had lots, and who owned a pit-bull. My father came to the conclusion that anyone who owned a pit-bull was extremely needy and so he got out of the relationship as fast as he could. That was his story about how a pit-bull saved him. Those are the stories my dad tells.

I knew there was something fishy about the story from the beginning; my wife didn't; I know how my dad tells stories. Knowing that he was employing a strategy didn't make the

story any different: it was just as wonderful. I've only ever known my dad through the stories he tells, picking through the desuetude washed up by the tide of his imagination and history. What I learn about my father—about the War, about emigrating to Canada, about farming, about hippies, about Californian jails, about his father teaching him chess while he teaches me chess—is always mediated by the stories he tells, by the act of telling. It took me a long time to learn that *how* he crafted stories was always more important to me than the facts in story. Maybe that's why I'm writing about the stories in names—the texture leaking out of text—and narrative strategies, and cognitive models that tell me about me, and the world. And maybe not, maybe I'm just a storyteller like my dad.

Thomas King ends *The Truth About Stories* with “Afterwords: Private Stories.” “For Native storytellers,” he writes, “there is generally a proper place and time to tell a story” (153). Context latches to storytelling, propriety too. King makes the distinction between different types of stories: “Oral stories. Written stories. Public stories. Private stories. Stories I can tell out loud. Stories I cannot” (154). He then goes on to tell a private story about the Cardinal family and him, one that probably doesn't rightly have a proper place and time, one that he doesn't want to tell, one about a family he knew, and abandonment, sadness, ethics, and saying platitudes “because it's what you're supposed to say, not because it's true” (161) even though everybody knows it. It's probably a story you should read for yourself, a story about “the myriad of other codes of conduct suggested by our actions” and how we've “created the stories that allow them to exist and flourish” (164). But mostly it's a story about telling the stories that we don't want to tell, of enacting story even when it makes us uncomfortable, when it posits a lack of guaranteed meaning.

I asked myself early on in the process of writing this thesis why King chooses to end with his personal story. Part of the answer is embedded in the irony of King's “truth about



stories.” When we search for truth, we find story. When we find story, we enact multiple possible readings. When we find multiple possible readings, we embrace ambiguity. Truth is ambiguous. While King’s story itself is important (perhaps more so to him than me), as is the knowing of as many stories as possible and their myriad of implications about how we attend to the world, the act of choosing to tell it is more so.

#### THE STORY OF MY CHOICES.

I have chosen my theoretical texts for what I have been calling pedagogical reasons. I would put every single one of my theoretical texts on a course syllabus for first-year English; I plan on doing so when I begin teaching. They are accessible, I think, precisely because they tell stories, first, and let their stories think through naming. Thomas King tells stories about how we tell stories, about how stories and their telling function. Anne Carson tells the story of Simonides’ epitaphs, and how the geography of stone forces a layering of meaning, layering through the linguistic strategy of negation. Laurie Ricou tells a story about the Pacific Northwest, about its literatures, its ecology, its names, its lessons about the un-bounding of boundaries. Fred Wah tells the story of his writing, of his life in *Diamond Grill*, and of the hyphen, making its silence noisy. Don McKay tells the story of a raven killed with a shotgun and strung up with bailertwine to evidence the act, re-stories Genesis, wraps his mind around ideas of “utility” and “homage” and “envisaging” and, of course, metaphor—McKay tells a story about poetry.

What I like about these texts is the different ways in which they engage with naming. King says that stories is “all we are”—stories name us. Kim Stafford says that “there are no names but stories”—names are stories. McKay writes “name as epitaph” (89)—mobile stories are behind those astonishingly un-mobile forms. Ricou says “Arbutus/Madrone” and “files” together—names are category and “kinesis” (90), kinetic thread. Malouf unsettles

settling. Hodgins writes characters who have cognitive moments enacted by a failure of referent, by the instability of the names of things.

What I like about naming for students is what happens in that moment when I say I'm interested in naming and they reply, "naming what?" To which I reply naming everything, its all about naming; and how we name is a reflection on how we index interaction, of the cognitive schema that inform our naming strategies. I like watching what happens to students' faces when they have a recognitive moment. What I like about naming as a narrative strategy is that it allows (forces) students (and me) to stay close to the text, to perform close readings—to look at the strategies employed rather than the one who employs them, to look at ambiguous pronouns and repeated words, to look at metaphors and their lies, to engage with the text itself, with its aesthetics, its sensed and sensual qualities, to *be specific*.

What I like about names is what is hiding behind them (they turn me into an Archeologist)—etymologically, their stories, the slippage that sometimes happens with them, to them, that gets me closer to them and their storied potential. Sumner slips into Summer and addition and summoner. Don McKay knows Trevor Goward, a lichenologist. Don McKay became engaged with Goward even before he knew him as a result of a his metaphor: "lichens are... fungi that have discovered agriculture" (105), which is a naming. Goward is also committed to "the spread of enlichenment" (105), another naming. I am engaged by the slippage, by word play and name play, in much the same way that Fred Wah is engaged by the slippage when he types "poetics of the potent," when potent becomes 'poetent' becomes poet-tent (*Faking* 194).

What I like about writing about names is what it mobilizes in my peers, the stories of their interaction with naming in literature, the space that the topic seems to create for those

engaging with writers who name. Laura Moss, in reviewing the Gil Courtemanche text-box epilogue in Chapter 2 and Claxton's translation of it, wanted me to delve deeper into the elision of "nom," got excited by it. Travis Mason emailed me the following two quotations, the first from *The Songlines* by Bruce Chatwin (1988), the second from Thomas Henry Huxley's essay "Science and Culture" (1881):

"Put it this way," he said. "Anywhere in the bush you can point to some feature of the landscape and ask the Aboriginal with you, 'What's the story there?' or 'Who's that?' The chances are he'll answer 'Kangaroo' or 'Budgerigar' or 'Jew Lizard,' depending on which Ancestor walked that way" ... "And the distance between two such sites can be measured as a stretch of song?" [The question is rhetorical]. (13)

So, if any of these opponents [to scientific education] be left, I will not waste time in vain repetition of the demonstrative evidence of the practical value of science; but knowing that a parable will sometimes penetrate where syllogisms fail to effect an entrance, I will offer a story for their consideration. (526-7).

Thinking about the spaces between names (and perhaps names themselves) as "songs" is slippery (and a good) "entry." And before I had even drafted my introduction—or chosen Malouf and Hodgins, or read Fred Wah, or knew that Duff was "a boiled or steamed pudding often containing dried fruit"—Bill New put the following passage in my box in the English office with sticky note attached, "Duffy – Thought you might enjoy this phrase. Cheers, Bill":

We know almost nothing of this lute-maker except the year he arrived... We don't even know his real name: Martinengo is a town in Austrian Italy where he may have lived for a while, Leonardo could have been his baptismal name... and Giovanni is an Italian version of Juan. So our luthier's name was itself a collection of stories. He was a composite man – made up of many different parts, rather like one of his own lutes. (*Colour – Travels Through the Paintbox*, 193).

And my wife, Kristina, who does not care much for my academic writing, who gets lost in the words, liked it when I read her my story of my dad's story and the line "the texture leaking out of text."

We are all namers. We are all storytellers. Naming's ubiquity requires attention. Fractaline moments occur in the re-cognition that occurs when attending to narrative strategies of naming.<sup>45</sup>



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<sup>45</sup> Duffy was my grandmother's maiden name. She was a writer. I never knew her.

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