Reading the "Deep Talk" of Literary Names and Naming

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   Literary texts contain poetic names whose "deep talk," or connotative value, is hidden beneath the primary level of the text. Within this level of discourse production, names have the ability to subvert, invert, and create meanings and actions that open a text to radical interpretive possibilities. To read through names and naming is to seek out the manipulative play of poetic names so that their function as strategies of discourse production is revealed and understood.

This study highlights the use of names as both disruptive and creative forces within the context of African American literary culture and proposes a strategy of reading black literature through the analysis of polyvocal names. Instead of insisting that a name refer to a specific object or concept exclusively, I argue that poetic names[1] contain semiotic spaces that describe, refer to, and voice a kind of deep talk of their own within an encoded text. This deep talk is the interpretive discourse, or utterances, of a poetic name that expresses actions and onomastic intent. It assumes multileveled interpretative roles within literature — roles that pivot upon a name's use as symbolic, metaphoric, metonymic, or allegorical discourse. By reading through names and naming, a researcher can go beyond explanations of symbols and symbolism and examine *how* names function as radical strategies of discourse production. Using the name *Tod Clifton* from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and *Lorraine* from Gloria Naylor's *Women of Brewster Place* (among others) as sample readings, I introduce a method of reading the deep talk of literary names and demonstrate how a reader might recognize its effects.

The theoretical postulates I present constitute a transformation or reorganization of three primary theories of referential onomastics. The first of the these theories was initiated by Gottlob Frege over a hundred years ago. The basic concepts of his Sense Theory originate from a belief that proper names have both connotation and denotation in the form of sense (Bedeutung) and reference. For Frege, sense determines reference and nothing outside of this criterium can influence how a name realizes its object. The second theory, the Description Theory, was introduced by Bertrand Russell in 1918. Russell contends that the signs we normally consider proper names (John, Linda, Saul etc.) are really disguised definite descriptions, truncated sets or clusters of meanings synonymous with systems of objects.[2] In other words, proper names are a shorthand for descriptions and *not* names at all. The Causal Theory of reference is the third model. This theory was introduced in a 1970 series of lectures given by Saul Kripke at Princeton University. Kripke insists that rigid designation, fixing a referent, assures the correlation between meaning and object designation. After a referent is fixed through an initial use, that name denotes the referent in all possible worlds or situations. This relationship is maintained by a causal chain of reference that does not allow new information concerning an object or a name's use (such as symbolic intent and other meanings, for example) to effect reference as determined by its original descriptive designation.

An analysis of literary names and naming must explore the connotative value of names as enunciative acts in order to not only determine reference but also to surmise their discursive potential and meaning. Therefore, my paradigm of reading through names and naming uses Kirpke's concept of rigid designation only as a point of departure. It ignores Russell's dismissal of traditional proper names as names, but preserves his notion of names as truncated discourses that explain the role a name plays within particular contexts. And it modifies Frege's Sense Theory by allowing images, customs and beliefs provoked by the mention of a name to influence that name's internal textual spaces, its framework of sense.

Unlike Kirpke, Frege and Russell, I am not particularly concerned with keeping language restricted within rigidly defined boundaries. Because a name achieves meaning accumulatively,

function, source, and context play a vital role in determining its
meaning and reference. The source of an utterance (the speaker's
intuitive relationships and world-view) informs how a concept and its
meaning can be interpreted whenever a name or naming expression
is employed. The context (conditions of a world or world-view in
which particular statements arise) determines a name's symbolic,
iconic or metaphorical function. With this in mind, it is important
that both the surface and substance of a name's enunciation is
examined; thereby, assigning to reference a doubling effect (at least).

Like any word, a poetic name functions within a conceptual field
of language, a referential order. Some theorists might call these
fields of onomastic idiolects. I call them lifeworlds.[3] Lifeworld, as I
use the term, refers not only to the conceptual field of language but
also the world-view it articulates, creates and organizes. The life-
world of a poetic name is defined by the world-view and intent of the
speaker. Harriet Wilson's novel *Our Nig* (1859) is a perfect example
of why source (intent) must determine meaning and reference.

Wilson's authorial pseudonym is written as the last line of the
book's title: "BY 'OUR NIG.'" Because both the title and the
authorial pseudonym include the epithet *Nig*, Henry Louis Gates
almost ignored the value of his literary find, thinking it was just
another white-authored, "slave" novel. Gates comments that "Since
I did not especially relish the notion of entering this fabricated racist
world, I put *Our Nig* on the shelf where it sat for about one year"
(Curtis and Gates, 28). In his world-view, the connotation of the
name *Nig* was negative — even derogatory. A nineteenth-century
African American woman would never assign such a name to herself.
But in the author's world-view the name is not an insult; it is a
mark of parody and functions as a caricature. A reader who is
familiar with both the word's derogatory intent and its new intent
might still detect the pejorative connotation of the name echoing
around the edges of the caricature, however. To clarify the name's
meaning, something more is needed. The word *Nig* does not change
its meaning unless we consider the sense intended by the source —
the referential order of the utterance. This intent defines the word's
lifeworld. Once the referential order of the name's lifeworld is
determined, the reader is on the path to understanding and experi-
encing the name's connotative value, its deep talk.

The interplay of two principle actions is involved in the development of a name's connotative value: the insertion of historical content into a name and that name's subsequent insertion into a narrative event. The interpolated historical content of which I speak is the residue of social and cultural modes of presentation that collapse into frameworks of internalized dialogical relations. Because of historical content and its use within a narrative situation, certain names can be viewed as more than referential designators; they are utterances, speaking actors that motivate narrative events. Such names can revise, parody, invert, and subvert primary language structures and world-views or manipulate moments of charactonymic, iconic and symbolic development.

The use of single quotes and capitalization in the authorial pseudonym above announces the presence of a hostile force which parodies the centered epithet. The name caricature does not follow the direction of the original word's intent; instead, it violently pulls against that direction, causing the word to function in a manner foreign to it. The causal chain of reference is interrupted and the word breaks apart, fragments into two separate words. The result is a name that not only represents the novel's protagonist, but also represents the author herself, Harriet Wilson. As the name is used within the novel, its deep talk functions symbolically beneath the surface to signify upon (parody, subvert and revise) both nineteenth-century American society's use of the word *nig* (i.e., *nigger*) and the socio-cultural ideologies supporting it.

Wilson's use of this formula to subvert a derogatory practice is not an isolated case. Names in African American literature often function as a means of subverting negative naming practices through revision. These revisions reinscribe not only the idea of a human presence within the fictional lifeworld of the black name but also a revised perceptual identity for the character. In almost all of African American literature, the narrator focuses on the relationship between perceptual identity (the way a character sees him or herself) and personal or proper names at some point within the work. This preoccupation with names is often so intense that naming and namelessness become central focuses of the narrative's story (such as in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*). In other cases, the question of a name's function seems to be just beneath the surface of the

narrative, breaking through occasionally to disrupt, revise, invert, confirm or challenge the main action of narrative events. Such is the case with the name *Pilate* in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*.

Pilate is a name that speaks of the past — an African American historical past in which an illiterate people blindly chose names for their children from the Bible.[4] The story of the character's naming, as presented within Morrison's novel, repeats this history and informs the historical content of the name; thereby, giving the name the interpretative force of an icon. The connotations of the name *Pilate* speak of both the character and a historical mode of naming. Morrison, however, has revised or rewritten this history by choosing to name her character not blindly, but purposefully. The name emerges in the text as a word with dual significance, speaking of both a character and the author's revisionary action.

Two processes are involved in creating a name's dual signif- icance. The first, *name fragmentation*, occurs when events in the narrative organize themselves so that a character's name fluctuates, or is otherwise transmuted.[5] The second process is called the *irruption of the true-real* — textual situations of delusional engage- ment that allow aberrant voices to emerge and function beneath the surface text. When these two processes merge, the influence of the dominant Referential Order is decentered, displaced by the marginal discourse.

If we follow a character's name from its inception within a novel throughout the text, we discover that, in many cases, the interpretive function of that name changes or the name itself is graphically mutated as the story progresses. I call the processes that create these mutations and changes "name fragmentation rituals." There are three types: naming, unnaming, and renaming.[6] When poetic names or name phrases function only as supplements to a character's original designator, naming has occurred. In *Invisible Man*, for example, Lucius Brockway, the old man who operates the machinery at Liberty Paints, is called an "old-fashioned, slavery-time, mammy- made, handkerchief-headed bastard" (227). The name phrase is an insult. It expresses Invisible Man's hostility towards Brockway, but does not replace the original name of the character in the text. It is merely a designator supplement. Unnaming, on the other hand, occurs when such a name, nickname or epithet replaces the original

designator within the text. It is often accompanied by a sense of namelessness — especially if a pejorative name or name phrase replaces the original designator. Unnaming occurs systematically throughout Ernest Gaines' *A Gathering of Old Men* (*A Gathering*). The character Robert Louis Stevenson Banks, for instance, is unnamed by the novel's white characters who refuse to acknowledge his formal name and refer to him as "Chimley."

The third fragmentation ritual, renaming, occurs when a name is redefined or revised as a homonym of the original or when a new designator contains the original name as a part of its phonetic or graphemic makeup. Such names can either replace the original name within the novel or function as a supplement to the original. In Sherley Anne Williams' *Dessa Rose*, the title character's name is changed in this manner several times. She is identified as Dessa, Odessa, and Dessa Rose. Each name designation represents the main character's development into a self-defined individual. As Dessa, the protagonist can only *envision* herself as elusive and able to resist opposition; she has community, friends, and the potential for love and freedom. As Odessa, she is merely a shadow of this image, a shadow defined by the world-view of slave masters. As Dessa Rose she is truly free and self-defined. She is a part of a maternal family line — an ancestral foundation that gives her continuity, beauty, and pride.

Since surface and encoded texts develop within separate onomastic fields (or lifeworlds) the effects of fragmentation rituals such as those in *Dessa Rose*, *Invisible Man* and *A Gathering* create and modify a novel's encoded text. In the surface text, a name refers to the same spatio-temporal being in all possible situations and nothing else — whether that character is present or not. This name is a subject persona designator. The names Dessa, Odessa, and Dessa Rose all denote the protagonist in the surface text of Williams' novel. In the encoded text, however, these names represent three distinct subpersonae manifestations of the protagonist. All names that emerge from fragmentation rituals, whether homonyms of the original or an entirely different word or name phrase, refer to or speak of sub-personae manifestations, class distinctions, and hierarchical relations. These names function as subject positions within the encoded text. The use of these names as symbols, metonyms, or iconic analogies within the encoded text are position effects.[7]

The second process through which a name can achieve dual significance, the irruption of the true-real, can only occur within moments of "iconic identity delusion." Much of African American literature concerns itself with revealing the foreclosed elements of social consciousness through a hidden discourse, a narrative or discursive act submerged beneath or embedded within primary linguistic structures. At certain points within the text this second discourse is allowed to emerge in the form of mistaken identity, epiphanies, dreams, role playing, apparitions, psychotic episodes or as a moment of narrative dissonance (i.e., ambiguity or name fluctuations). These moments within the text unfold dramatically, imposing themselves upon the surface narrative's ordered social and historical definitions of character identity, action, and referential order. I identify these points as "iconic identity delusions," moments within a narrative when a marginal discourse, like the true-real, breaks free of symbolic stagnation or foreclosure, intervenes within the surface text and cunningly opens it to radical interpretive possibilities.

'True real' (vreel) is a term coined by Julia Kristeva to represent a disruptive force in discourse, an "obsessive fear" of the truth as the 'real' (216-17).[8] The term *true-real*, as used in this study, is a perception, sense or concept that is implausible within and denied by the fictional world's dominant laws of socialization and Referential Order.[9] In its role as an absent, yet ambiguously present, force within a name, the true-real cannot be neutralized by systems of meaning that attempt to foreclose or disavow its movements. (Only a second episode of iconic identity delusion involving that name's fragmentation can do that). The true-real fills the gap between a name as connotative signifier and its role as a subject persona designator. The true-real is an impossible or aberrant "truth" revealed through a name's deep talk, giving the name the ability to become and represent something other than what it seems on the surface. These fragmented names are iconically charged and function as both signified and signifier of a subversive intratextual action, idea, or event. The irruption of the true-real is the emergence and articulation of an actor's true position, role, viewpoint, or voice within the textual spaces of a poetic name.

In Gloria Naylor's *Women of Brewster Place*, for instance, the
irruption of the true-real occurs within the deep talk of the name
Lorraine. This deep talk is created by and expressed through the
poetic names associated with the character and assists in telling a
story of difference, sacrifice and hope. Lorraine is a lesbian, an
outcast of both society and the community in which she lives. She is
called various names: "Miss Innocent," "butch," "dyke," "lesbo,"
"freak," "cunt," and finally "a tall yellow woman in a bloody green
and black dress" (145, 162, 170, 173). In the surface text, her status
as outsider ends with a rape that breaks the barriers of difference
separating her from the community of women in which she lives. In
the encoded text, the voice of dual significance emerges through a
strategic manipulation of the names, epithets, and naming expres-
sions associated with Lorraine. On this level of interpretation, the
character is the vehicle through which a Christlike sacrifice and
resurrection, issuing hope for all of Brewster Place's women, is
made. Reading through names and naming shows that in the encoded
discourse of the novel, her name becomes one that not only denotes
an archetypal symbol of hope, but also iconically represents the
obliteration of female difference.

Lorraine's transformation into a symbol of hope begins as the
result of name fluctuation. During a tenants' meeting, her presence
is violently objected to by another female character, Sophie, who
raises a statue the text describes as being "like a crucifix" (145) and
points it towards Lorraine. "Don't stand there like you a Miss
Innocent," Sophie says as she points the statue. The use of the term
"Miss Innocent" is a name fluctuation whose deep talk signals an
interpretive event.[10] In this scene, the statue Sophie holds is trans-
formed into the Christian symbol of spiritual sacrifice and personal
suffering, the crucifix of innocence, the crucifix of Jesus Christ.

This symbolically fraught event brings to light the many parallels
between Lorraine's plight and the religious archetype that are
developed later in the novel. Like Jesus, she is misunderstood and
rejected by her own people; she is an outcast who becomes a sacrifice
for the promise of hope. But this is not all that happens in this
scene. The character Lorraine is called out of her name. As a result,
renaming occurs allowing space for the irruption of the true-real.
Symbolic discourse breaks away from the name's use as a referent

for the character and becomes an actor within the text, an actor whose subject effects embody the true-real and whose subject position identifies *Lorraine* as a community scapegoat and sacrificial lamb. Woven into the story of her brutal rape is a story of a subject position's sacrifice, death, and resurrection; and a position effect's message of hope.

Gaining an understanding of how this encoded story develops is dependent upon several additional name fragmentations and even a few metaphorical character transformations. This story's first *metaphorical* transformation does not occur with Lorraine, however, but with Ben, the janitor and building handyman, who develops a father/daughter relationship with her. Through their relationship, Ben is transformed into a creative god-like figure. In his basement apartment, Ben nurtures and "re-creates" Lorraine until her "fading spirit" (145) is transformed. Tee, Lorraine's lover, acknowledges this change when she notices that there was a "firmness in her [Lorraine's] spirit that hadn't been there before" (155). This event, situates Ben as god-figure and Lorraine as his creation. Ben's new role becomes a part of his name's descriptive discourse, its deep talk. Whenever the name is used thereafter, the subject position of a god-figure accompanies it.

This relationship also reinforces the deep talk of the poetic name *Lorraine*, a subject position whose truncated discourse describes the character's symbolic role as the salvation and hope for all of Brewster Place's women. Yet, this promise of hope is realized by the community only after another name fragmentation, preceded and followed by several incidents of iconic identity delusion, occurs. After her rape, Lorraine is described as "a tall yellow woman in a bloody green and black dress" (173). Both the character and her name disappear from the text and are replaced by the naming phrase. Lorraine is unnamed. In the surface text, the phrase is a subject persona designator that refers to the entity previously known as Lorraine. Within the encoded text, it serves as a metonymic incarnation of the Christian archetype presented throughout Lorraine's story. It is through the experience of this name's deep talk that all of the women on Brewster Place comprehend the true-real and receive "salvation."

The text tells us that after Lorraine was abandoned by her assaulters, her body "fell over like an unstringed puppet.... Lorraine lay pushed up against the wall on the cold ground with her eyes staring straight up into the sky" (171). The use of the phrases "unstringed puppet" and "cold ground" conjures images of lifelessness and signals the character's spiritual death. Symbolically, her battered body and distorted mind are the traces of the pain, mental impairment, and spiritual decay that all of Brewster Place's women have suffered at some point within the novel. As she lies in the alley, silenced by a dirty bag the men jammed into her mouth and bloodied by the brutality of their sexual abuse, she pays the price of silent, personal sacrifice demanded by her role as the archetypal promise of salvation.

Similar to the Christian archetype, Lorraine's physical being rises from its stillness after hours of painful suffering and is resurrected from a death-like paralyses. But unlike Christ, Lorraine kills her creator. Naylor allows this through the use of an iconic identity delusion (mistaken identity) facilitated by Lorraine's hysteria. In the description of this delusional experience, Ben's name is changed and he is referred to as "the movement by the wall" and "the movement on Brewster Place" (172). Lorraine attacks the movement with a brick. In the surface text it is the movement that was "[a]lmost in perfect unison with the sawing pain that kept moving inside of her," the dehumanized residue of rape, that Lorraine attacks (172). But in the encoded text, something more occurs.

The delusional episode involving Ben is the mark of an unstable point in the text as well as in the character, a point of narrative displacement. This break with the religious archetype results in a distorted version of the murder of the Father (i.e. the indefinable movement of God). In order to maintain the narrative theme of a healing community which is *woman* centered, Naylor's characters must reject the male image of God (because it is male). To this end, Lorraine strikes out against it — killing it. A second break between the Biblical Jesus and Lorraine exists in the vehicle and purpose of their resurrection visits. As a result of her spiritual death, all of the women and female children of Brewster Place are visited (or haunted) by the spirit of "the tall yellow woman in the bloody green

and black dress [who] came to them in the midst of the cold sweat of a nightmare, or had hung around the edges of fitful sleep" (175-76). These dreams are a shared delusional experience for all of Brewster Place's women, an experience of the true-real.

Beneath the surface text, the name phrase, "the tall yellow woman in the bloody green and black dress," serves as both signified and signifier of that which obliterates difference. The name as metonym is separated from its original referent, thereby, creating an identity gap. Within that space its denotative and connotative values are split. In other words, the name's function is doubled. It denotes both an iconic analogy of the Christian archetype of hope (a subject position) and an event in which delusional experiences irrupt and destroy imposed symbols of difference (a position effect).

The haunting image of Lorraine's disembodied spirit indicts the women's prejudices as partially responsible for her pain and also identifies them as the community for whom she has suffered and survived. Because a shared experience is necessary to install the novel's underlying promise of hope, all of Brewster Place's women must suffer and acknowledge their guilt. A collective experience of delusional engagement occurs as the women and young girls of Brewster Place dream. During these experiences Lorraine's pain "spreads" and becomes their pain and her creator's blood, their blood. Note how Naylor describes Kiswana's reaction to one of the "bloodstained" bricks that has been ripped from the wall where Ben was killed and Lorraine was beaten and raped: "Kiswana looked down at the wet stone and her rain-soaked braids leaked onto the surface, spreading the dark stain. She wept and ran to throw the brick spotted with *her blood* out into the avenue" (187, my emphasis).

This scene is a part of one character's experience (Mattie) of the dream delusion. The phrase "her blood" is ambiguous and indicates a point of narrative dissonance within the text. Whose blood is on the brick? In Mattie's nightmare, the blood on the brick is Kiswana's blood and by extension her blood. "It's spreading all over," she says (186). The name, "the tall yellow woman in the bloody green and black dress" itself speaks of this meshing of identities. Its connotations do not highlight Lorraine's sexual preference, her difference. It merely speaks of a *woman*.

The text tells us that all of the women on Brewster Place experience dream-visits from this woman. They all find their identities meshed with hers. All of Brewster Place's women suffer the irruption of that which was once foreclosed and considered implausible: the irruption of the truth as that which they "knew, and yet didn't know," the 'real' (176). Because of this name's position effects, both the reader and the women of Brewster Place are forced to recognize a very important truth: "regardless of race, regardless of social status, regardless of sexual preference, the commonality is the female experience. When you reduce that down in this society even to something as abysmal as rape, there is no difference between women" (Naylor, quoted in Goldstein 36).

Reading through the name *Tod Clifton* (Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*) provides an example of a name fragmentation that neutralizes the true-real. Unlike the name *Lorraine,* whose fragmentation involves a series of renaming rituals, the name *Tod Clifton* fragments only twice: once by way of renaming and once through unnaming. Unnaming occurs when a lexical meaning of the word *Tod* (meaning death in German) "calls out to" and ultimately usurps the connotative value of the name as a poetic word.

The underlying motivation of Ellison's novel is the protagonist's search for a "true name." As the invisible man contemplates the similarities between himself and Fredrick Douglass he wonders what Douglass' "true name" had been and concludes that:

> [w]hatever it was, it was as *Douglass* that he became himself, defined himself.... Perhaps the sense of magic lay in the unexpected transformations. 'You start Saul, and end up Paul,' my grandfather had often said. 'When you a youngun, you Saul, but let life whup your head a bit and you starts to trying to be Paul — though you still Sauls around on the side.' (381)

Invisible Man has found the key to reading names: the unexpected transformations. It is through the experiences of another character, however, that both the reader and Invisible Man are first reminded of the source of one's true name. As a result of Tod Clifton's "unexpected transformation," we discover that in the world of Invisible Man the only means of defining a "true" self is in discover-

ing "Saul." Like the words *Tod Clifton*, *Saul* is a poetic name whose deep talk speaks of the margins of society, the novel's black community and its definitions of self. The subject position of these two names, *Tod Clifton* and *Saul*, is presented in the novel as one outside of "history" and, therefore, outside of the hegemonic Referential Order of white male society. It is this subject position that offers the novel's black characters individuality and a chance for finding truth.

The transformation, or fragmentation, of the name *Tod Clifton* results from the manipulation of the name's interpolated historical content. Before the name disappears from the text, it suffers an internal collision of meaning that ultimately situates it as an utterance of rejection — an utterance that subverts the dominant ideological structures defining social significance, human value, and language within the surface text.

The name *Tod Clifton* is introduced to the reader in Chapter Seventeen. It denotes a black character who is appointed the Harlem youth leader by the white organized and controlled Brotherhood. The character is a staunch supporter of the Brotherhood's ideals. His characterization as one of its best black members remains constant until Chapter Nineteen. At the end of this chapter, we discover that he has disappeared. When he is found by Invisible Man, Clifton is selling dancing Sambo dolls. Invisible Man describes his friend's unexplained actions as a betrayal (433) and as a "plunge outside of history:"

> Why should a man deliberately plunge outside of history and peddle
> an obscenity.... Why should he choose to disarm himself, give up
> his voice and leave the only organization offering him a chance to
> 'define' himself?... Why did he choose to plunge into nothingness, into
> the void of faceless faces, of soundless voices, lying outside history? (438)

Prior to his disappearance, Brother Tod Clifton is a resistive, violent force within the organization. His violence and resistance, however, is focused inward, towards a history he denies, towards the very source of his "true name." Instead of plunging outside of history, as Invisible Man contends, Tod Clifton's strange behavior is a plunge deeper *into* history as defined by the dominant white society. According to Invisible Man, the Referential Order of the white,

male-governed Brotherhood refers to anyone whose self-concept lies outside of their scientifically orchestrated history as "disarmed," "void," "soundless voices." The Brotherhood advocates a "scientific approach to society," an approach of experimentation and dehumanization (350). Under the guise of "science," "discipline," and "equality" both Tod Clifton and Invisible Man become pawns and puppets of the Brotherhood. Because they are controlled by the organization's invisible strings, they are much like "Sambo, the dancing doll" (431).

In this lifeworld, the name *Tod Clifton* internalizes the definitions of history as articulated by the Brotherhood. Their definitions become a part of the name's defining elements, its truncated discourse. But already present within that name is a previous history, a foreclosed history, one that gives the character a "Negro stride" and "chiseled black-marble features" (363). This denied history is what gives Tod Clifton the peculiar look of "a hipster, a zoot suiter, a sharpie" (366). And it is his attempt to keep that history denigrated that forces him to strike Ras the Exhorter after listening to the man proclaim Black brotherhood to be a power deserving of respect. These two internalized definitions of history occupy the internal, textual spaces of the same name. Because one is foreclosed by the other, it is not until Invisible Man eulogizes his murdered friend that the reader becomes fully aware of the name's multiplicity and its encoded textual functions.

In Chapter Twenty-one, we discover that the name *Tod Clifton* is more than the signifier of a martyred character, a political symbol; it is also an icon of the true-real and an utterance that subverts the story's Referential Order. During Invisible Man's speech, renaming occurs and the name *Tod Clifton* enters the encoded text as a parody or caricature of itself. The irruption of the true-real in this chapter strips the Referential Order of its ability to limit meaning and control the language of a marginal discourse. A series of events signal this irruption.

First, in this novel, it is an old man's song, not a name, that facilitates a moment of iconic identity delusion.

> It was not the words...it was as though he'd changed the emotion
> beneath the words while yet the old longing, resigned, transcendent

> emotion still sounded above, now deepened by that something for which
> the theory of Brotherhood had given me no name" (453).

Trying to contain this nameless something, maintain its foreclosure,
results in a memory lapse that binds Clifton's name to "a vague,
nameless shame or fear" (453). This is the second event that signals
the irruption of the true-real. "[A]ll that I could remember was the
sound of his [Tod Clifton's] name" (545). The third event occurs
when the song ends. Invisible Man drifts into a daydream depicting
a peanut vendor being devoured by "feasting birds." "Someone
nudged me and I started. It was time for final words. But I had no
words..." (545). All that is left to tell the awaiting crowd is a name.
"What are you waiting for, when all I can tell you is his name?" the
protagonist says in desperation (455). With the language of the
story's dominant Referential Order exposed as insufficient and
inadequate, Invisible Man enters into a monologue about the only
thing the delusional experience has left him: the name *Tod Clifton*.
Building a speech around an individual's name is completely outside
of the laws that define the politics of the Brotherhood. "It wasn't
the way I wanted it to go, it wasn't political. Brother Jack probably
wouldn't approve of it at all..." (457).

  Clifton's name is mentioned twenty-one times during the
speech. This repetition transforms it into a new word, a homonym of
the subject persona designator. The new name functions as a subject
position that represents the voices of those "outside of history." It
functions as an icon of the true-real, a subject effect. Just as in
Women of Brewster Place, the encoded text of the new name sub-
sumes the action of the surface text and emerges as an absent, yet
ambiguously present, voice within that narrative space. As Invisible
Man speaks a new definition of *Tod Clifton* into being, he renames
him. The name's narrative spaces collect defining elements "full of
illusion" (457); forgotten history, time, and places (547); it speaks
of poverty in overcrowded dwellings (458) and the aroused yet unful-
filled hope of Brotherhood (459). The irruption of that which was
once foreclosed composes the new deep talk of the name. This
internal dialogue relativizes the meaning of history installed into the
name's textual spaces by the scientific laws of the Brotherhood,
making those laws subordinate to the new connotations of the name.
The result is a poetic word that is not only the name of a martyred

black man but also a symbol of the forgotten, "a whole unrecorded history" of Southern Blacks in "transition" (471, 441).

We later discover that the new name, with its new implications, cannot enter the lifeworld of the word as spoken by Brother Jack and the other white members of the Brotherhood. In that world, Invisible Man's recreation of *Tod Clifton* as the symbol of a forgotten history and an icon of the true-real is denied. For Jack, Clifton is "a traitorous merchant of vile instruments of anti-Negro, anti-minority racist bigotry [who] has received a hero's funeral" (466). The members of the Brotherhood refuse to see that, like the man, the textual spaces of the name *Tod Clifton* are "jam-full of contradictions" (467). They refuse to acknowledge the true-real because they are afraid of it — afraid to see the truth as the "real," afraid to see themselves as martinets pulling the strings of the dancing Sambos they create. "The dolls are nothing," Invisible Man explains in an attempt to ease their fears. "Nothing," Brother Jack replies, "That nothing that might explode in our face" (468). As a result of these fears the newly empowered name *Tod Clifton* with its new connotations and references remains outside of their language. Only in the language of those occupying the margins can it speak its illusions and contradictions; only within the world-view of Invisible Man and other blacks in the novel is it allowed to subvert meaning as defined within the dominant Referential Order. Only there is it sprawled across banners and written on signs as an icon of hope.

Even this power is stripped from the name as the novel continues and we learn that the subject position revealed to us through the power of Invisible Man's speech has died. "Tod Clifton was underground," dead and buried; and when Invisible Man buys into the Brotherhood's denial of the power within the redefined name, the name suffers the same fate. It experiences "Tod Clifton's *Tod*" (460). By the end of his meeting with Brother Jack, Invisible Man accepts the notion that a name which stands outside of the dominant society's discourse is powerless and can never be heard. "I looked at him [Brother Jack]... with the feeling that I was just awakening from a dream," Invisible Man tells the reader (476). Through the first delusional experience mentioned in this analysis, the name Tod Clifton fragments and is redefined; and, as a result of a second one, it fragments again. This time the name that speaks of a forgotten

history is unnamed and emerges in its final form as *Clifton*, a word that is "as dead and as meaningless as Clifton," the man (478). *Clifton* is a name with denotation, but without empowered connotative value. After this chapter (chapter twenty-two), there is no other mention of the name *Tod Clifton* in the text. The name *Clifton* replaces it within the surface text where it functions as a subject personae designator only.

Poetic names such as *Tod Clifton* are signs containing event-driven meanings which enable them to internalize multiple voices (or dialogues) and subsume a variety of discursive functions. These internalized dialogues are the deep talk of literary names and naming that motivate various processes of language production beneath, but not without, the primary level of the text. The deep talk of poetic names endows them with the ability to function dialogically as metalinguistic and self-referential utterances. Reading through names and naming allows these utterances to surface — to organize, categorize and describe the framework of sense and meaning of an encoded text. Pivoting upon a continual play of names and naming, voices that question or redefine the referential status of names and restructure their narrative function resonate throughout a text. Identifying and reading these absent, yet ambiguously present, voices keeps both the characters and the reader "in check," revealing insights into a novel's dual significance, and sometimes even foreshadowing events or characterizations yet to be revealed.

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Notes

[1]Words such as *Saul* and *Linda*; phrases such as *the tall yellow woman in the green and black dress*; epithets like *nigger* and *wench*; and titles such as *Masa* and *Mistress* are all rhetorical figurations of naming and can be classified as poetic names. Only one condition exists: these names must be used as signifiers that have literary characters, character roles, or an event of charactonymic, thematic, or perceptual change as their referents.

[2] Russell's theory of names is challenged by Alan Gardiner in his *Theory of Proper Names: A Controversial Essay*, as being "unsound" and "lamentably confused." Julia Kristeva considers the theory a "logical embarrassment." See Chpt. 9, Julia Kristeva, "The True-Real," in *The Kristeva Reader*.

[3]See Jürgen Habermas, "Technical Progress and the Social Life-World," in *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science and Politics*. Habermas defines the life world of literary expression as one "which is culture bound, ego-centered, and pre-interpreted in the ordinary language of social groups and socialized individuals."

[4]Morrison is repeating an event from her own historical past in choosing to have her character named in this manner. Her grandfather named her mother *Rahmah* by choosing "blindly" from the Bible (Dowling 41).

[5]When a name is used or mentioned the record of its associations, its historical content, accompanies it. Like an individual, a name can become so strongly associated with a certain world-view that escaping that world-view is impossible without some form of fragmentation, foreclosure or "splitting off" occurring. Without fragmentation, former definitions, voices, and associations remain a part of the name's historical content (i.e., they remain inscribed within the textual spaces of a polyvocal name).

[6]The manner of presentation for a name fragmentation ritual occurs in three forms: "calling," "calling out" of one's name, and "loud talking (speech addressed to a second person, but intended for a third person to overhear and understand).

[7]Honoring the Saussurean dichotomy of linguistic signs and using it as point of departure, I consider a name to be two faced, so to speak. It contains an external structure made up of phonemes or graphemes and an internal structure made up of semantic and semiotic features. It is the internal, semiotic structures of names that allow them to function as subject positions and position effects.

[8]This idea of the "real" is not to be misconstrued as "reality." The word *real* is being used in the Lacanian sense to denote that which is outside of both the world of image cognizance (the imaginary) and the world of language with its signifying structures (the symbolic). The "real" emerges when the imaginary (that which is perceived or imagined) and the symbolic give way to the impossible (Lacan, 1977).

[9]The phrase *Referential Order* when capitalized signifies the dominant force of socialization and linguistic control within a fictional lifeworld. In many cases this dominating element is defined by white, male hegemony. However, in the examination of *Women of Brewster Place*, given later, it is the articulation of dominating ideologies and prejudices of the novel's heterosexual characters that is signified.

[10]Although there are other catalysts for moments of iconic identity delusion (such as music in my reading of the name *Tod Clifton*), many are motivated by names whose subversive intent opens a space for the true-real to emerge.

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