Native American Placenames of the United States. By William Bright. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press. 2004. Pp. xviii + 600. $59.95 hardcover.

We celebrate the life of the distinguished linguist and onomast William Bright and recognize his steady and significant contributions throughout a lifetime of dedicated service to his students, academe, and Native American (NA) or American Indian language research. A quick search of my university library provides documentation for 22 major works by William Bright. The latest of his articles to which I have access (Bright 2005) emphasizes the overarching importance of context in language research and offers researchers valuable advice based upon a lifetime of investigating and extending our knowledge of human language.

In September 2004 one of William Bright's most important reference works was published. This 600-page, alphabetically-arranged dictionary of NA place names is comprehensive and scholarly. It incorporates not only the author's own previous work on the placenames of Colorado (Bright 1993) and California (Gudde 1998), but also the extensive efforts of Americanists from across the nation. In the Acknowledgements section Bright names individually those who have aided him in assembling this major work. He credits scholars for their research contributions and recognizes the invaluable assistance of librarians and NA informants. Bright documents relevant scholarly work in a detailed References section and thereby affords the researcher a rich resource. The researcher and general reader alike will appreciate the scope and the convenience of this dictionary.

Bright assembles and describes placenames not previously catalogued in a single reference. He draws upon the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS 2002) as the basic source for his ("Headword") entries. Perhaps the work's foremost strength is that it identifies the cumulative efforts to date that establish a connection between place and name. The incontrovertible omnipresence of Amerindian influence in the

landscape will surely strike the reader attempting to find his or her placename.

Bright establishes his aims, method, and rationale for the work in a concise and valuable Introduction (3-15). There he describes how he has organized and catalogued the available information for approximately 11,000 entries. Bright assigns American English linguistic borrowings from American Indian languages to one of five linguistic categories: "Loan Translations," "Folk-Etymologies," "Terms Associated with Native American Culture and History," "Invented Words," and "Bogus Words." Each entry in the dictionary can contain the placename itself ("Headword"), its geographical reference ("Location"), "Pronunciation," and available historical information ("Etymology"). Perhaps expectedly, much of the author's remaining discussion concerns the category of etymology. He also offers the following as a possible typology of NA placenames based upon his cumulative research and study (9-11):

1. Traditional Native American Placenames
2. Native American Derivations
3. Pidgin Derivations
4. Transferred Derivations
5. Dubious Native American Terms
6. Adopted European Names
7. English < Spanish/French < Indian
8. Hybrid Indian Names

As Bright states in the Introduction, the current work is necessarily an incomplete effort given the real limits of discovering and recording etymological information. Bright reminds us that not every toponym can have a convincing etymology. This is especially so due to historical changes in language, long-held ethnocentric views of Amerindian names (13-4), as well as our simple inability to access the documentary sources of Amerindian language items assumed to be the bases for placenames. Surely, as Bright (2005) himself suggests, knowledge of the many contexts of NA culture is called for in order to discover and present additional

etymological information. At the same time, a truly considered view of toponyms as proper names (Coates 2006) is needed. Accordingly, if toponyms have lost much if not all of their sense on the way to proper name status, then a status of onymic (Coates 2006: 368) may well find a place in future references where our author is currently unable to provide a satisfying etymon or etymology.

The author's pronouncing guide, entitled "Pronunciation" (xiii-xviii), is remarkable for the complexity it seeks to treat. Bright makes use of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols for the pronunciation of American Indian, American English (AE), or other languages as needed. This guide is used for both phonetic and phonemic transcriptions. Complete or close phonetic transcription [in these brackets] is used rarely in the dictionary, while phonemic transcription / in these brackets /, corresponding more closely to ordinary pronunciation, is used regularly. An example from the guide section follows:

> [x] like k, but made without closing off the airstream; like the j in Spanish José or the ch in German Bach. (xiv)

Bright provides an additional key adapted from an English language dictionary for the pronunciation of AE sounds. This kind of transcription is used regularly and is helpful for names derived from American Indian languages. These transcriptions occur \ in these brackets \. An example from the guide follows:

> \ī\ the vowel sound of eye, sigh, side, bite, line. (xvii)

The spelling systems for NA languages vary. For this reason, the author provides a set of symbols that helps to account for spelling and pronunciation differences. Spellings of NA words are italicized without any brackets. An example from the guide follows:

> Blackfoot. Following Frantz and Russell 1995, the symbol h represents IPA [x], the German ch in Bach. (xv)

The reader may discover that some symbols are used and not explicated in the pronouncing guide. In its totality, however, the pronouncing guide offers valuable information that is basic to pronouncing and also useful to understanding etymology. Bright is keenly aware of this fact, and addresses the importance of linguistic details in his Introduction (13).

Individual entries in the dictionary are not usually lengthy. Available information is offered in concise language and incorporates abbreviations explained in the Introduction. A page containing only short entries is likely to contain from 18 to 21 entries. A typical short entry is as follows:

> CROMOSET Point (Mass., Plymouth Co.). From Wampanoag (SNEng. Algonquian), of uncertain derivation (Huden 1962). (126)

Longer entries may contain more information about the variants or related placenames. The following long entry is found on a page containing 17 entries:

> POCAHANTAS (Conn., Fairfield Co.). A variant of Pocahontas \ pō kə ŋon´ təs \. The daughter of the CAC Algonquian leader Powhatan; her Native American name has been given as <Pokachantesu> 'she is playful' (Vogel 1983). The placename Pocahontas is widespread (e.g., Va., Tazewell Co.; W.Va., Pocahontas Co.; and Ill., Bond Co.). Related forms include Pocahuntas (N.C., Swain Co.). Pocahontas was also called Matoaca, with a similar meaning, and that too appears as a placename (e.g., Va., Chesterfield Co.). (387)

Students and scholars as well as general readers interested in NA languages will find this reference work compelling. It offers readers a convenient resource of baseline information for further research, as well as answers to such general questions as: Is there a relationship between similarly spelled or pronounced placenames? Do Amerindian placenames occur in more than one location? Is there reason to believe that a European placename may in fact be related to an earlier Native American form?

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From Abbotts to Zurich: New York State Placenames. By Ren Vasiliev. Syracuse University Press. 2004. Pp. 258 (Photographs). Softcover. $24.95. ISBN 0-8156-0798-9.

Whenever I visit a new city I make it a point to stop in at least one bookstore. These visits used to be more interesting before the large conglomerate bookstores put the local "mom and pop" stores out of business, but they still hold some allure. Many of the stores strike the same appearance—*Bestsellers* are near the door, *Recent Releases* and *New in Paperback* are not far away, and all the while the coffee shop is declaring its odiferous presence. Most bookstores that I have encountered have a section called *Local Interest* and often this section will contain a book or two on regional or state placenames. A few excellent state placename books exist. Lewis L. McArthur's superlative volume *Oregon Geographic*

Names, for example, is undoubtedly the most thorough and complete. It must hold the record for the amount of time spent on research. After all, it has taken the lifetime efforts of two outstanding scholars. Beginning with the father, Lewis A. McArthur, who produced the first edition in 1928, the book continues to be revised even to this day. Another seminal book on placenames to which potential authors can look for excellent guidance is *The Place-Names of Dane County, Wisconsin* by Frederic G. Cassidy. It was first published in 1947 by the American Dialect Society (the parent of the American Name Society) and sought to "collect" and "analyze" all the placenames in Dane County, Wisconsin, for over a century (9); it is likely the most thorough and complete county placename book that has ever been produced. Most placename books have set more modest goals than Cassidy, and many have been worthy additions to the corpus. While there are too many unrepresented states and counties, those of us who seek placename books have had much to occupy us, although, to be honest, most don't rise to the level of the works of McArthur or Cassidy.

One must admire the researchers who take on the daunting, time-consuming, and labor-intensive task of creating a placename book. There is clearly an audience for this type of book since they continue to be created and purchased. They are sought out by those who want to know *why* a particular name came to designate a specific place and the events surrounding that designation. Stewart addresses some of the motivations in his *Names on the Globe*, which cites their usefulness to geographers, historians, folklorists, poets, archaeologists, and other researchers:

> Once the naming-process has been active, the names themselves remain as a heritage for future generations, preserving the record of what may be called, in its broadest sense, human history—preserving that record, too, through the illiterate centuries. (369)

A notable deficiency in state placename literature has recently begun to be filled by Professor Ren Vasiliev, a Professor of Geography at the State University of New York at Geneseo. Until now, the State of New York has been lacking in this arena, with the exception of a few notable county placename books. Vasiliev's *From Abbotts to Zurich: New York State Placenames* is an admirable beginning toward representing the venerable state of New York in placename literature.

While well researched, Vasiliev's book has not been written primarily to set forth new scholarship. For the most part, *From Abbotts to Zurich: New York State Placenames* meets the needs of the casual reader. We find in it an interesting collection of the placenames of New York which begins to paint a picture of the settlement history of one of the oldest states in the union. I say "begins" because Vasiliev had to make some difficult choices in the creation of her book. She had to limit the number of entries in the book; otherwise the book would have been, like McArthur's or Cassidy's offerings, far more extensive and have taken far longer to produce. There are about 44,000 New York State names listed in the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) database created by the United States Board on Geographic Names (USBGN). The author sought to "reduce this list to manageable proportions" (xvi), so she started by limiting her study to only the names of populated places, or PPL as they are called in GNIS, of which there are 6,402. Vasiliev has further reduced the list of names considered in her book to 2,463 entries or about 34% of the possible placenames, and of those she chose to include, 256 are listed in an appendix as placenames "about which I could find no information at all" (xviii). Vasiliev describes the method she used to select the entries in her book:

> My choices within that list [of nearly 7,000 names] were guided by the consideration that any book is written for the edification and

> benefit of its readers. While lovers of placenames might not care about the size and accessibility of the settlements whose names I was recording, travelers would. I therefore decided to exclude the names of populated places not visited by general travelers to the state, many of which are not even listed on road maps. So, using three road maps of New York State . . . I narrowed the list of names that I had received from the Geographic Names Information System . . . to those appearing on at least two of the three maps. This brought the number down to a manageable figure of about 2,500. (xvi)

So, through this method, the body of names was reduced and the reader encounters information on 2,207 New York State placenames. Whatever method was chosen to limit the number of entries would, however, have had its shortcomings. This one for instance, apparently precluded from consideration the very name which we are told was the catalyst for the book to be written in the first place. Vasiliev notes in her Preface:

> This book did not exist when I needed it more than a decade ago as I was working on my master's thesis. That work was a study of the geographic and temporal diffusion of all of the places in the United States that were named Moscow. The references that proved most helpful then were the placename books for the many of the individual states. When I discovered that there was no one book for the state of New York, I vowed that I would write it. That day is now. (vii)

Unfortunately, the method which the author used to determine which placenames would be included in her book eliminated the possibility of an entry for *Moscow Hill*, a populated place in Madison County.

The placenames presented in the body of the book give us an interesting view of how places in New York came to be

designated, how those whom George Stewart called "Man, the Namer" assigned names for their denotative and connotative values (1). Vasiliev presents the individual entries in alphabetical order with each section listing the names that begin with a particular letter. (There are no Xs, only 2 Zs and 7 Qs. In fact, she jokes that upon learning that there are no names in New York State beginning with X, she "almost made one up, just to have one – but then people would not trust the rest of my work, so the X slot remains empty" [xviii].) Each alpha section begins with a black and white photograph by Jon Crispin, often of a scene of one of the places listed in that section. So, for instance, the section of names beginning with the letter A has a scene from Auburn, New York, B, a scene from Buffalo, etc. Each individual entry contains the name of the place followed by the county in which it is located. The body of each entry lists whatever information her research uncovered about it—often something to do with the origin of the name or reason for naming. Each entry is then completed by an abbreviated list of sources with respective page numbers in brackets. Though the names in the book represent only about a third of the populated places in New York, those which are included give a remarkably full picture.

Perhaps the two most noteworthy features of New York State names are the large number of classical names and the significant number of names which derive from aboriginal languages. This book includes both types of names. As Wilbur Zelinsky notes, New York State was among the first to memorialize "the ancient world of Greece and Rome" in its placenames (465). "But it is in west-central New York, particularly in the Military Tract and adjacent areas, that we find a truly formidable cluster" of classical placenames (486). Zelinsky lists 133 independent occurrences of classical names in New York with 82 of them first recorded before 1820, and Vasiliev reflects this preponderance in her book. From *Troy*, which she notes was adopted in 1789, "the beginning of the classical naming in New York State" (223), to *Homer*, "named

for the Greek poet as part of the Military Tract naming of 1790" (108), to *Virgil*, "named for the Roman poet Publius Vergilius Maro" (230), *From Abbotts to Zurich: New York State Placenames* faithfully represents this very important phenomenon.

Another feature of New York State names is the extraordinary number of names, both current and historical, which derive from Native American Languages. Many Amerindian names and their etymologies are problematic, largely because they have been invariably filtered through the speakers of another "receiving" language, usually English, Dutch, or French. The number of names in New York State which arrived in our onomasticon via another language reflects a rich history of bilingual interaction, however limited, which then sets the stage for lexical opaqueness and folk etymology of the most interesting types.

Typical problems one encounters with trying to determine the etymology of a name which entered our onomasticon from a Native American language (in New York State, usually from a dialect of Iroquoian or Algonquin) are the circumstances of its adoption into the new dominant language and the passage of time:

> In fact it is probable that the multilayered sequence of names on a contemporary map results from periods of bilingualism embedded in socio-cultural contact. Otherwise each new dominant language would, in isolation, have had to create from scratch a new onomastic system, naming each geographical feature afresh . . . from its own lexical resources. (Nicolaisen 167)

Not only do disagreements about translations emerge, but folk etymology enters the picture. Vasiliev includes:

> **Wawarsing**. Ulster. The town was formed in 1806, and the name was spelled Wawarsink, said to mean either "black bird's nest" or "holy

place of sacred feasts and war dances" or
neither. (235)

Here Vasiliev humorously demonstrates a dilemma with
Native American names—the origin is uncertain, the
aboriginal word has been distorted by its transmittal into
another language, and interpreters too often entertain fanciful
descriptions of Native American behavior. Later authors then
repeat earlier speculations, and we end up with what appears
to be statements of fact when they are often corruptions, at
best, of what was originally said. In many cases it may very
well be, as she states, "neither." Native American names are
often problematic in that the literature is replete with the
scholarship of so-called authorities on aboriginal dialects.
Many do not stand up to scrutiny. She states, "[U]ntil a
comprehensive, detailed study is done on Native American
placenames in the United States, we will have to rely on the
sources that we have" (xv).

Shortly after this statement by Vasiliev, William Bright
published his 2004 volume, *Native American Placenames of the
United States*. It fills the void to which she alludes, although
Bright, as well, was occasionally confounded by the lexical
opacity of names which entered our onomasticon via bilingual
interaction. But that is another discussion.

Vasiliev has made extensive use of sources who, in the
19th and early 20th century, set out primarily to record
information about regions and places in New York and
sometimes included how they came to be named. One
outstanding source of information is the *1860 Gazetteer of the
State of New York* by J. H. French. His work is referenced in
many of her entries. From input to the entries for *Adams,
Adams Center* on the first page to *Youngstown* on the
penultimate page of the book, French is very likely the most
frequently referenced source for this work.

Vasiliev has brought together an enormous amount of
information in order to produce this publication. She has
avoided a problem which some placename books present in

that when she "was unable to document the reason for a choice of placename," she "refrained from speculation" (xviii). I found it surprising that, though there are a substantial number of references to Native American placenames, a seminal work by William M. Beauchamp, *Aboriginal Place Names of New York*, does not appear to have been consulted. Translations and speculations about Native American names by authors such as H. R. Schoolcraft, for example, have been repeated in *From Abbotts to Zurich: New York State Placenames* through references to secondary sources. Beauchamp states:

> While H. R. Schoolcraft is an authority, yet on many points it is now conceded that in eastern matters he was often fanciful. His names and definitions will be quoted with this necessary reservation. Mr. Tooker said: "Schoolcraft attempted the translation of many Algonquin names in the east, but, by employing Chippewa elementary roots or syllables, with which he was familiar, he failed in nearly every instance. . . . His erroneous translations are still quoted and are very persistent." This dialect, however, did affect some names in northern New York. His most conspicuous failure was in Iroquoian names, but in general treatment it seemed proper to give them here, their character being well understood. (16)

If we look back to our earlier example, **Wawarsing** from Ulster County, Beauchamp states:

> Wa-war-sing or Warwasing was the *place of a blackbird's nest*, according to Schoolcraft, but this has no support. It might be derived from woweaushin, *a winding about*, in allusion to its many streams, but the terminal syllable seems that of place. It was written Wawasink in 1779, and the Rev. N. W. Jones defined it as *a holy place for the sacrifi-feasts and war dances*. No ground exists for this meaning. (236)

From Abbotts to Zurich: New York State Placenames is a valuable addition to the corpus of placename books, but we

would do well to keep in mind that it is in fact a collection of materials from largely secondary sources, as is especially noticeable in the references to Native American names. We have seen that bilingual interaction can obscure the true origins of a name. The entire picture may also be confused by re-creations of names and coining of so-called Indian names by white settlers who, long after Native Americans were resident in an area, thought that an Indian-sounding name gave a special and even romantic feeling to a place:

> A generation or two had passed since there had been open conflict with Indians and many whites had never known the bitterness nor had most ever met an Indian. A new community of Americans existed in a relatively peaceful and settled society and reflected nostalgically on a golden age of discovery and exploration. The Indian, in retrospect, transcended the previously held beliefs of his barbarity and he began to assume an aura of majesty to the white man. The myth of the noble savage was born and Indian names began once again to appear in the onomastic system. (McGoff 134)

Native American names are an important and substantial part of the onomastic history of New York State, but as Vasiliev reminds us, "It is difficult to know how much credence to put into the meanings that were recorded" (xv). The fascinating entry for Manhattan reads in part:

> **Manhattan.** New York. The origin of this name is uncertain; it might come from the Munsee *manhactanienk*, "place of general inebriation" (referring to the time that Verrazano gave liquor to the Native Americans), or *manahatouh*, "place where timber for bows and arrows is found," or *menatay*, "island." It is the earliest known Munsee placename, found as Manahatta on a 1610 map made by a Spanish spy in the English court where Henry Hudson was jailed before he returned to the Netherlands. (139)

The difficulty with relying on the sources that we have can be further illustrated by the differences between the entries for *East Rockaway* and *Far Rockaway*:

> **East Rockaway**. Nassau. In the 1670s, this was called Near Rockaway to distinguish it from Far Rockaway, determined by their proximity to Hempstead. The post office was established here as Atlantic in 1868, but there already was one in the state, so the name was changed to East Rockaway in 1869. In New Jersey, Rockaway is derived from the Native American term *rechawackes* or *achewek*, meaning "bushy" or "difficult to cross," or maybe "sandy place." [APN:408; Gannett:224; Winsche:29]. (68)

> **Far Rockaway, Rockaway Park, Rockaway Point**. Queens. The Canarsee Indians had named the peninsula Reckouacky, probably meaning "place of our people." In 1860, the Rockaway post office was in Far Rockaway. [French:547; Jackson:391, 1013; WPANYC:591]. (77)

While the two placenames certainly derive from the same source, we have very different etymologies suggested. The answer lies with the sources. Different experts proposed their definitions and we are left with a puzzle.

From Abbotts to Zurich: New York State Placenames does not include pronunciations for the entries. In most cases this is not an issue for English-speaking readers, but there are a few cases in which it would be helpful. One familiar with Thomas Jefferson's famous homestead, for instance, might be forgiven for thinking that New York State contains another *Monticello* [Monti-chell'-o] when, in reality, those from Sullivan County pronounce it [Monti-sell'-o]. Entries such as *Spuyten Duyvil*, *Skaneateles*, *Poughquag*, and *New Berlin* similarly would have benefited from some direction on how the locals pronounce the name of their town. For example, *New Berlin* residents

pronóunce *Berlin* with the accent on the first syllable—
something like [Burr' lin].

I do not wish to overstate the problematic issues with
this book, for it is clearly an important contribution to
placename literature. The author has labored long and hard to
prepare this volume, and we now have a significant work
which begins to fill what had been a vacuum in placename
literature. I applaud Ren Vasiliev, for she has created an
enlightening, well-written book which details many of the
issues and answers many of the questions about New York
State placenames. There are, she readily admits, additional
questions to be addressed, but this is an excellent start.

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Memorious Discourse: Reprise and Representation in Postmodernism. By Christian Moraru. Madison and Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005 (distributed by Associated University Presses, 2010 Eastpark Blvd., Cranbury, NJ 08512). 282 pp. $52.50. Cloth. ISBN 0838640869.

Once upon a time, novels were about something: *The Scarlet Letter* about guilt and repression, *Jane Eyre* about love and marriage, *War and Peace* about war and peace. Then came postmodernism, in which a work of fiction was not "about" something but *was* that something itself. This specific formulation, by Samuel Beckett about the impossibility toward which his mentor James Joyce's art was striving, reflected a shift in linguistic understanding, argued by Saussure, that the ultimate meaning of words was not in what they referred to but how they related to each other. Either formulation could have been reconciled within the conventions of literature, but postmodernism seized them for a bold initiative that has left us where we are today: with novels and short stories whose narratives are most basically plays with words and manipulations of other texts (as texts).

As an aesthetic born within the lifetimes of most well-established scholars, postmodernism has had many critics. Their chief complaint about its fiction is that by declining to represent reality such work is socially irresponsible, even ethically inept. To answer this objection Christian Moraru presents a compelling thesis: that while writers and readers can no longer work with the semantic depths of meaning, they

can deal with it syntactically—"horizontally" rather than
vertically" (205). Although he does not identify it as such,
Moraru's reorientation continues the scheme identified long
ago by Robert Spiller in *The Cycle of American Literature* (1955),
in which the metaphysical bent of the Puritans yields to the
more socially inclined interests of writers in the age of the
American Revolution and early Republic, followed by a
reinstitution of spiritual concerns by the Transcendentals and
the Romantics, who are in turn "corrected" by the Realists and
Naturalists, and so forth. The emphasis in *Memorious
Discourse*, however, is emphatically social, while never
surrendering one bit of postmodernism's claims to self-
apparency. Working with other texts rather than with the
world itself is not decadent or irresponsible; instead, by virtue
of the "memorious" self-consciousness that distinguishes the
new age, postmodern discourse is given "access to culture's
treasure chest where personal and collective representations
lie and await their reprise" (27).

If writers may no longer represent an action, they can
very well represent the representation of an action; here is the
"reprise" of the book's subtitle, just as "memorious" indicates
the author's awareness of this act and the comprehensibility of
all the material being reprised. A key state of Moraru's
argument involves onomastics, the subject of his second
chapter. "Names, too, re-present," he suggests. "They say
other names while saying themselves, and by the same token
flaunt their own 'positionality,' their place in a culture's or
literary tradition's nomenclature" (86). Names are always
used "relationally," in the context of other names being
reprised, and "with them, a whole spectrum of texts,
discourses, and representations" (87). Because our own names
carry the memories of others, variously painful or comforting,
they "weave us into other layers of social life and history, into
otherness, ultimately, and our responsibility toward it" (88).
Here is the horizontality Moraru values in postmodern fiction,
for his purposes a superior orientation to that of the vertical,

which would make names nothing more than "indexes" (95). Hence names not only allow a political consideration but virtually mandate an ethical response.

Postmodern American novelists value this appreciation of names. Don DeLillo, Thomas Pynchon, Kathy Acker, Paul Auter, and Mark Leyner are the ones Moraru analyzes in detail, drawn by their "drama of an identity threatened by mass culture" (99). For DeLillo, names are repositories of stories: "The name is an anthropological caveat. It tells stories" (108), and—so important for the thesis of *Memorious Discourse*—tells them in a postmodern manner, with full awareness of how signifiers refer less to signifieds than to other signifiers in relation. True, "[w]e crack the signifier open, yet the signified reveals itself as another linguistic shell." But when any action to be represented is one *already* represented in the play of signification, then the point is made: "postmodern onomastics is infinite onomastics" (110).

Moraru's chapter on names and naming is not only central to his book's thesis but provides some of the most accessible examples of postmodern fiction that fits the memorious mode. It is here that he finds novelist Kathy Acker developing in her fiction "a full-blown onomastic theory" that empowers her "'naming' and 'renaming' as fundamental strategies of cultural appropriation and determing features of her identity politics" (114). Important as such identity politics are for a woman in our still-patriarchal society, they are even more crucial for an African American woman, as Toni Morrison's fiction shows. "Power is largely the power to name" (118), and in her novel *Song of Solomon* Morrison uses the techniques of postmodern fiction—self-apparent fiction, memorious discourse writ large—as a way of achieving that power.

Like other books of literary criticism and theory that have become the most helpful and insightful of their era, *Memorious Discourse* invites its readers to draw wide-ranging

implications. Far from being socially unconcerned, the postmodern fiction Moraru celebrates practices great ethical responsibility, not the least because it shows where represented action really is. Not by coincidence does the age of postmodernism also serve as the age of new personal freedoms and value—for women, for minorities, for everyone. For Moraru, this may well be the ultimate name of postmodernism's game.

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International Glossary of Place Name Elements. By Joel F. Mann. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press. 2005. Pp. xxii + 189. $65.00. 7x10 inches. ISBN 0810850400.

The title of Joel Mann's new volume accurately conveys the sort of database he has created. This book is essentially an ˙ alphabetically arranged, multilingual morphological dictionary of toponyms worldwide. As such, it is a step toward addressing an outstanding need for crosslinguistic surveys of place names, which will facilitate generalizations about how these names tend to be constructed. This area of research, in my view as a linguist, stands to add to the growing body of literature on language universals in potentially exciting ways. Given the customary assignment of onomastics to a peripheral status in linguistics, a great deal of most languages' morphosyntax has hitherto been excluded from grammatical analyses. (The exception that confirms this generalization is the literature on hypocoristics-—which are taken as marginal, exotic formations, studies on which are typically published in isolation rather than integrated into holistic grammatical treatments. Cf. Mattina and Jack 1992; Bat-El 2005.)

It should be noted that Mann's intent as an "admitted layman" is not quite as analytical as this (1). In fact an even more accurate title for this book might have included the word "Etymological." His interest is primarily in showing the vast

range of *meanings* used in place names, in some ways mirroring the approach taken in popular baby-name books. That is, he presents a voluminous list of the etymological forms underlying toponyms. Awareness of its etymological nature is key to any appropriate use of this book. Because the book is arranged only by etymological forms (with English meanings given), the user must proceed from Mann's suggestion of "How to Use This Book" (4):

> [Y]our best approach is to break the name into syllables and start from there. . . . [¶] Beware of making unwarranted assumptions: place names ending in 'ston' could be derived from 'stan', 'tun', or 'dun', three completely different words. . . . [¶] Remember, also, that the sound of a place name is often more important than the spelling.

For example, then, given the name *Asbestos* (a place in Quebec), the reader might search for an initial syllable *as-*. There are indeed entries for this form: they mean 'small hill, ridge', 'to dry, to burn', and 'ridge' in, respectively, Icelandic, Indo-European [sic], and Norwegian. The problem is that one ought to have looked under the entry *a-* 'not' [in Greek]. Thus, readers are well advised to proceed *letter by letter* rather than syllabically in seeking out the relevant etymology for a given name found on a map.

Flexibility with regard to syllabification will not suffice, however. Users must in many cases make just the seemingly "unwarranted" leaps of intuition against which Mann counsels. To continue with *Asbestos*, the reader who is not drawn into the *as-* analysis (which leads sensibly to *Bes* 'the goddess Bes' [Egyptian]!) will find *sbennynai* 'to quench' [Greek] to be the best match. It is not past doubt that the many readers untrained in Greek morphology will find this form an implausible match for *sbestos*, leading some perhaps to resyllabify again. (Perhaps this will lead to the conclusion that the Quebec town was somehow named for *Asbjorn* 'a male personal name' [Scandinavian]).