# Locating Derridean supplementary in Don Delillo's The Names

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***Abstract***-*The essay titled "Locating Derridean Supplementarity in Don DeLillo's The Names" draws on Jacques Derrida's concept of supplement to offer a postmodern version of quest narrative. Instead of verifiable facts and authorial intention, what Don DeLillo's quest narrative projects is a series of linguistic non-referential signs which rely on the principle of supplementation. Significantly, the novel in emphasizing the significance of language as a rhetorical non-referential medium explicitly promotes antifoundationalist perspectives. Playfully deploying the theme of quest as a metaphor for the self-referential function of language, The Names clearly reveals DeLillo's affiliation with*

In *The Names* (1982), the American novelist Don DeLillo draws attention to the function of Derridean supplementarity which foregrounds the instability inherent in signifying systems. According to the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, supplement operates by offering a necessary substitute for the absence prevailing within a signifying system. For replacement, absence is the necessary other, therefore, substitution is possible only by evoking its double, that is, absence. Distinctly, the double meanings-replacement and addition-inherent in supplement exposes the function of alterity. In supplanting the absence through the substitution of signs, supplementarity employs the similar logic of play, of trace, and of iteration which is intrinsic to the functioning of language. Exploring the interface between philosophical investigation into language and its fictional representation, this essay looks into how the notion of supplement as an attribute of language informs *The Names*.

For Derrida, the logic of supplementarity underlies his summation of 'differance.' The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of 'difference' is a prerequisite for comprehending Derridean 'differance.' Repudiating the reductionism in finding a one to one correspondence between "a thing and a name" (66),[1] Saussurean linguistics explains how the bond between the signifier and the signified creates meaning through arbitrary connections. Instead of language being reduced to the naming process in which a list of words corresponds to the thing it names, Saussure claims that a linguistic sign brings together "a concept [the signified] and a sound pattern [the signifier]" (66).[1] Saussure's synchronic study establishes that "any given linguistic state is always the product of historical forces, and these are the factors which explain why the linguistic sign is invariable, that is to say why it is immune from arbitrary alteration" (72).[1] Language constitutes a system which is self-referential in nature in which the meaning of each term arises not from its referential relation to a thing outside the linguistic system, but from the term's 'difference' from other terms available within the system of language. Saussure rightly notes: "They [languages] form a product, a combination of interdependent elements, their value deriving solely from their mutual contributions within a higher unit" (126).[1] So language is a self-contained, non-referential system which is incapable of reflecting any reality outside. The Derridean proposition of 'differance' is itself an example of supplement. To the Saussurean differential nature of linguistic sign, Derrida supplements 'a' instead of 'e,' thus replacing

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'difference' with 'differance.' For Derrida, 'differance' is a portmanteau word which brings together two aspects of the signifier: 'differing' from other signifiers and 'deferring' the ultimate meaning: "The verb 'to differ' [differer] seems to differ from itself. On the one hand, it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernability; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of a spacing and temporalizing that puts off until 'later' what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible" (129).[2]

Here, Derrida disapproves of the Saussurean phonocentric paradigm which privileges speech over writing. In *Of Grammatology,* Derrida contests Jean-Jacques Rousseau's claim that writing serves only as a supplement to speech.[3] For Rousseau, writing holds a secondary status to speech because if speech signifies the verifiable presence of the speaker, writing symbolizes the absence of any verifiable authority. Contesting Rousseau's view, Derrida affirms that the thought of the speaker can never appear outside the realm of writing because the speaker thinks and articulates in language. Intriguingly, language serves as a supplement to thought. For instance, the speaker, during his speech, feeds on words already available within the linguistic system to strengthen the authenticity of his presence. But if the words pre-exist the speaker, words act as differential signs, and the words carry the trace of other signs, then the speaker's signifying intention will be deferred indefinitely because speech obeys the logic of language. Thus speech, Derrida claims, is always already a form of writing which has a relational and iterative character and functions according to the logic of supplementing and supplanting signs. So, the differential and deferential functions of language expose the presential fallacy of the speaker. Thus, supplement is a potential agent of subversion, particularly in disconcerting the metaphysics of presence which privileges speech over writing. Contesting the supposedly unassailable exactitude that characterizes different representational systems, *The Names* presents itself as a textual space or a realm for exploring supplementary structures. DeLillo's novel exposes the way signs carry the trace of the alterity and defer meanings indefinitely.

As a postmodern detective fiction, *The Names* punctures the causality associated with murder mysteries by revealing the heterogonous narrative structures replete with irreconcilable solutions. In the novel, the protagonist James Axton is a risk analyst who works for the Northeast Group, an American firm that trades in political risk insurance. The efforts of Owen Brademas, the director of archaeological studies, at finding out a pattern to explicate the series of cult murders arouse curiosity in James. Keen on striking a cause and effect sequence, Kathryn, the estranged wife of James and a scholar working under Owen, seeks to establish an order by examining the data she collects from the geological space. Simultaneously, their son Thomas Arthur Axton, mostly referred to as Tap, codifies his experiences into small linguistic units by lettering "a nonfiction novel" (33).[4] Kathryn's archaeological survey, James's and Owen's uncovering of cult, and Tap's novelistic endeavors constitute different forms of "writing" or "scribbling" (8).[4] The investigation into the murder mysteries inscribes a pattern into the murder, that is, in every murder the initial letters of the victim's name exactly coincide with the first letters of the name of the place where the murder took place. For example, if the name of victim is Michaelis Kalliambestos, the name of the place will be Mikro Kamini. Thus, there is an underlying connection between the initials of victim's name and the initials of the location of murder. While Owen's archaeological knowledge analyzes, codifies and eventually orders the available data into "painterly forms" (19),[4] the intervention of language transforms Owen's innumerable archaeological information into "a vast cataloguing of fragments" (148).[4] However, when the cult murder's abstruse and "esoteric" (36)[4] associations with language come to spotlight, Owen's riddle-solving efforts to find finitude through geographical explorations fracture from within.

Like 'excavation' in *The Names*, 'digging' in DeLillo's Ratner's Star is a metaphor for an investigation into infinitude and its affinity with

language. Fascinatingly, the life of Endor in Ratner's Star parallels the operation of language as a set of interrelated words. Defying realistic portrayal, DeLillo describes Endor as a character who lives in a hole and survives on plants and worms. Not only is the hole the place of habitation but it is also a metaphor for language. If language is a system of interconnected words, the hole is a circuit of labyrinthine maze: "There seemed to be another hole inside the first, a tunnel gouged out of the dirt at one corner of the original hole, the hole proper" (83).[5] In so doing, DeLillo brings out a chain of signifying links and its association with the logic of supplementarity. The critic Thomas LeClair labels such signifying links as 'looping' "systems among systems" (229).[6] Likewise, in *The Names*, 'looping' functions through a continuous link between characters, a concern that the critic Matthew J. Morris terms as the "interchangeability of characters" (125).[7] For instance, Owen directs James to Dr. Malik at the Department of Antiquities in Amman who redirects James to the Armenian Vosdanik who in turn takes references about the cult from a Frenchman named Texier. Like floating signifiers in language, the place names as well as the questors "escape accountability" (43)[4] by traveling across languages, customs, and beliefs. For Owen and James, the murder weapons, the site of murders and *the names* of frail victims are details with which they arrive at a definitive conclusion: "The old man, Michaeli, may have been a victim of some ordering instinct. They may have felt they were moving toward a static perfection of some kind. Cults tend to be closed-in, of course. Inwardness is very much the point. One mind, one madness. To be part of some unified vision. Clustered, dense. Safe from chaos and life" (115-116).4 Even so, Owen and James who are pursuers of the crime literally fall prey to the 'ordering instinct' which they in turn attribute to the pursued. With such an ordering instinct the pursuers classify murders into apparently intelligible patterns. In due course of time, moreover, the function of the victim and victimizer turns complimentary. Such interchangeability between the role of victim and victimizer is forcefully felt in the underlying conspiracies that surround James's occupation. As a risk analyst, James works in the Middle East for the American firm named the Northeast Group which prima facie sells political risk insurance. Later on, however, James learns from his friend Charles Maitland that the American firm maintains a furtive relationship with the US Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA. Ironically, James relentlessly searches for a pattern to explicate the victim and the victimizer divide, but this division is too hazy in his life given that the American organization and its surreptitious bind with the CIA make James a victim of the "bureaucracies of silence [by indulging] in conspiracies and doublings and brilliant betrayals" (317).4 Also, if an excavation into the nature of James's work is carried out, one finds that the conspiracy ridden network of the CIA masks its identity under the Northeast Group. And George Rowser, who made James a political risk analyst, manipulates James's work conducted in the North East to lend secret information to the CIA. Traveling under false names, Rowser divulges his interest in "the cost-effectiveness of terror," (46)[4] in particular, he employs his "alternate self" (47)[4] as well as the study of Middle East political situations by James to obtain more information regarding terrorist activities. Much like the murders, a supplementary hidden pattern unveils in the case of James and eventually the pattern gives way to "complex systems [and] endless connections" (313)[4] which is a characteristic feature of language itself. Both the murder series and the CIA connections with the insurance company closely tag along a chain of associations which makes them akin to the function of language as a set of floating signifiers.

'*The Names*,' as the title suggests, deals with the process of naming and the inherent instability in language, a concern which DeLillo articulates in his latest short story, "Midnight in Dostoevsky" (2009) too. In the story, the process of naming begins when two college students, Todd and Robby, encounter an old man on the road. Since the details of the old man are unknown to the students, they are curious enough to construct a supposedly credible story in language concerning the mysterious life of the elderly man. Like a novelist, they have an eye for detail in

selecting an 'appropriate' name and defining each aspect of the man's existence in accordance with the things that surround the old man. DeLillo's story has many a parallel with Derrida's explication of the paradoxes of naming in on the Name:

*Suppose that X, something or someone (a trace, a work, an institution, a child), bears your name, that is to say, your title. The naive rendering or common illusion is that you have given your name to X, thus all that returns to X, in a direct or indirect way, in a straight or oblique line, returns to you, as a profit for your narcissism. But as you are not your name, nor your title, and given that, as the name or title, X does very well without you or your life, that is, without the place toward which something could return-just as that is the definition and the very possibility of every trace, and of all names and all titles, so your narcissism if frustrated a priori by that from which it profits or hopes to profit. (12)*[8]

In the story, naming happens right from the point of defining the old man's apparel, that is, the students seek to select the accurate word that will exactly define the man's attire. They hold a debate as to whether the man wore a loden coat, an anorak, an Inuit or a parka. Although all the terms refer to a garment with a hood, Todd and Robby lay much emphasis on their distinction based on cultural grounds. Such cultural divergences might in turn reveal the old man's homeland. Besides, Todd and Robby conjecture that the old man is the father of Ilgauskas who teaches them Logic at college. Since Ilgauskas was a voracious reader of Dostoevsky in original, Todd and Robby comes to the conclusion that he might be a Russian: "This was my [Robby's] crystalline link; the old man to Ilgauskas to Dostoevsky to Russian. . . . I would spend my life in a thought bubble, purifying the link" (76).[9] Such arbitrary links about his 'origin,' metaphorically implicated in the old man's birth place, inform the fabricated story of the man which, as Robby argues, would come to an end once they try to meet the old man: "We [Robby and Todd] do that [meet the old man], we kill the idea, we kill everything we've done. We can't talk to him" (77).[9] At this point, Robby and Todd indulge themselves in a play and they derive a lot of narcissistic fervor in the course of their creative endeavors of constructing a non-realistic account of events in language. Here, DeLillo affirms his belief both in the Derridean notion of 'differance' and also in Roland Barthes's concept of 'the death of the author.' In fabricating a story about the old man, Todd and Robby construct the story of the old man in language; their selection of appropriate words that differ and defer the possibility of ultimate meaning offers the man a linguistic existence. Also, defying authorial claims over the work of art, DeLillo turns "Midnight in Dostoevsky" as the story written by the characters, Todd and Robby, whose story holds, as Paul de Man notes, the "vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration" (30).[10] Besides, DeLillo gives his story a metafictional twist by revealing the art of composition itself and also by establishing that a work of art, through constant associations, supplements and supplants absences in the text. While Fyodor Dostoevsky's novels often instill puissant expectancy in the readers, the lingering dubiosity of Todd's and Robby's perplex narratives in "Midnight in Dostoevsky" lends the story exciting twists at regular intervals.

Much like "Midnight in Dostoevsky," *The Names* deploys linguistic markers to underscore the element of play and to resist a totalized narrative framework. Owen's explanation about the polyphonic implications of the word 'character,' for instance, inaugurates the operations of the differential nature of linguistic sign. Etymologically the word 'character' derives meaning from its Greek root, kharakter, which means "to brand or to sharpen" (10).[4] The word also trails with it a host of supplementary meanings, namely "pointed stake," "an engraving instrument or branding instrument," "somebody in a story," "a mark or symbol" (10).[4] Unravelling a word that harbors its opposite meaning is a preferred strategy in deconstruction. For instance, J. Hillis Miller, a critic of the Yale school of deconstruction, deconstructs M. H. Abrams's statement that deconstructionist reading of a work is 'parasitical' by focusing on the several renderings of the very word 'parasite' itself. According to Miller, the word parasite has

an "'uncanny' double antithetical prefix" (441)[11] which is 'para.' Interestingly, this prefix contains a host of meanings, some of them are: "proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority, something at once inside a domestic economy and outside it, something simultaneously this side of the boundary line, threshold, or margin, and at the same time beyond it, equivalent in status and the same time secondary or subsidiary, submissive, as of guest to host, slave to master" (441).[11] Further, the antithetical relation exists between "pairs of words in this system, host and parasite and host and guest" (443).[11] Since deconstruction is "a rhetorical discipline" (443),[11] Miller notes, it uncovers a ". . . strange sort of chain without beginning or end in which no commanding element (origin, goal, or underlying principle) may be identified" (444).[11]

In *The Names*, the act of naming functions in different ways. Firstly, operating as linguistic markers, names encapsulate history by naming the place after a prominent personality. For instance, in the first section of the novel titled 'The Island,' the narrator James muses over the name after which the island 'Kouros' is named: "It was Tap who'd told me [James] the name of the island derived from a colossal statue found toppled near an ancient gravesite about a hundred years ago. It was a traditional kouros, a sturdy young man with braided hair who stood with his arms close to his nude body, his left foot forward, an archaic smile on his face" (36-37).[4] Secondly, the evolution of language reveals how the archaic sense of the word is substituted with new meanings. In the penultimate part of the novel titled 'The Desert,' the narrator muses over the derivations of the word 'book':

*The Sanskrit word for knot . . . eventually took on the meaning of 'book.' Grantha. This is because of the manuscripts. The birch-bark and palm-leaf manuscripts were bound by a cord drawn through two holes and knotted. . . . It's [A book] is a box that you open. . . . The Greek word puxos. Box-tree. This suggests wood, of course, and it's interesting that the word 'book' in English can be traced to the Middle Dutch boek, or beech, and to the Germanic boko, a beech staff on which runes were carved. (291)*[4]

Thirdly, from the etymological significance of words, DeLillo moves toward exposing how alterity, that is, the presence of the 'other' in every word, threatens the alleged inherent stability of language. For instance, traveling far and wide, Owen reaches India and finds out that in Hindi language "the word for yesterday [khal] was the same as the word for tomorrow [khal]" (279).[4] Here, Owen comes across the uncertainty inherent within the linguistic system; the word 'khal' encapsulates the meaning and its opposite within the same word 'khal.'

Such a playful logic underlies the Derridean re-reading of Plato's Phaedrus as well. In Phaedrus, the debate between Socrates and Phaedrus revolves around the binary distinction between living speech and dead writing, with the former as the privileged term. To affirm his arguments about writing as a poor supplement to speech, Socrates draws on the Egyptian mythology about writing. According to the myth, Theuth presents before the Egyptian king Thamus, also known as Ammon, the art of writing as one of Theuth's greatest discoveries. Thamus, who privileges speech over writing, outrightly denounces writing by alleging that it is detrimental to memory and that writing lacks referential quality. Socrates argues:

*Writing has one great fault in common with painting; for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence. And the same may be said of books. . . . And when they have been once written down they are tumbled about anywhere, all alike, among those whose understand them and among strangers, and do not know to whom they should or should not reply: and, if they are maltreated or abused, they have no parent to protect them; for book cannot protect or defend itself. (185)*[12]

Derrida undermines the Platonic binary distinction between speech and writing by deconstructing pharmakon, a word Plato uses in Phaedrus. At the beginning of the dialogue, Plato introduces the myth of Boreas and Orithiya, in which Orithiya was led astray while playing with

her friend Pharmacia. This brief evocation of the myth by Plato, Derrida claims, is not an accident but a necessary element woven into the dialogue. In the Platonic dialogue, Socrates compares the written text that Phaedrus conceals from him to pharmakon, a drug that leads one astray. Socrates gave a one-dimensional touch to the word pharmakon meaning poison. Conversely, Derrida invokes the inherent opposite meaning of the word, which is medicine. Significantly, Derrida argues that Pharmacia is not only a mythological figure but also a word that signifies "the administration of the pharmakon, the drug: the medicine and/or poison" (75).[13] Both the myths, the Boreas Orithiya myth and the Egyptian Theuth myth, help Plato accord a secondary status to writing. But for Derrida, the relationship between Thamus and Theuth is similar to the relationship between the presence of an authoritative father, signifying the primacy of speech, and that of the surrogate son, symbolizing the ancillary position of writing. Furthermore, Derrida employs the concept of supplement to destabilize Plato's binary postulation between speech and writing. Derrida notes that reading itself is a form of writing or rewriting which makes meaning possible through a number of associations with other signifiers. So the act or reading or writing is informed by the "the necessities of a game, by the logic of play" (70).[13] To explain a subversive tendency inherent in the art (teckne) of writing, Derrida takes recourse to the myth of Thoth which is a variation of the Egyptian Theuth myth. According to mythological sources, Thoth, the eldest son of the god-king Ammon-Ra, also known as 'the sun,' is the executor of thoughts through language. In other words, Thoth was not the originator of creative act but only an executor in language. Thoth can become the god of the creative word "only by metonymic substitution, by historical displacement, and sometimes by violent subversion" (93).[13] While he participates in the plot lead by Seth, Thoth, the moon, substitutes for Ra, the sun. This act of supplementation leads to the violent subversion since, like the king Ra, Thoth adorns the role of "god-doctor-pharmacist-magician" (94).[13] Now, the god of writing substitutes for the king who represents presence through his speech: "As a substitute capable of doubling for the king, the father, the sun, and the word, distinguished from these only by dint of representing, repeating, and masquerading, Thoth was naturally also capable of totally supplanting them and appropriating all their attributes" (94).[13] So here Thoth, the pharmakeus or the god of writing effectively supplies a drug rather than a poison, which in turn helps characters like Horus and Osiris back to their life and potency, respectively. In the character of Thoth, Derrida discerns the subversive moment of replacement which is a dangerous supplement: "He [Thoth] cannot be assigned a fixed spot in the play of differences. Sly, slippery, and masked, an intriguer and a card . . . he is neither the king nor jack, but rather a sort of joker, a floating signifier, a wild card, one who puts play into play" (96-7).[13] Thus with this mythological example Derrida drives home two important points. Firstly, Plato employs a mythological reference to legitimize speech, therefore, the mythos undercuts the logos from within. Secondly, the word pharmakon which Socrates makes use of so frequently harbors within itself the "complicity of contrary values" (128)[13] which "presenting itself as a poison, may turn out to be cure" (128).[13] On these accounts, Plato's text contains the seeds of its own destruction which considerably weakens the logocentric claims in the text.

Derrida uses the word pharmakon to deconstruct the logocentric claims in Plato's *Phaedrus* and DeLillo employs '*The Names*' to bring out its polyphonic associations that are capable enough to undermine the unity of the text. To begin with, the investigation into the murder cult leads to the revelation that the name of the cult itself is '*The Names*.' Although James's teleological mission endeavors to uncover the intentions of the victimizer, he is surrounded by an excess of data which signals how the cult acquires meaning rather than what the cult means. Since the cult is named '*The Names*,' it is a self-reflexive label which calls attention to its own position as a construct. Also, if for Kathryn the archaeological excavation "preserves the finds [and] puts the pieces together" (73),[4] for James finding a pattern was part of his craving to reach a solution: "I [James] found myself trying to match the name of

the victim with the name of the place where the crime was committed. Initials. . . . I don't know why I did this, I wasn't looking for the cult, I wasn't even looking for murder victims especially. Any crime would do, any act that tended to isolate a person in particular place, just so the letters matched" (250).[4] Curiously enough, James in his discussions with Del Nearing, the filmmaker Frank Volterra's girlfriend, comes across a different set of information about Volterra, who desperately discovers "some closed-in horrible logic" (199)[4] about the cult. The archaeologist and the questor closely follow the cult murder to expose its 'truth.' Similarly, Volterra in his film about the cult focuses on the 'surveillance' mechanism that is part of the twentieth century visual culture. At this point, DeLillo ruptures the boundary between fact and fiction exposing the way the murder itself forms part of a filmic reality:

*The life they [cult murders] lead out here, what they do, seems so close to something on film, so natural to film, that I [Volterra] believe once I talked to them they'll see it's an idea they might have thought of themselves, an idea involving languages, patterns, extreme forms, extreme ways of seeing. Film is more than the twentieth-century art. It's another part of the twentieth century mind. It's the world seen from inside. . . . The twentieth century is on film. It's filmed century. You have to ask yourself if there's anything about us more important than the fact that we're constantly on film, constantly watching ourselves. The world is on film, all the time. Spy satellites, microscopic scanners, pictures of the uterus, embryos, sex, war, assassinations, everything. (200)*[4]

Owen and James unmask the reality behind the cult murders, whereas, Volterra attempts to represent the esoteric function of the cult through films. Both the investigators of the cult and Volterra equally partake of surveillance when they try to name and fix the reality about the '*The Names*.' But functioning exactly like a set of deferral signifiers, the cult named '*The Names*' defies referentiality. Consequently, '*The Names*' is not only the name of the cult, but also a reference to the cuneiform inscriptions on the Behistun rock, the stone bound recitation of Vedas, the Hindi graffiti's relating the scenes from Lord Krishna's life, stone pillar inscriptions in Brahmi script, the edicts of Ashoka, and the glossalalia of Tap.

Out of these, Tap's unique way of writing an 'autobiographical non-fiction novel,' a label which problematizes the distinction between fictional and realistic representation, elicits special mention. The last part of *The Names* titled 'The Prairie' deals with Tap's novel featuring the escapades of a young boy named Orville Benton. Tap's inscription defies the laws of referentiality partly because his novel builds on an alternate system of language, namely, "glossylalya [or] to speak with tongues" (336).[4] Alluding to the Biblical event of Jesus's disciples speaking in tongues to the congregation and also to the confusion of tongues that arose out of the Tower of Babel event, Tap perhaps discovers a language about language replete with unconventionality. In his non-fiction novel, Tap experiments with the deliberate use of misspellings- 'conveeniently,' 'Yeeld,' 'terrour,' 'enormas,' 'interprit,' 'multy,' 'incomprehenshun.' Commenting on Tap's unconventional use of spellings, the critic Paul Maltby states that the child's experimentation touches at "a deeper, primal level which is the ground of visionary experience" (266).[14] If observed closely, the words are written as they are pronounced; written words imitate speech. In this fashion, Tap's novel is a discourse on language about language, metalanguage. Much like Thomas Pynchon, DeLillo plays with anagrammatic place names such as 'Zarqa and Azraq,' and groups together words with similar letters in the initial positions, like, 'Jebel Amman' and 'James Axton.' In doing so, readers are seemingly driven toward constructing a unified meaning, but eventually the text undermines its own sense of unity by exposing them as mere word play. Also, the investigators seek to find a connection between the initials of the name of the victims and the place of murder, but the novel on the whole finds associations between the coded Greek language (Ob) that Tap spoke to his friend Anand, the first letters in the name Owen Bradmens (OB) and the character in Tap's novel Orville Benton (OB)

playful in nature. In Tap's novel, Benton is unable to comprehend the arbitrary language of adults and loses himself in a treeless grass filled prairie: "Even in his creeping desire despair, the boy marveled a little at how these people spoke. . . . All his words were poor clattery English like a stutterrer at the front of the class. He didn't know how to begin, where was the whurl of his ignorant tongue. A spidery despair loomed over him" (337). 4 Dennis A. Foster observes that "language is a kind of risk insurance, offering a sort of currency in exchange for a child's lost home. As part of the reality principle, it defers and displaces desires to safer times and situations" (166).15 Perhaps, Benton's forfeiture of 'the prairie,' the title of the last part of the novel, signals the loss of childhood days itself. Therefore, Tap's non-fiction novel which experiments with language possibly refers to the attempts made by a child to restore his childhood language, metaphorically named "the fallen wonder of the world" (339).4 If seen from this angle, the non-referential language refers to Tap's intriguing creation of a world with words inside his autobiographical non-fiction novel. So Tap's act of writing a novel, Kathryn's archaeological survey, Volterra's art of filming, and Owen's and James's role of inquiry are supplementary structures that help DeLillo advocate the novel's protean nature.

Briefly stated, *The Names* privileges the subversive aspect of the Derridean concept of supplement. *The Names* problematizes the process of naming by focusing exclusively on the polyphonic implications of the very title, '*The Names*.' The operation of language, therefore, undermines the narratives of quest for an orderly investigative modus operandi in *The Names*.

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