



“Bridging the Lonely Distances”:

A Study of Metaphorical and Physical Voice in Don DeLillo’s
The Names from the Perspective of Post-Classical Narratology

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*To my late mother, Heléne, who passed away during the course of this program.
Without whom, this paper never would have been written. She convinced me to be true to myself and
to follow my dream of writing about literature. I remain eternally grateful.*

Abstract

This paper explores narratology with a focus on metaphorical and physical voice in Don DeLillo's 1982 novel, *The Names*. Beginning with an overview of previous criticism on the novel and an exploration of its post-modern qualities, I progress into a discussion of meaning, and how it can be found in the narratological voice. The concepts of semantic and vocal form of meaning are taken into consideration. Moreover, it is demonstrated how language in *The Names* is both representational and experiential.

Analysing the novel both in print and in audiobook format, I study voice from the perspective of post-classical narratology. With the use of audionarratological theory, I illustrate how voice in *The Names* is transformed into an explicit and amplified presence when encountered in its audiobook form. In this context, ideological characteristics of the voice are explored, and I look at how they are semiotically communicated.

Finally, since criticism of post-modern fiction usually focuses on representational and metafictional qualities of language, this paper advocates for future research on the experiential qualities of language and asks for this mindset to be applied when analysing post-modern fiction. It is illustrated how the experience of listening to an audiobook version can add to the interpretation of a printed work.

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Introduction

Every conversation is a shared narrative, a thing that surges forward, too dense to allow space for the unspoken, the sterile. The talk is unconditional, the participants drawn in completely. This is a way of speaking that takes such pure joy in its own openness and ardor that we begin to feel these people are discussing language itself. What pleasure in the simplest greeting. It's as though one friend says to another, "How good it is to say 'How are you?'" The other replying, "When I answer 'I am well and how are you,' what I really mean is that I'm delighted to have a chance to say these familiar things—they bridge the lonely distances" (DeLillo 61).

In one of his many monologues, the protagonist of *The Names*, James Axton, ponders the nature of language and conversation. *The Names* is full to the brim with philosophical insights, linguistic reflections, and daydreams about the nature of life; three elements commonly associated with language. Thus, it is no wonder that literary critics have focused on the role of language in the novel. Since it was first published in 1982, Don DeLillo's *The Names* has been the sole focus of only a few dozen academic articles. Possibly overshadowed by the publication of *White Noise* in 1985, with which DeLillo entered the literary mainstream, *The Names* has primarily been analysed more generally as part of academic articles covering DeLillo's early literature. Most critical studies of *The Names* have concentrated on the role of language, the concept of glossolalia, words and their inability to fully describe reality, the relation between violence and language, and the seemingly futile search for a "pure" language. Merely a few articles were written after the publication of the novel in the 1980s, while it seems to have generated a renewed interest at the start of the 21st century, presumably due to DeLillo's growing

popularity as a contemporary writer. With this paper, I aim to add to the ongoing conversation about DeLillo's literature in general, and *The Names* in particular.

Set mostly in Greece, on the fictional island of Kouros, and in the capital of Athens, *The Names* follows American risk analyst, James Axton, who doubles as the narrator. The narrative mostly revolves around the conversations and experiences Axton has with friends, colleagues in different branches of international work, and his estranged wife Kathryn and son Thomas, called "Tap." The major mystery and emerging plot of the novel deals with a nomadic cult called *Ta Onómata*, which translates as *The Names* in Greek. This cult murders people in locations whose place names match the initials of their victims' names, for example Michaelis Kalliambetsos in Mikro Kamini. Although the cult is constantly mentioned in conversation, it does not properly enter the plot until the end of the novel.

The novel is divided into three main parts, with an epilogue forming a book chapter written by Tap. Fairly slow paced, the narrative is mostly made up of Axton's monologues of thought and description, as well as dialogues with those around him. Featuring most prominently of these are Owen Brademas, Kathryn's boss and colleague, with whom Axton develops a complicated friendship. Brademas ultimately leads Axton closer to *Ta Onómata* by way of his own increasingly obsessive interest.

The nature of language is a persistent theme throughout *The Names*, linking the cult with the conversations of the characters. The novel fittingly ends with Axton making his way up the Parthenon in Athens, pondering what the people around him are bringing to the ancient temple and realising that "our offering is language" (397). These reflections are then cut short by the epilogue; a framed narrative, written by Axton's son and featuring a fictional version of Brademas as the chapter's protagonist.

My aim is to add to the ongoing scholarly conversation by exploring the narrative structure of *The Names* with a twofold focus: the metaphorical voice of the novel in print, and the physical voice of the audiobook version. In addition to voice, this paper focuses on different aspects of language, narratology, and transmediality in *The Names*, issues that have so far not been broadly discussed by critics. I see the narrative style of *The Names* as inherently unconventional. As an ideologically loaded post-modern novel, it can be seen as a response to contemporary literary trends which tend to favour mass-consumption, as well as clichéd storylines and overused narrative techniques, such as absurd plot twists or overcomplicated backstories. Additionally, I argue that the narrative voice of the novel is ideologically loaded and semiotically communicated through the voice of James Axton. I use both post-structuralist theory and post-classical narratology, specifically audionarratology, as my primary theoretical approach. I study *The Names* both from a text-immanent and reader-oriented perspective, with added weight on the latter, and argue that the narrative voice is the linking factor that joins the perspectives of these fields together. Using *The Names*, I illustrate how the physical voice of the audiobook serves as an idiom of the metaphorical voice in the novel, giving prominence to the ideological aspects of the text through interpellation. By juxtaposing the printed version of *The Names* with the audiobook, I demonstrate how the implicit voice of the novel becomes explicit when performed aloud in the audiobook. Ultimately, I investigate whether the audiobook can be seen as a remedialisation of the printed novel.

The first section briefly summarises the most important conclusions that previous critics have reached on the novel. Building on that material, the section continues into an analysis of the novel from a post-structuralist perspective, comprising an overview of its post-modern qualities. I investigate the representational and experiential values of language, and the concept of

meaning. In the second section, I focus on the narrator and voice. Using an approach based on post-classical narratology, I discuss the narrator and his voice in *The Names* from both the printed version and the audiobook. I problematise the abstraction of narrative voice, explore its authorial character, and investigate the effects of the physical voice in the audiobook. This branches out into the field of audionarratology which I explore further in the third section, debating the performed, physical voice and its components, and how it is a transmedial narrative tool for amplification. Intertwining post-structuralist theory and post-classical narratology, I investigate the ideological qualities of voice using Richard Walsh's theory of voice as interpellation, before concluding my analysis of *The Names*.

Language as representational and experiential

This section starts with a brief overview of previous criticism of *The Names*. I then move from some of these strands of discussion into my own analysis. Starting off in the field of post-structuralism, I focus on the post-modern qualities of the novel before I end with an analysis of language as representational and experiential. For my post-structural study of *The Names*, I use Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida, and for my section on different qualities of language, I again use Heidegger, and Roland Barthes, contrasting them with the theories of Monika Fludernik and Richard Walsh.

Previous criticism of *The Names* has made significant contributions to the understanding of the role of language in the novel. More specifically, critics have highlighted the way DeLillo's prose illustrate the arbitrariness of the sign, and the post-modern instability and lack of connection between the signifier and the signified. James Berger, for example, argues that *Ta Onómata* symbolises a rebellion "against the arbitrariness of linguistic signification" (352). Similarly, Anne Longmuir acknowledges that the link between language and reality is a major theme of the novel, but goes even further, arguing that the novel holds a place in a larger discourse, "the social text" (120). Moreover, the political situatedness of *The Names* is an aspect with which Tom LeClair, Matthew J. Morris, and Jacqueline A. Zubeck deal. Bruce Bawer connects issues of language, representation, and narrative voice when he criticises DeLillo's prose for being overly pretentious in the way the characters speak. Further debating mythic strategy and the sublime in *The Names*, Maria Moss concludes that the process of narration seems to be a useful tool in resolving the terror represented throughout the novel, arguing that a "narrative" substitutes the known for the unknown, explains the inexplicable, names the unnameable," and is a "behaviour and survival strategy" necessary to escape the mythical terror

of the novel (493). Paul Maltby, on the other hand, investigates representations of visionary moments and experiences in *The Names* and asserts that DeLillo does not strictly adhere to post-modern conventions, instead employing a “romantic metaphysics.” While he acknowledges that DeLillo comments on the post-modern experience of life, Maltby argues that rather than merely using a parodic mode, DeLillo searches for a deeper meaning; a sense of mystery behind language that is more akin to romanticism than post-modernism.

While other critics, most prominently Matthew Mutter and Arnold Weinstein, also contribute to the debate on the relation between representation, language, and reality in the novel, this seems to be as far as criticism has advanced on this subject. Some critics have aimed at taking the discussion further by illustrating the relationship between the concept of violence and language, sometimes denoted as “writing as violence” or “reading as violence” (Morris; Thurschwell; Weinstein). While Mutter suggests that the novel “moves beyond” the initial question of what language fails to accomplish, and instead presents us with the question of “whether we should be frustrated at all” with the representational values of language (489), it is apparent that critics have not moved far beyond this line of questioning. Despite the fact that extensive character studies of Axton and tentative attempts at a narratological analysis by critics like Moss have been made, the narratological structure of the novel and narrative voice are aspects that have not been subjected to an in-depth analysis. This is clearly an area where an expanded wave of criticism is warranted.

In the present study, I argue that the next legitimate turn in the conversation on *The Names* is to connect the aspects of language with narratology and narrative voice. These aspects then feed into the performed, physical voice in the audiobook, and post-classical narratology. Not only is this approach a natural progression for a conversation that has come to a standstill or

is conducted in the form of an infinite loop, but it is also in accordance with the contemporary movement of critical theory. Before I enter the field of narratology, I start my analysis of *The Names* by looking at some of its post-modern qualities through a post-structuralist lens.

In many ways, *The Names* can be categorised as a post-modern novel. It invokes a range of post-modern features, most prominently due to its lack of a traditional plot, its metafictional notions, and the permeating theme of the nature of language. In terms of narrative and plot, the novel is set up like an international travel narrative with elements of adventure and mystery. The plot follows Axton to places like Greece, India, Jordan, and Egypt, to mention but a few. However, the narrative does not unfold quite as one would expect for such genres. The mystery surrounding the cult of *Ta Onómata* is arguably the main plot component that develops throughout the novel. The existence of the cult is revealed slowly, and its motives are discovered about halfway through. However, except for the tales of Owen Brademas, neither Axton nor the reader is allowed to come really close to the cult. Instead, it seems as if the murders lurk in the background while Axton is busy engaging in conversation, pondering the peculiarities of life, and travelling the world.

The Names lacks a conventional narrative structure that takes the reader from A to B. The mystery of the cult is uncovered at a safe distance. Axton is revealed to have been unwittingly working for the CIA in his profession as a risk-analyst, but, apart from these events, there are no significant story developments. The lack of a traditional storyline makes *The Names* a post-modern text. While this is not a paper on the poetics of post-modern fiction, I nevertheless find it important to provide an overview of some of the significant post-modern characteristics of the novel before progressing to my narratological investigation. This is important, not merely as a way of understanding the conversation about the novel up until this point, but also as a method of

illustrating how two very different fields – post-structuralism and post-classical narratology – can be brought together in literary analysis.

Perhaps the most interesting post-modern feature of the novel, in terms of its relation to voice and narratology, is how language is represented throughout the text as the central topic of conversation between characters. Language plays a critical role in *The Names*, plot-wise and as a permeating theme. The question of the nature of language constantly looms in the background, and the characters frequently return to the subject. As several critics have stated, *The Names* ponders the function of language and represents it as unstable since it sometimes fails to signify the real world. This is illustrated by the cult *Ta Onómata*, whose murders lack any apparent sense of motivation:

The cult's power, its psychic grip, was based on an absence of such things. No sense, no content, no historic bond, no ritual significance. Owen and I had spent several hours building theories, surrounding the bare act with desperate speculations, mainly to comfort ourselves. We knew in the end we'd be left with nothing. Nothing signified, nothing meant. (258)

Axton and Brademas' struggling obsession with figuring out the "true" motives of the cult demonstrates a strong yearning for order. In literary criticism and philosophy, Jacques Derrida is perhaps the critic most famous for demonstrating the instability of the sign and its role in the interpretive process. In *Margins of Philosophy*, Derrida deliberates on the concept of *différance*, the differentiating and deferring qualities of the text. Building on the Saussurian concept of the sign, Derrida posits how language is founded upon a system of differences. In short, words are

defined by the meaning of other words. Hence, Derrida maintains that play, the interpretative process, is always deferred, and never fully stable. However, as *The Names* also illustrates, language is not only a tool for the characters to express themselves, or to ponder the nature of things, but also as a means of *experiencing* life. Thus, consciousness is expressed by language:

This talk we were having about familiar things was itself ordinary and familiar. It seemed to yield up the mystery that is part of such things, the nameless way in which we sometimes feel our connections to the physical world. *Being here*. (38, emphasis in original)

It is difficult not to think of the Heideggerian notion of *Dasein* (German for *being there*) when reading the passage above. Martin Heidegger coined the concept of *Dasein* to theorise the consciousness of human beings and their relationship to the world (Wrathall 7-10). In his 1950 lecture, “Die Sprache,” he famously stated that “language speaks.” By this notion, Heidegger did not argue for an agency of language itself, but meant that it “brings man and his existence into conscious existence” (1120). In *The Names*, language, and more specifically, the act of signification, is literally what brought the cult *Ta Onómata* into existence, and subsequently, drives its victims out of theirs. Thus, the cult is a mockery of the representational side of language. When James Axton unknowingly encounters the cult for the first time, he reflects on language:

“How many languages do you speak?” Strangest damn thing to ask. A formal question. Some medieval tale, a question asked of travelers at the city gates. Did my entry depend

on the answer? The fact that we'd spoken to each other in a language not our own deepened the sense of formal procedure, of manner and ceremony. I called up, "Five," again in Greek. (33-34)

The members of the cult are obsessed with language, and this recurring question of how many languages people speak signifies the complexity and diversity of man's consciousness and experience of the world. This can be seen in contrast to another recurring enquiry: "Are they killing Americans?" (52, 112, and 231), frequently asked by the international business people in Axton's surroundings. While the cult focuses on the connection between language and reality, Axton and his colleagues are a shallow subculture abroad, removed from any responsibility and connection to the world: "Americans used to come to places like this to write and paint and study, to find deeper textures. Now we do business" (7). The repeatedly asked question "Are they killing Americans?" seems to signify a silent call for recognition, a way to perceive connections in a world where these people find themselves to be in a vacuum. Conversely, the purpose of the cult is to illustrate randomness, and the arbitrary nature of language and life. This is reinforced by the nomadic nature of the cult since they lack connection to a place per se; there is only a connection between place names and their "work." *The Names* illustrates a post-modern world where language serves as a phenomenon that connects and divides people. Ultimately, both *Ta Onómata*, Axton, and his friends, fail to understand this.

By looking at how language occurs in the world, Heidegger argues that it is not merely representational but also that it shapes the consciousness and perception of man. In fact, it seems possible to move beyond the post-modern way of merely treating language as an unstable signifier of reality, and to see how language in *The Names* goes deeper, forming part of a

cognitive process that affects how the characters view the world. The fact that language, as well as the means of perceiving and interpreting it, is a cognitive process is highlighted throughout *The Names*. Axton ponders Tap's perception of language in the passage below:

At the airport the next evening I stood with Rajiv and Tap under the status board, talking about the destinations and wondering what Rajiv saw when he came across words like Benghazi and Khartoum. I wondered what Tap saw. (105)

In "Mediacy, Mediation, and Focalization," Monika Fludernik proposes that in terms of narration, the meaning-making process is not merely "reception-oriented" but is also generative (107). Thus, when readers engage a text, they create meaning for themselves during the process of reading. Fludernik rejects the claim that there is always a pre-existing story composed by the author with the purpose of being understood by the reader (109). Similarly, focusing on the concept of voice as his primary object of investigation in *Rhetoric of Fictionality*, Richard Walsh advocates a communicative model of narratology that he calls a rhetoric of fictionality (1-2). While Walsh, much like Fludernik, believes in a reader-oriented cognitive approach to narratology, he does not fully dismiss the structuralist origins of the field and the complex relationship between narration and representation (6).

It becomes clear that with a cognitive reader-oriented perspective, the interpretation of a text and the search for meaning may differ from person to person. In this context, it is important to note the difference between the two characteristics of language and what consequences this has on any critical reading of *The Names*. By looking at where meaning resides, whether this is on the page or in the mind of the reader, it is possible to conclude how it affects the interpretation

process. This becomes clear in *The Names* as both the representational and experiential sides of language are foregrounded. The reader's interpretation will always depend on several factors, such as general language skills, vocabulary, and cultural knowledge. An experienced reader might pick up on the cult's method of selecting their victims at the moment when Axton and film maker Frank Volterra are discussing the logic behind the killings (166-167), even though this fact is not revealed until later (188). As Axton concludes that "There's a particular logic," so the reader ponders the same logic of the cult, trying to figure it out before it is revealed. Of course, this is one of the pleasures and objectives of reading a novel in the mystery genre (167). This is one example of how meaning-making in *The Names* works on a cognitive reader-oriented level.

Still, there are alternative views where semantic meaning is arbitrary yet not originating from the same source as in cognitive reader-oriented theories. The elusiveness of meaning has been debated extensively by Derrida but also in the work of Heidegger and Roland Barthes. In "From Work to Text," Barthes argues that "the logic regulating the Text is not comprehensive (define 'what the work means') but metonymic . . ." (1472). He clarifies by adding that the text "practices the infinite deferment of the signified" (1472). This is similar to Derrida's concept of *différance*. While a cognitive approach to interpretation states that meaning will differ depending on the reader, post-structuralist approaches to interpretation state that meaning differs due to the nature of the text itself. It should be noted that I am still solely talking about semantic meaning in this context. However, even in the text, it is possible to discuss meaning as wider than merely semantic, as demonstrated below in a passage from *The Names*.

There was a ready-made quality about the way she spoke. Tired nonstop fluency. It came raining out. Tension and fatigue made her overbright, almost frantically eager to string

sentences together, any sentences. She used pitch as an element of meaning. What she said was beside the point. It was the cadences that mattered, the rise and fall of the ironic voice, the modulations, the stresses. What we lacked was a subject (118).

Speaking to Ann Maitland, Axton deliberates on the functions of the voice, how meaning resides in pitch, and how rather than the words, the movements of the voice create the message. It is also possible to approach the interplay of conversation and meaning by analysing the processes of listening and reading. Heidegger notably asserted that people hear before they speak (Aczel 602). He meant that hearing is a prerequisite for understanding and that human beings hear things *because* they understand; selecting semiotic information from sounds and noises (603). And it is not only until you have heard that you can turn to speaking, and in extension, writing. As opposed to Derrida and Barthes, but in line with Fludernik and Walsh, I argue that this notion supports a cognitive approach to the interpretative process.

The contrasts between the text and the mind of the reader as the origin of meaning-making are, of course, not as black and white as they might seem. Supported by Heidegger's notion of hearing, speaking, and writing, it appears that an interplay of factors affects meaning-making. While the text on the page, as a physical object, is fixed in space and time, its subject is evidently not, as demonstrated by Derrida and Barthes. Additionally, the relationship between the text and the reader is dependent on a multitude of factors, as shown by Fludernik, Walsh, as well as Heidegger. I argue that this is highlighted, repeatedly, in *The Names*, through the representations of language and Axton's monologues. The study of this continuous interplay of post-structural theory and narratology continues in the next section.

Narrator and voice

In this section, I shift focus to the reader-oriented field of post-classical narratology and the concept of voice. I emphasise the physical voice of the audiobook version of *The Names*, as compared to the metaphorical voice in print. Jan Alber and Monika Fludernik's *Postclassical Narratology* and Richard Walsh's *The Rhetoric of Fictionality* serve as the theoretical approach from which I analyse *The Names*. The situatedness of the reader in relation to the narrative remains my main focus. In order to understand this relationship, I draw on the argument of Fludernik and Walsh. For the purpose of analysing the narrating voice of the audiobook, I use Theo Van Leeuwen's parametric system of voice as detailed in "Parametric Systems: The Case of Voice Quality."

It should be noted that Gérard Genette's definition of voice in *Narrative Discourse* (1980) as purely metaphorical will not suffice for the scope of this paper. In my analysis, voice is more than an abstraction, hence my use of Walsh, Fludernik, and Van Leeuwen. It is not my aim to become entangled in the web of previous debate over definitions of narratological terms. Instead, I keep to post-classical narratology and *The Names*. Post-classical narratology aims at intertwining traditional structuralist perspectives of narratology with new methods of criticism, like transmedial narratives, audionarratology, and reader-oriented cognitive perspectives (Alber and Fludernik). Alber and Fludernik describe the field of post-classical narratology as "post" in the way that it builds upon, and transcends, the structuralist beginnings of narrative theory (1-4). Moreover, they point out that another major factor that sets the field apart from its predecessor is its ability to encapsulate "various heterogeneous approaches" (6). Thus, one should perhaps refer to *post-classical narratologies* to better understand the field. Due to the unconventional narrative features of *The Names*, the novel stands out as a prime candidate for this kind of analysis.

James Axton is a homo-diegetic, and intra-diegetic, narrator. He retells the story primarily from the past tense, presumably shortly after the events have taken place, except for a few instances where the narration turns into the present tense. In some of these instances, the textual markers make it apparent to the reader that the narrator is Axton: “Awake. The pulsing cry of doves. I have to concentrate to form a sense of whereabouts. Up, into the world, crank the shutters open” (44). The use of “I,” in first person, makes it clear that it is Axton who is speaking. At this point in the novel, narrative time has caught up with story time before the two lines diverge again, as illustrated by the use of past tense in the next paragraph where Axton has sat down in his office to reflect. In other instances of the present tense, there is reason to suspect that the narrator may no longer be Axton. For example, in the following section, it seems unclear who is speaking; not only do we know that Axton is absent, but the narrative also lacks textual markers, indicating that he is retelling something that he has heard from another source. This would indicate that we are now dealing with an omniscient, extra-diegetic narrator.

In the painted evening they walk past the windmill. He points out to sea, about a hundred yards, to the place where dolphins breached, a week ago, in a softfall of violet light. It is one of those imprinted moments, part of him now, contained in island time. A fishing boat approaches in the calm that settles in at this hour. It is blood red, the *Katerina*, a life ring fixed to the mast. She smiles as he makes out the name. The motor leaves a cadenced noise. The small Cretan rugs. The plank floors. The old lamp with its sepia shade. The donkey bag on the wall. The flowers in rusty cans on the roof, the steps, the window ledges. Tap’s handprint on a mirror. (159, emphasis in original)

However, in other passages, such as the following one, which reports on one of the cult victims being found, it is harder to identify the narrator since Axton cannot have been present. Instead it seems likely that this is Axton retelling, or rather reconstructing, a narrative of his own, based on information he has picked up from others.

Two blood-covered stones were found near the body on the outskirts of the fifteenth-century town, at first light, by a woman fetching water or by boys on their way to the fields. By this time three men would be trekking west, leaving behind a comatose woman and two other men, one dead, one merely sitting still. Eventually a constable would make his way along the rough path to the storage bins, and then a subdivisional officer, to question the one conscious person. He would be sitting in the dust, blue-eyed and sparsely bearded, without documents or money, and he would probably try to speak to them in some dialect of northwest Iran. (370)

I argue that Axton is constructing a narrative since the textual markers heavily imply it. The vagueness of the first sentence, such as whether the body was found by a woman fetching water *or* by boys on their way to the fields, illustrates that the narrator was absent, and subsequently does not have full knowledge of the events. This impression is further enforced in the next few sentences where “a constable *would* make his way...” and “he *would probably* try to speak to them.” The textual markers enforce evident vagueness and speculation, implying that the narrative is not wholly reliable.

The narrative is hardly straightforward, and close reading is often required to spot textual markers like the ones quoted above. *The Names* challenges the reader to consider the cognitive

aspects of language, and, from a reader-oriented perspective, this has consequences for how narrative is understood and voice perceived. This should be seen in contrast to the focus on the nature of the text as discussed in the previous section, where meaning is structurally positioned. In recent developments of narratology, the discussion has moved from a structural focus on narrative levels in the text to a wide variety of cognitive approaches (Walsh 2-3). In the introductory chapter of *Postclassical Narratology*, Alber and Fludernik refer to the argument made by Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck, declaring that “Whereas structuralism was intent on coming up with a general theory of narrative, postclassical narratology prefers to consider the circumstances that make every act of reading different. . . . From cognition to ethics to ideology: all aspects related to reading assume pride of place in the research on narrative” (5). Therefore, understanding narration from the perspective of the reader has developed into a significant area of study.

Due to *The Names*' unconventional narrative structure, it is difficult for the reader to position themselves in relation to the text. The constant conversation, the multitude of voices, and sudden changes in location make it hard to perceive any kind of close situatedness to the events of the plot. While the reader is likely to feel a certain degree of closeness to Axton as the novel's narrator, they are less likely to imagine being close to the events that he narrates. This is because the reader is told about the events through Axton's voice. He is the sole authority, the only source of information. As the homo-diegetic narrator of the novel, he is almost always present at the time when the events are being narrated. A notable exception is when Axton meets the dying Owen Brademas in Lahore, Pakistan. Brademas tells Axton how he finally infiltrated the cult. The latter listens to the story and reports it to the reader who is one step further removed from the events of the story. Notably, Axton makes a metafictional comment on the resulting

distance that follows: “There are voices and rejoicing, a rash of voices, movement here and there. This speech is beautiful in its way, inverted, indivisible, absent. It is not quite there. It passes over and through” (368). Owen’s story is recapped thoroughly, and at some points it is difficult for the reader to situate themselves in time and space as the framed story consumes the main narrative. There is a feeling of absence and distance between the reader and the narrative. Like most of the main narrative, Owen’s story is told in the past tense. Dialogue is also quoted directly and seemingly accurately. Thus, from the perspective of the reader, it is easy to forget that the narrated events are a framed narrative; initially experienced and retold by Brademas, and finally reported by Axton. This mountain-wall of narrative levels is a challenging ascent even for the experienced DeLillo reader.

The constant murmuring conversation is a distinguishing feature of *The Names*. This is yet another aspect that makes the novel unconventional and affects how voice is perceived. A passage like the one relating to the conversation about rugs between Charles Maitland and Axton renders it difficult for the reader to stay focused (210-211). With a lengthy conversation that ultimately weighs light, the reader is likely to start mind-wandering. A reader familiar with DeLillo’s prose will know that this type of conversation is a recurring feature. As Christian Moraru points out, readers of DeLillo’s novels engage in a process of consuming the narrative (96). This continuous process of consuming, which can become tiresome after some time, certainly invokes the need to take a break. Looking at these types of conversation from a reader-oriented approach, it is not always entirely clear who is speaking. This is especially the case when there are breaks between narrative and story time. These breaks generally result in an element of confusion for the reader, with the need to backtrack to the previous sentence.

This is where the audiobook version of the novel, produced in 2017, comes into play. Narrated by Jacques Roy in a standard North American accent, it inevitably invites a range of additional perspectives compared to the print version, as is noticeable from the very start of the narrative. As the story opens *in medias res*, the listener begins searching for clues as to what is going on and who is speaking. Roy embodies Axton calmly and composedly, introducing the listener to the character's distanced disposition (00:00:00-40). In an early passage that ambiguates who is speaking, whether Axton or an omniscient narrator, the audiobook provides the answer. In print, parentheses are used to signify a detachment from the rest of the sentence, a metafictional remark: "One night (as we enter narrative time) I was driving with friends back to Athens..." (4). Roy, however, does not change the character of his voice; he merely slows down for a moment (00:01:40-42). Compared to print, this clearly provides the listener with a different sense of who is speaking. The metaphorical voice is disambiguated when performed aloud as it becomes possible to analyse physical voice qualities. It is apparent that there is a perceptive element to this, as the impression of the metaphorical voice of the novel changes in the process of listening. Admittedly, listening, as much as reading, is a cognitive process. However, studies in narratology usually focus on aspects of the text rather than the cognitive process of the reader to follow a narrative.

While technically the audiobook is a mimetic form of the novel, rather than a unique artistic expression of its own, there are several features that set it apart from the print novel. In the audiobook, the perception of Axton's voice characteristics is a complex feature. Roy's re-enactment of Axton is notable in how it portrays the character, providing voice characteristics that we cannot perceive by reading the text alone, such as accent and tone of voice. Moreover, the audiobook makes the distinctions between Axton and his environment more perceptible. The

contrasts between voices and sounds, between Axton and others, are more distinguishable. This can be heard in one of the first dialogues of the novel where Roy switches between the inner and exterior voice of Axton, Charles and Ann Maitland, and David Keller (00:05:29-06:09) Not only does Roy change the quality of his voice between representations of Axton's inner and exterior voice, he also performs British accents for the Maitlands, including a clearly perceptible gendered difference between them, and a Nebraskan accent for Keller. Apart from accents, there are also significant differences in the pacing and stresses, most noticeably between Axton and Keller. Again, this presents an even more thorough description of the characters than what can be understood from the print text.

While it should be noted that Roy has undoubtedly made his own individual interpretation, it is remarkable that Axton is represented as dreamy, distanced, and quizzical. This is in line with the way critics have characterised Axton and his distance to responsibility (Houser; Zubeck). For example, Axton lingers on his Greek language abilities, noting how the first thing he ever translated from Greek was “a wall slogan in the middle of Athens. *Death to Fascists*” (96; 02:52:40-57, emphasis in original). Axton's detachment is quite ironic considering that he is unknowingly working for the CIA. Ultimately, I believe that Roy's representation of Axton's interior monologues consolidates the impression of the character's search for meaning and identity. Axton's voice becomes a tool for discovery, as way of perceiving the world, much like Heidegger's thoughts on language in general. When Roy speaks in character, reading *is* hearing, and speaking *is* understanding. Axton himself comes close to making this observation:

Here I am again, standing by the bed in my pajamas, acting out a memory. It was a memory that didn't exist independently. I recalled the moment only when I was repeating

it. The mystery built around this fact, I think, that act and recollection were one. A moment of autobiography, a minimal frieze. The moment referred back to itself at the same time as it pointed forward. *Here I am*. (96-97; 02:54:01-28, emphasis in original)

The experiential quality of language develops into something even richer and more powerful during Roy's reading. Just like Axton's memories come to life only when he repeats them in his head, his words become amplified when read aloud by Roy in a way that is not possible to achieve in print.

Moreover, there are other noteworthy choices made by Roy in his narration of *The Names*. In "Parametric Systems: The Case of Voice Quality," Theo Van Leeuwen gives the reader an overview of a selection of voice qualities with semiotic value, looking at pitch range, loudness, roughness, smoothness, breath, articulation, and resonance. As Roy is the sole narrator for the entire novel, it is interesting to observe how he makes certain stylistic choices regarding the voice quality. In addition to the characteristics referenced above, Roy adapts all of Van Leeuwen's voice qualities depending on which character he is voicing. He even makes minor changes in pitch range and loudness of voice when he switches between Axton's inner monologues and exterior voice (08:20:10-52). I argue that these character choices, as well as Roy's representation of Axton, are semiotic in nature, and ultimately, ideologically made. His consistent choice to perform female voices in low, timid, and smooth quality illustrates this. In the words of Richard Walsh, the audiobook of *The Names* functions as an idiom of the metaphoric voice of the novel. Walsh states that voice as idiom is "a way of bringing to the fore the mimetic dimension of the narrative discourse, its capacity for representing the discourse of

another” (93). In line with Walsh, the audiobook can function as a narrative instance at the same time as it is a mimetic form of the same.

Allowing a little backtracking to the previous section, it is important to remember what Fludernik and Walsh pointed out about mediacy in narratology. They disagree with the conventional “story first” view of narratology, instead advocating a narratology which is reader-oriented and focused on a generative mindset. As emphasis shifts to experientiality in post-classical narratology, so *The Names* represents the connection between experience, cognition, and language. The following passage illustrates the link between language and experience in self-perception.

“...Metempsychosis. It’s what I’ve been feeling all along. But I didn’t know it until now.” “There’s a generic quality, an absoluteness,” I said. “The bare hills, a figure in the distance.” “Yes, and it seems to be a remembered experience. If you play with the word ‘metempsychosis’ long enough I think you find not only transfer-of-soul but you reach the Indo-European root to breathe. That seems correct to me. We are breathing it again. There’s some quality in the experience that goes deeper than the sensory apparatus will allow. Spirit, soul. The experience is tied up with self-perception somehow.” (133)

Metempsychosis is Greek for “transmigration of the soul.” The origin of the word has etymological connections to the noun “breath;” an essential factor of life. As metempsychosis has a link to the state of being, so the concept of voice plays a role in self-perception and insights about the world. When attention is turned to experience, the question of voice in narrative fiction changes in character from a question of structure to a question of reader-oriented cognition. This

is further noticeable when analysing audiobook vocalisation, as the concept of voice goes from being a metaphorical feature to a physical reality. This type of metempsychosis of the voice is apparent in the audiobook version of *The Names*. Both in print and in the audiobook, the perception of voice has an impact on the narrative as a whole. More importantly, the voice is the link between the narrative and the reader.

The Names is full of representations of language as both representational and experiential. Listening to the audiobook version of the novel reinforces this impression and poses interesting questions about how Roy's reading of Axton and other characters affects the voice of the novel. This discussion continues, along with the ideological and transmedial properties of physical voice, in the next section.

Physical voice and interpellation

The final section of this paper moves the emphasis from strictly narrative theory to a deeper analysis of the physical voice and its components in the audiobook version of *The Names*. I intertwine the conclusions that I reached in the previous two sections to produce a coherent overview and analysis of the implications of the voice in *The Names*. I discuss the voice of the audiobook using Jarmila Mildorf and Till Kinzel's *Audionarratology: Interfaces of Sound and Narrative*. I then move on to the somewhat complicated relationship between voice, authority, and ideology. Richard Walsh's theory of voice as interpellation is used to illustrate my point that the voice in the novel is fundamentally changed when performed aloud in the audiobook. Finally, I tie the discussions together and focus on the performed voice as a transmedial narrative tool.

In the previous section, I started my analysis of the audiobook version of *The Names* with examples of how voice quality can invoke vocal meaning, and how Jacques Roy's narrating voice affects the interpretation of the novel from the aural standpoint of the listener. To proceed further in this discussion, it is important to look at a subfield of post-classical narratology: audionarratology. This field focuses specifically on the effects of sound on narration across different media. The potential benefits of using audionarratology to investigate the concept of voice in DeLillo's *The Names* are substantial, particularly considering the previous lack of debate of the significance of vocal meaning in the novel, and the increasing popularity of the audiobook medium.

Audionarratology is a relatively new branch of what is considered post-classical narratology. The research field is focused on the factors of sound, and by extension, physical voice, and vocal meaning in narration. Critics in the field emphasise that vision, often in terms of character focalisation and point of view, has historically been prioritised over sound in studies of

narratology (Mildorf and Kinzel 1-2). With the technical evolution and widespread availability of audiobooks in portable formats, the need to study narratives from a sound perspective and its inherently vocal meaning has increased in the last decades. It may be noted that the field has not been represented within narrative studies until recently, which may be explained by the relatively late impact of the oral origins of storytelling within research.

Moreover, this state of things might have to do with the transitory object of analysis. In Jarmila Mildorf and Till Kinzel's introductory chapter of *Audionarratology*, the "transitoriness of the object of study in aural/oral genres and media" is emphasised (3). They explain how "sound and voice qualities are evanescent" and, accordingly, there is a need for them to be "captured" or "fixed" on a recording medium before the analytic process can be initiated. In terms of voice, this is a clear contrast to the physical status of the printed text where voice is metaphorical and already fixed.

The transient nature of language is illustrated continuously throughout *The Names*. In one passage, James Axton mediates on the conversations he has had with fellow business people about the places they have been to: "All these places were onesentence stories to us. Someone would turn up, utter a sentence about foot-long lizards in his hotel room in Niamey, and this became the solid matter of the place, the means we used to fix it in our minds" (111). Axton brings up the need to reiterate past experiences through language and conversation; the purpose of the conversation is to fix what has been, at the same, the fact that this is a process that needs to be repeated points towards the unstable nature of both experience and language. The elusive nature of language becomes evident when juxtaposing the printed novel and the audiobook.

The contrast in fixity and instability between the voice in a printed novel like *The Names* and a narrative performed live is evident. However, when we discuss voice as a performed

version of a textual narrative, the lines are no longer drawn as clearly. This is the case for audiobooks, in which the narrator is recorded reading the book aloud. The situation can be found somewhere between performance and mimesis. Even though the text of the novel is read word by word, the narrator still has to make choices when it comes to voice quality. So, in terms of audionarratology, how does the voice of *The Names* change with the audiobook? Mildorf and Kinzel point out that the voice of an audiobook is transformed from being mediated by metaphor, to becoming immediate (13-14). Therefore, the need to discuss a narrative persona diminishes as the reader can experience the voice of the narrative themselves. An additional result of the audiobook format is the accentuation of vocal meaning, the significance of which is also something that is represented in *The Names*. In the following passage, Axton starts daydreaming while taking off on a flight.

Words sounded incomplete to me. The starts and stops in people's voices came unexpectedly. I couldn't figure out the rhythm. But the writing flowed, of course. It seemed to have a movement top to bottom as well as right to left. If Greek or Latin characters are paving stones, Arabic is rain. (163)

As is made clear in this passage, vocal meaning contributes to the interpretation of language. Meaning-making is central to the debate of language in previous criticism of *The Names*. However, in this respect, the focus has historically been on semantic meaning. Meaning has always been a central aspect of critical literary analysis; the lack, or instability of which, is a focal point in post-structural theory and often represented in post-modern works like *The Names*.

Meaning as a concept as such is often discussed at length in literary analysis, serving different purposes depending on which field of literary criticism is studied.

In my analysis of *The Names*, meaning is useful as a twofold concept: semantic meaning, based in the grammatical and linguistic roots of the expression, and vocal meaning, anchored in the contextual and physical aspects of an utterance. While both methods are valid, semantic meaning has undoubtedly been privileged in the study of literary narratives. It is not until recently that vocal meaning has become a valid factor of analysis in certain academic fields. It is possible to analyse a literary work such as *The Names* from both perspectives simultaneously, where meaning lies somewhere between the semantic and the vocal. Advocating a greater awareness to vocal meaning, Adriana Cavarero claims in *For More than One Voice* that “the words, which are reduced to their sonorous materiality as sounds among sounds, do not count for their semantic valence but only for their phonic substance” (1). Extreme as this stance is, it needs to be taken into consideration since it draws attention to the tension that arises between semantic and vocal meaning. This is exemplified when analysing the audiobook version of *The Names*. When print and audio are juxtaposed, the interpretation of vocal meaning can shed light on, or in some cases altogether change, the previous interpretation of semantic meaning. I comment on this because the meaning-making process depends on whether one adopts a text-immanent or a reader-oriented perspective. The relationship is explored further when looking at the medium of the audiobook.

In “Audiobooks and Print Narrative: Similarities in Text Experience,” Anežka Kuzmičová discusses the ontology of audiobooks. Instead of focusing on the differences between print and audio, Kuzmičová looks at the similarities (218). She does this from the cognitive approach of the listener, and how they experience the narrative as compared between the two

media. Looking at how listeners perceive voices in audiobooks, Kuzmičová concedes that there is a grain of truth to the proposition that the physical performance of voices has a negative impact on the referential imagery of the reader, meaning that the moment of imagination in the implied meaning of the text is cut short (221). However, the performative nature of the voice also actualises a physical presence; it invokes *verbal imagery* (221). This verbal imagery is inherently exclusive to the audiobook. Yet, as Mildorf and Kinzel point out, aural storytelling only works when the listener is actively “trying to make sense of what they hear” (11). One manifestation of this in *The Names* is Axton’s rich character descriptions (05:26:59-27:26).

When it comes to the concept of voice in audiobooks, it should be noted that the technical development in the 20th century has had an impact on the characteristics of voice. Van Leeuwen notes that the technical factor of amplification has led to a need of uniformity of voice (76). Before, there was a need for theatre actors and oral storytellers to adapt their voice qualities to the specific acoustic context. Van Leeuwen gives a range of different examples, such as whispering to indicate a private conversation, or speaking loudly to express temper (71). Technical development removes the need for actors to adopt a uniform voice for a given context. Instead, an opportunity for increased individuality emerged as voice could be used as a tool instead of as a standardised signifier.

Undoubtedly, this is also the case for audiobooks, as illustrated by film stars and other performers who are chosen by publishers to narrate certain books to increase sales. Interestingly, in the case of the audiobook version of *The Names*, Jacques Roy is not one of these conspicuous choices. Looking at the audiobooks Roy has narrated in the past, it is noteworthy that these include three other DeLillo novels: *Great Jones Street*, *Players*, and *Ratner’s Star* (*Audible.co.uk*). Hence, it is interesting to note that the selection of the narrator tends to

underscore the unconventional, anti-normative trend of the novel, which would not be the case if the audiobook was narrated by someone with a high market profile, like James Earl Jones, John Goodman, or John Ratzenburger. Ultimately, selecting a narrator for the audiobook version is a narratological choice as much as anything else, firstly because voices vary and possess different qualities, and secondly because they belong to different people. These voice qualities communicate different messages and narratological implications are thus unavoidable.

Interestingly, Fludernik touches upon this phenomenon when discussing mediation and re-mediation. She poses a rhetorical, yet important, question: “Does the process of selection, restructuring, and media-related refocalization create a new story through a new discourse, or is it still the same story?” (111). The case of the audiobook might not be as clear-cut as re-mediation since it involves a mimetic aspect. However, the format of the audiobook involves a certain amount of selection, both in terms of the narrator, focalisation, and choices made in the recording process. It is certainly valid to ask whether an audiobook version of a novel affects the meaning of a story. Furthermore, Fludernik asserts that “Narrative is to be distinguished from drama by its mediacy. Whereas the story of drama is enacted on stage and therefore presented without mediation, im-mediately, narratives represent the events through the medium of verbal narration by a narrator figure” (113).

I argue that the same logic applies to the audiobook. Audiobooks lack a visible figure, but, in terms of mediacy, the audiobook is much closer to the listener than the printed novel is to the reader. Arguably, in *The Names*, Axton’s voice becomes more authorial in its overtness, closer in terms of physical presence, and more explicit than in print. Indeed, when discussing the representation of narrative voice, Richard Walsh argues that “mediacy is a property of media . . . the distinction between (for example) fiction and drama is not a distinction between indirect and

direct form, but between semiotic means of representation” (86). Clearly, a change in voice quality is one such difference in semiotic means of representation that occurs between print and audiobook, altering the narrative. However, there are also aspects exclusive to print that can change the meaning of the narrative, aspects that do not come across as clearly in the audiobook.

While such examples are few in *The Names*, they do exist. One instance can be found in the last chapter of the novel which consists of the beginning of Axton’s son, Tap’s, fiction novel. While Roy modifies the quality of his voice depending on which character is speaking, this is evidently not the case for the narrator here. The chapter is presumably narrated by an omniscient narrator; yet Roy reads the events in a manner indistinguishable from Axton’s style (11:51:34-52:02). What is even more remarkable, Roy does not repeat Tap’s typos from the text. This does not necessarily have to be a conscious choice as it appears quite difficult to pronounce the differences in the misspelled words seen in the following passage: “There was a man in a *daise* like a *drunkerds skuffling* lurch, *realing* in a corner. One window had glass, three others were boarded up when the glass was broken, and it wasn’t *conveeniently* well lighted in there, like an Indian’s hut of *adoby* and straw” (401; 11:51:43-59, emphasis added). However, a listener who does not also read the novel in print will fail to make the connection between the typos and the fact that the chapter is written with the aim of looking as if a young boy had written it. This example illustrates that the audiobook does not always reinforce the message of the narrative in print.

While this is one of the rare instances of where the audiobook fails to explicate aspects of the text, there are plenty of examples of the opposite. One such is when Jacques Roy adds stresses and alters his pace of narration. In some instances, stress is italicised while in others, Roy seems to be making his own interpretation. A case in point is a passage where Axton is

speaking to Volterra: “This is where we are. The twentieth century is *on film*. It’s the filmed century. You have to ask yourself if there’s anything about us more important than the fact that we’re constantly on film...” (239; 07:07:08-19, emphasis in original). While there is only one occurrence of stress in print, Roy accentuates the stress on both the italicised part as well as “the *filmed* century” and “constantly *on film*”. Examples like these are telling, but not the most significant in the overall picture. The simple fact that the audiobook *gives voice* to the text in print is why I am arguing that the semantic meaning of the text is explicated through the vocal meaning of the audiobook. In the end, much of Axton’s thinking in *The Names* relates to how conversation and storytelling is an enhancing tool for experiencing:

People everywhere are absorbed in conversation. Seated under trees, under striped canopies in the squares, they bend together over food and drink, their voices darkly raveled in Oriental laments that flow from radios in basements and back kitchens. Conversation is life, language is the deepest being. We see the patterns repeat, the gestures drive the words. It is the sound and picture of humans communicating. It is talk as a definition of itself. (61; 01:49:05-37)

What is implicit in print is made explicit by the performed voice of Jacques Roy in the audiobook. This calls for a discussion of how ideology fits in with narrative voice and in what way this is amplified in the audiobook. Christian Moraru looks at the relation between DeLillo’s work, the art of consumption, and the “contemporary production and treatment” of narratives. Not only investigating written narratives, Moraru makes the essential point that “non-textual narratives can be read too” (90). Similar to what I have argued in this paper, Moraru states that

DeLillo's texts thematise how narratives are produced and consumed, asserting that these narratives illustrate the frail edge between reading and consuming. When introducing the audiobook into the discussion, the consumption of the narrative needs to be looked at from a different angle. While textual narratives tell stories through words, audiobooks utilise a scientifically proven connection between sounds and narrative functionality (Mildorf and Kinzel 7).

The back cover of the 2011 Picador version of *The Names* states: "DeLillo wonders: how does one cope with the fact that the act of articulation is simultaneously capable of defining and circumscriptively restricting access to the self?" The answer to this question is that one needs to look at voice as being more than articulative. Richard Walsh separates the theorisation of voice into three categories: instance, idiom, and interpellation. As to the category of interpellation, Walsh builds on Althusser's use of the term in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. While voice as instance and idiom focus on the generative and representational qualities, voice as interpellation involves the subjectification of individuals through ideology (98). It is this interpellation, I argue, that we can see in the audiobook version of *The Names*. Jacques Roy's representation of James Axton constitutes an act of interpellation, the subjectification and amplification of the voice of narrator and main character. Walsh argues that "narration always involves perspectival choices, which necessarily carry with them some set of presuppositions, ranging from the physical (spatiotemporal), through the epistemological, to the ideological" (98). Other critics have also noted the connection between narratology and ideology, perhaps most notably Frederic Jameson in his *The Political Unconscious*, where he advocates that narratives count as "the central function or instance of the human mind" and that they are socially symbolic in the way that we must interpret them from a socio-political context (xiii; emphasis in original).

Does this relationship also extend to narratological voice? Van Leeuwen argues that “there is no divide between materiality and meaning” in voice (70). What he is saying is that it is not possible to separate the semiotic and social aspects of a voice from its materiality. I believe that this has been foregrounded in my discussion of Roy’s narration of *The Names*. Van Leeuwen goes on to state that “voice is the embodiment of language,” but it can also be argued that voice indirectly embodies ideology, much like Walsh’s theory of voice as interpellation. Van Leeuwen argues that “speech is material and experiential as well as semiotic and social”; the same could be said to apply to the narrative voice (69).

DeLillo scholar Tom LeClair argues that the author’s novels are “a coherent fictional system that, as a whole, presents a comprehensive critique of the ideologies-scientific, literary, and political-in which he and his readers exist” (xi). Thus, while there is a general connection between narratology and ideology in DeLillo’s works, not all critics agree on how semiotically effectively this message is delivered in *The Names*. Bruce Bawer criticises *The Names* for its weak characterisation. Instead of speaking and thinking as individuals, Bawer argues that DeLillo’s characters all “engage in dialectic” and “sound exactly the same” (24). He refers to the characters in the novel as “authorial mouthpieces” (27). This might in fact be a textual factor that is resolved by the audiobook. The disambiguation and diversification of voices in the audiobook certainly makes for an appealing case against Bawer’s criticism. When the voice quality of the audiobook narrator is diversified in the way that Jacques Roy reads *The Names*, criticism like Bawer’s certainly becomes less valid.

Finally, the physical voice of the audiobook version of *The Names* is a transmedial tool for the amplification of meaning. This is essentially because it tells a story using more than one medium (Alber and Fludernik 8). Not only does the audiobook disambiguate the metaphorical

voice of the text, it reinforces the ideological qualities of the novel, as well as adding a layer of its own narratological choices. The transmedial experience of *The Names* in print and audiobook exemplifies how vocal meaning deconstructs and enhances semantic meaning and illustrates how fictional narratives can be approached from a cognitive standpoint.

Conclusion

This paper has dealt with narrative voice in Don DeLillo's *The Names*. In the novel, I have demonstrated the significance of looking at language as both representational and experiential. I have problematised the abstract nature of metaphoric voice, while still maintaining the importance of analysing narrative voice. In the final section, I illustrated how voice is the connecting aspect of the novel, intertwining the features of the text with the cognitive perception of the reader. Through the perspective of audionarratology, I have also demonstrated how the process of meaning-making is affected by listening to the audiobook version of the novel, as opposed to engaging in the silent reading of the printed version. A key claim made is that the metaphorical voice of the printed version of *The Names* is transformed and made explicit when performed aloud in the audiobook.

Readers and listeners of *The Names* are accompanied by James Axton's voice throughout the narrative. It is largely his voice that the reader grows accustomed to and associates with the events represented in the narrative. It is authorial since the reader lacks an alternative voice to listen to most of the time. I have argued that the narrating voice of Jacques Roy functions as interpellation for James Axton; but, I would also like to argue, for the *The Names* as such. Roy does not stray far away from DeLillo's original text. While he does make certain significant choices, accounted for in the sections above, Roy sounds like an average American middle-aged male, much in line with the reader's expectations of what Axton might sound like. Ultimately, Roy does not break the stereotypes of what you would expect from a DeLillo novel. Having been chosen to narrate four of DeLillo's novels, Roy must be deemed fit to reinforce this image. I argue that this is an ideological choice in itself, partly because it conforms to the listener's stereotypes of what a person like Axton might sound like. Van Leeuwen also posits that to

understand voice as metaphor, concrete experience is required, in this case, stereotypes. Moreover, the voice is in tune with DeLillo's typical prose. Had a different narrator been selected, someone who left their own imprint on the narrative by using a selection of unique voice qualities, the semiotic, and thus ideological message, is likely to have yielded a very different result.

This reinvokes the earlier question if the audiobook version of *The Names* could be considered a remedialisation of the original novel in print. I believe that it is, considering that the audiobook functions both as voice as idiom, and as interpellation. Since the audiobook is a mimetic instance of the diegesis of the novel, one could argue that it is not strictly a remedialisation. However, when one takes into account the function of the audiobook as interpellation of the narrative voice of the novel, the mediation of what is implicit, and the embodiment of the abstract through semiotic means, it can be argued that the audiobook version of *The Names* is a remediation indeed. The fact that significant narratological choices have been made in the production of the audiobook reinforces this viewpoint.

It is clear that the narrative of *The Names* is partly ideological in nature, which is transmitted through the narrative voice, both metaphorically and physically. The audiobook functions as a transmedial semiotic tool for the amplification of that ideological message. With the availability of both a printed and audiobook version, *The Names* is an example of a transmedial narrative. This was not the case when first published; it was only available in print until the audiobook version followed some thirty years later. There are no overlapping connections in the narration between print and audio. Thus, *The Names* does not truly compare to other "traditional" transmedial narratives like TV series that also incorporate alternate reality games on the Internet. However, I would argue that *The Names* constitutes a transmedial

narrative as it represents, embodies, and explicates the experiential aspect of language, in the medium of the audiobook.

Transmedial narratology and audionarratology are young sub-fields of post-classical narratology. With this paper, my aim has been to show how these theoretical approaches can be helpful in advancing the conversation in literary criticism of post-modern literature. Much of the debate in these conversations, as exemplified in the case of *The Names*, has focused on the representational values of language, and ended up in a loop of self-referential discourse. It seems apparent to me that post-classical narratologies like audionarratology can be useful in taking the conversation further by exploring other aspects of language. The cognitive reader-oriented approach taken in this paper is something that has developed into an area of significant study. I argue that this is somewhat foreshadowed in *The Names* by the frequent examples of language as experiential.

The concept of voice in post-modern literature like *The Names* is an area that is underdeveloped and in need of further input. My hope is that this paper has been a useful addition to the criticism of *The Names*, as well as an inspiration for future academic writing on narratology and voice in post-modern literature.

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