

**In Search of the Perfect Name:  
Self-branding, Blank Slates and Negation in a Neoliberal Era**

*Cayley Sorochan (McGill University)*

Saint West arrived in early December 2015 after months of fan speculation as to what name would be bestowed upon the son of Kanye West and Kim Kardashian. The most common prediction was “South,” a directional name that mirrored older sister North’s uncommon appellation. After the name was revealed the Internet freaked out. At least that’s how the *Daily Mirror* described the flood of humorous tweets that alternately derided or expressed appreciation for the name. The mocking reactions took aim at the grandiose connotations of Saint, which were linked to the oversized ego of Kanye (who did, after all, title one of his songs “I Am God”).

The interest in celebrity baby names has seemingly grown more intense as celebrities increasingly choose non-traditional and exceptionally unique names (Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin’s daughter “Apple” comes to mind)—names that in turn offer another easy target for the gossip sites and us bored plebeians to share a laugh over, but that also at times have the power to broaden the horizons of possibility in naming our own children, pets, fictional characters, selves or avatars. Moon Unit Zappa, one of the most well-known of out-there celebrity baby names from the 1970s finds plenty of company in the

## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT NAME

2000s climate of celebrity “name as brand” culture, where word names often gain the most notoriety but can no longer be seen as quite so exceptional.

For the majority who pay little attention to naming practices, Saint may appear outlandish. However, one of the co-founders of the baby-naming site *Nameberry*, Linda Rosenkrantz is quick to emphasize that it’s very much in keeping with a number of larger trends that have be tracked through the site.<sup>1</sup> So much so, that it was actually predicted to be one of the up and coming names of 2015 along with Reign, Messiah, Legend, Royal etc.<sup>2</sup> This predictive power is one of the chief elements that bolsters *Nameberry*’s claims to have “revolutionized baby naming.” With over two million visitors a month, *Nameberry* harnesses the interactive capacities of the web to reveal otherwise hidden trends. Informed not only by national naming statistics, but also the data garnered from its users (known as “Berries”), who tend to be self-identified name nerds, the site boasts cutting edge knowledge about where the popularity tides are shifting before such trends show up in the official birth records. It’s essentially coolhunting for namers, allowing them to get a leg-up on the competition as they seek the “perfect” name.

<sup>1</sup> Linda Rosenkrantz, “Behind the Baby Name Saint,” *Nameberry.com*, December 7, 2015: <http://nameberry.com/blog/news-flash-kim-kanye-have-named-their-son-saint-west> (accessed February 2, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Abby Sandel, “The Royals are Coming: King, Prince and Princess,” *Nameberry.com*, January 7, 2015: <http://nameberry.com/blog/the-royals-are-coming-king-prince-and-princess> (accessed February 2, 2016).

As *Seachange* presents its fifth issue on “Naming,” *Nameberry* offers an interesting case study of this common everyday act, however meaningful, which presents many clues to how we approach identity in a neoliberal era. What one first notices when visiting the site is that many name entries on *Nameberry* are relatively pithy. Rather than long name histories detailing etymology and meaning, *Nameberry’s* entries are often short, focussing squarely on the question of how appropriate the name is for a child born in 2016. Popularity statistics are important, as well as whether the name fits in or diverges from broader tendencies. We are told for instance that “Brandy” is “The alcohol laced member of the Randy-Candy-Mandy sorority of the 1970s to 80s nickname-names; now pretty much on the wagon.”<sup>3</sup> “Cindy,” having dropped to #710 is also out, described as having gone from “cute teenager to peppy soccer mom, but its not for her daughter.” “Kay,” on the other hand, while not ranking within the top 1000, is “a cigarette-smoking, nightclubbing name of the 1930s,” and “could be ready for a comeback along with cousins May/Mae and Ray/Rae.”

The definitive tone of these judgements and the reactions they provoke from users is certainly a large part of the enjoyment derived from the site (another part is simply a nerdy love of statistics, ranking, list-making and

<sup>3</sup> All name descriptions herein are quoted from their respective name-entries on [Nameberry.com](http://Nameberry.com).

## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT NAME

obscure discoveries). The question of a name's status galvanizes opinion and ultimately reflects struggles over taste and distinction. Popularity itself is the attribute that most commonly divides Berries. While a few prefer very popular names, the majority are searching for those that fall into a mythical Goldilocks zone: not too popular, but easily recognizable; distinctive, but not weird; simple to pronounce and spell, but not boring. At the same time, there is a significant segment of Berries for whom popularity is avoided at all costs. For this group, any name inside the top 1000 is too common, or potentially at risk for gaining wider appreciation. *Nameberry* becomes another space within which to accumulate cultural capital as namers attempt to choose just the right name at just the right moment to keep ahead (but not *too* far) of the popularity curve.

Judgements over proper names also situate namers in relation to more precise measures of status, belonging and identity. Distinction isn't simply statistical, but a measure of the namer's aspirations, social circles, and cultural politics. In *Nameberry's* many discussion forums, conflicts over gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, education and class, as they are reflected in name choices, are played out endlessly. One of the most prominent debates revolves around the issue of unisex names or using a name traditionally associated with the opposite gender. While for some the gender ambiguity of unisex names carves out space for more fluid sexualities and gender expressions, others have argued that in reality, their very one-sided

application reflects deeply ingrained misogyny.<sup>4</sup> There is a tendency over time for male names to be appropriated for female children, perhaps because male names are coded as strong and serious. At the same time, giving a traditionally female name to a boy is extremely rare. While the parents of a daughter named James may hold a feminist intention, the larger result is that as more female children are given such names they risk becoming coded as feminine. Over time such names are abandoned for boys due to the increasing feminine associations. Name nerds complain that the pool of good boy names has a tendency to shrink, as they are “stolen” for girls. This tendency also influences longstanding unisex names. Kelly, Aubrey, Ashley, Morgan, etc., once equally used for both genders have all drifted into the exclusively female zone. One of the other consequences of the trend in giving boy names to girls is the rise of hypermasculine names for boys as an attempt to maintain rather than lessen gender distinctions. Examples include Hunter, Stetson, Titan, Cannon, and Maverick.

Less often discussed than gender is the appropriateness of choosing a name across religious or ethnic lines. “Cohen” is one source of controversy that has been raised on *Nameberry*. For those of Jewish faith it is a royal title referring to someone who is a priest in a temple and so it is perceived as

<sup>4</sup> See Kasey Edwards, “The Subconscious Bias of ‘Unisex’ Baby Name Trends,” *Nameberry.com*, February 4, 2016: <http://nameberry.com/blog/the-subconscious-bias-of-unisex-baby-name-trends> (accessed February 4, 2016).

## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT NAME

disrespectful to use Cohen as a first name, whereas many non-Jews simply like the sound of it, or perhaps, inspired by the singer Leonard Cohen, see their Cohen fitting in with the growing group of little Bowies, Hendrixes and Lennons (it's currently #342). In most cases Berries range widely across religious and national naming traditions, with little thought to such potential controversies or worries about cultural appropriation.

*Nameberry* welcomes multiple approaches to naming, whether traditional or modern, common or unique. However, they do subtly bias against using names too strongly associated (from an Anglo-American point of view) with a particular culture if one lacks a direct line of descent. And yet their advice is often contradictory on such questions. Slight exoticism is sought out: see the recent exuberance over Luca and Micah as fresh sounding imports that update Luke/Lucas and Michael. Luca is clearly Italian and Micah is Hebrew, but they are both considered fair game to be appropriated by Western parents of any ethnic background. On the other hand, names too-heavily inflected with a particular ethnicity are discouraged. Luigi is "stereotypically Italian," Sigrid is "forever Scandinavian," and we are advised to try "cute diminutive Siri or more international Ingrid instead."

Battles over the connotations and status of names nicely illustrate the determining aspects of language and the inherently alienated nature of subjecthood. Such debates have more to do with the identity of the namers

themselves than the as yet inexistent future bearer of the name, who is not present to assent or refuse any particular positioning in language. The proper name is the signifier that carves out a space for the subject within the socio-symbolic network, clearly situating them according to gender, ethnicity, class and so on, before they even draw breath.

Yet, not all names are so clearly determining. In fact, one can discern a trend towards the indeterminate. In a neoliberal world that demands constant adaptation, and a culture that encourages entrepreneurialism, self-branding, and self-fashioning according to all kinds of “techniques of the self,” would the perfect name not be a kind of blank slate, empty of obvious determinations? Among the diverse major- and micro-trends charted by *Nameberry*, one that stands out in this regard is that of short names that have multiple provenance. These names have a crisp modern sound to the Anglo-American ear and don’t obviously signify any particular nationality (even when they do in fact have a long history). For instance, some recent *Nameberry* blog posts highlight the following names as travelling well across cultures: Aran (Sanskrit, Hebrew, and Irish), Aria (Italian, Hebrew), Kai (Scandinavia and Hawaiian, German and Dutch, Cai is Welsh), Kiren (Sanskrit, Irish, Scottish), Kiro (Macedonian, close to English and Greek Cyril or Kiril), Zara (Hebrew and Arabic), Zora (Serbo-Croatian), Zella (African, Bobangi), Zimri (Hebrew), Mira (Slavic and Sanskrit), Mila (diminutive of several European names, Ukrainian, short for

## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT NAME

the Czech Milena), Milo (Latin and Old German, close to the English Miles, common in Ireland), Minik (Greenland, Dutch), Maya (Hebrew, Central American, Greek, “illusion” in Sanskrit, Latin), Vera (Russian, “truth” in Latin), Veda (Hindu), Viva (Latin), Vida (Spanish or short form of Davida, feminization of David), Lena (English, Scottish, Dutch, German and Scandinavian, close to Indian Leena or Arabic Lina), Layla (Arabic), Finlo (Manx, close to English Finn), Thea (Greek, widely used in Scandinavia, short form of many names), Sara (Hebrew, Arabic, close to Anglo version Sarah), Otto (German), Rupin (Sanskrit, but similar to Reuben and Rupert).<sup>5</sup>

I can easily imagine the ideal manager described within Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello’s “new spirit of capitalism”—open, flexible, adaptable, available, sociable, creative, transparent, charismatic but not imposing, self-initiating, a good listener, highly mobile and definitely not fixed or strongly attached to anything, whether it be a place, person, idea or principle (beyond tolerance and openness)—wearing a name like Kai or Lena, Milo or Veda.<sup>6</sup> These names are straightforward and simple on the surface, but ambiguous underneath; common enough to feel familiar yet somehow very contemporary;

<sup>5</sup> Abby Sandel, “Name Sage: A Baby Name for Two Cultures,” *Nameberry.com*, September 29, 2015: <http://nameberry.com/blog/name-sage-a-baby-name-for-two-cultures> (accessed February 4, 2016); Esmerelda Rocha, “Boy’s Names: 10 New Favorites,” *Nameberry.com*, October 14, 2015: <http://nameberry.com/blog/boys-names-10-new-favorites> (accessed February 4, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2005).

## SEACHANGE | NAMING

lacking any strong associations to famous personalities or character types; not easily fixed within the boundaries of a single ethnicity or culture, yet somehow approachable and easily relatable. With names such as these our subject could float between spaces as need be, connect with others without being constrained by obvious limitations, and aspire to a lifestyle that is both placeless and global.

In comparison to these adaptable names, Saint carries much more baggage. And yet, it's also clearly legible within a neoliberal universe of subject formation wherein the flip side of the blank slate name is the name as brand. For a subject who has been guaranteed hyper visibility from birth and whose future success may rely on leveraging that visibility, a bold, unique name is a clever strategic choice. Given the uber-celebrity status of his parents, Saint could never be perceived as a blank slate. With thousands (hundreds of thousands? ... millions?) of fans eager for images of the newborn, trying to ensure an anonymous childhood for the West/Kardashian family would be a fruitless endeavour. Saint, rather, beats us to the punch. Living up to our expectations by bending the bounds of good taste and asserting naming as an essentially creative act.

In spite of the long traditions that many names are drawn from, the assignation of a proper name is inarguably a creative use of language. With no need to adhere to any strict etymology, namers in search of a unique

## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT NAME

appellation regularly mash phonemes together, derange traditional spellings beyond recognition, play with sounds and their name-like or non-name-like associations, and increasingly draw upon regular words in order to come up with a name suitable for the absolute singularity that will be their child. Berries may frequently groan and roll their eyes at the latest aberrations (see: Allececea, Kymberleigh, Braidynne), but where else do we enjoy such freedom of invention with language? In a culture that values non-conformist conformity, can we blame anyone for taking this rare opportunity to leave their own unique mark on the social lexicon?

While certainly inventive, does such language-play represent anything beyond yet another aspect of subject formation within today's neoliberal context? According to Slavoj Žižek, one way to conceive of a free act is as a gesture that, rather than choose between existing options in the present situation, rearranges the very coordinates of the choice.<sup>7</sup> Is there a politics to naming? While naming can be a site of boundless creativity, is such signifying activity socially transformative? Such a gesture would have to entail more than choosing between Anastasia or Aurora, Berkeley or Brooklyn, Edelweiss or Wolfgang, Oak or Calliope, Cannon or Messiah. Even the most bizarre name choice we could imagine seems to reflect our times rather than depart

<sup>7</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 121-23.

from them, situating its bearer within, rather than breaking from the existing social world. Saint is certainly audacious, aggrandizing, supersized ... and yet, also perfectly legible within today's naming coordinates. *Nameberry* tells us that it fits the trend for word names, biblical names, virtue names while also living up to the demand for celebrity self-branding and image consciousness. In a digital context where such tendencies can be traced with minute accuracy, what may appear divergent can easily be shown to conform to a larger pattern. In a cultural context where the boundaries of acceptable names are ever expanding, in which the range of names and the access to them is greater than ever before, a time in which families are more global, mobile and multicultural, a culture in which uniqueness is prized and image consciousness is rampant, and in a competitive precarious economy where distinctiveness is an asset, no gesture of naming seems unimaginable or fundamentally unsettling.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, we can still find cases, at least historically, that seem to represent the disruptive potential of naming. The letter I keep returning to in these reflections is "X." It's a very on-trend letter that shows up in popular

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps outright obscenity is the only exception. Leos Carax's fictional protagonist "Merde" from his segment of the three-part film *Tokyo!* is very fittingly a figure who represents everything taboo, anti-social, revolting and inhuman and that society attempts to repress. Filthy, living in a sewer, destructive and violent (yet strangely charismatic), Merde is ultimately sentenced to death and yet proves to be indestructible, perhaps standing in for society's constitutive remainder and/or an irrepressible return of the repressed. See Joon Ho Bong, Leos Carax, and Michel Gondry, *Tokyo!* (2008).

## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT NAME

contemporary male and female names, including Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's sons Maddox, Pax, and Knox, and the trendy Axel, Xander, Alexandra, Lexy, Xianthe, Roxanne, and Beatrix. Yet, when it was chosen to stand alone in the act of Malcolm X's self-naming, it implied a fundamental negation of naming, a negation of the existing coordinates of racial identity and subjectivation in America that could not have been more politicized. One way to clarify the status of X's gesture of self-negation as an authentic act in the Žižekian sense would be to compare it to the contemporaneous strategy of naming in some black communities that were influenced by the Black Power movement.

In his essay "The Fact of Blackness," Frantz Fanon writes about a moment in which he felt compelled to confront his blackness and to think its ontology in relation to white society.<sup>9</sup> He tries out multiple strategies to defend his human dignity in response to the oppressive reality of racial prejudice. At one point he plays with reversal, embracing his African origins and reclaiming traits that are coded as "primitive." Rhythm, sensuality, emotional experience, and connection to the earth are posited as intrinsic characteristics of blackness that can function as sources of pride and humanity rather than denigrating stereotypes. When this reclamation fails to sway his imagined white interlocutors, Fanon then uncovers the untold histories of

<sup>9</sup> Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," in *Black Skin, White Masks (1952)* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 109-140.

black civilization, finding evidence of advanced intellectual and political culture in ancient Africa. Such facts ultimately prove futile in confronting the structure of discrimination. In either case, the strategy to revalue and reassert a connection to origins finds an analogous gesture in naming practices among North American blacks in the wake of the Black Power movement of the late 1960s. The rise of cultural nationalism and Afrocentrism saw an embrace of African clothing, music, art, spiritual practices, and a wave of inventive naming.<sup>10</sup> Black nationalists often drew on African, Arabic, and French sources and sounds to create their own naming-Lexicon. Names like Amiri, LaToya, Shaquille, and Barack came to carry a connotation of black pride and were part of a struggle to redefine black experience in America. However, while cultural nationalism was very influential among the base of the Black Power movement, it was also criticized by the national leadership of the Black Panthers for being ineffective as a basis upon which to build a revolutionary movement. Although they supported black pride, organization was deemed more important than resignification and cultural practices, which could easily be manipulated by capital. Fanon, for his part, eloquently describes how every attempt to reclaim his “negritude” was thwarted in advance. In a final instance, he is even undermined by Jean-Paul Sartre’s interpretation of race and

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 116-119.

## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT NAME

dialectics, which Fanon argues renders his blackness merely a “minor term” in a larger historical transformation.<sup>11</sup>

Like other black nationalists, Malcolm X encouraged black people to dispense with their European given names. However, unlike most cultural nationalists, his gesture of self-naming doesn't refer to an African or Arabic cultural lineage preceding slavery. Malcolm's “X” does not assert an origin, but the negation of origin. For this reason, the gesture escapes the binary of competing essentialisms, the choice of either sticking with the “respectable” European name or embracing a more authentic African moniker. It designates an identity indelibly marked by dislocation and discontinuity, one that is located squarely within the violent imposition of American slavery rather than an imagined state “before” the event. “X” is a blank slate name that is nonetheless heavily loaded with a commitment to a cause. It denies a foundation in “ethnic” or “cultural” lineage and asserts a foundation in an ongoing collective struggle defined by race as an imposed and oppressive social relation, rather than an inherent characteristic. In this example, self-possession is found through the assumption of the very lack imposed upon the subject by a long and ongoing history of racist dehumanization. Ultimately, similarly to the ideological position of the Black Panthers, Malcolm's “X”

<sup>11</sup> Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness,” 138.

## SEACHANGE | NAMING

locates meaningful transformation in revolutionary organization and political struggle.

To return to the transformative potentiality of names, it is clear that the power of the gesture lies neither in the distinctiveness of the chosen signifier nor the particular traits it supposedly signifies, but in the connection of the name to new organizations and subjects who constitute alternative realities through collective political struggle. With this in mind, the present moment with its many social movements is surely ripe with transformative potential, a potential that may give rise to names that are novel, not because they are unique or garner social capital for their bearers, but because of the spaces of resistance that they signal and the action and commitments that they demand.

The contributions to this issue of *Seachange* confront the complex ways that acts of naming are caught in the shifting webs of meaning, identity, contestation and control. Whether it is in relation to persons, places, artworks, avatars, or collective projects, naming is a productive site for thinking about the tension between the potentially disruptive power of the word and the gentrifying effect of the symbolic network. Naming participates in the ongoing constitution of history, lineage, and cultural continuity while also at times becoming an object of contestation, opening up spaces of struggle, designating a rupture with the past, and contributing to alternative imaginaries.

## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT NAME

Acts of self-naming are a particularly rich area in which to consider the ways in which names exhibit self-reflexive processes of identity formation and situate their bearers in social space. Steffen Krüger's essay considers the ubiquitous practice of self-naming through the use of pseudonyms in online platforms and the self-reflexive performances they frame. The essay offers a comparative analysis of pseudonym choices—construed, in itself, as a creative gesture—between the online platforms of two tabloid newspapers: the German *Bild* and the English *The Daily Mail*. The author compellingly describes the dynamic of concealment and disclosure that characterizes pseudonym choices, searching for what is symptomatic in user-platform relations.

A different set of questions arises in cases of shared or collective pseudonyms. Concerned less with the performance of individual identity and more with the social symbolic power of shared names, Marco Deseriis' essay addresses the fascinating phenomena of aliases such as Monty Cantsin, Luther Blisset and Anonymous. Drawing on ideas from his recent book *Improper Names: Collective Pseudonyms from the Luddites to Anonymous* (2015), the author asks whether the bridging function of these collective names has the capacity to unify, synthesize or transform their constituent parts, particularly in cases where they enter the public domain and exceed the control of their originators. Deseriis argues that ability of an improper name to wield symbolic power does

not depend solely on a strictly controlled “authorizing context,” but is also constructed retroactively from its subsequent iterations, which can either enhance or diminish its reputation in often unpredictable ways.

Naming is a practice imbued with power dynamics that reflect larger conflicts over social status and systems of discrimination. Stéphanie Cassilde shifts attention away from proper names to the practices of racial nomination. Her essay “Nommer la couleur/race d’un enfant” offers a comprehensive overview of the bureaucratic and cultural forms of racial classification undertaken in contemporary Brazilian society, particularly in the case of children’s birth certificates. Drawing on close readings of administrative documents, national statistics, and qualitative analyses of self-descriptions by racial groups in Brazil, the article addresses the distinction between actual and projected racial experiences, complex parental lineages, and the multifaceted politics of “racisme cordial.” Also dealing with politics and identity issues, Marie-Hélène Constant offers a close reading of Gaston Miron’s “notes sur le non-poème et le poème” (1965) to reflect on the specific usage of the term “post-colonial” within the pages of the Québec political journal *Parti Pris* before the term was adopted by postcolonial theorists some ten years later. The piece offers a retroactive reading of Miron’s poetic manifesto, based in particular on the more recent writings of Homi K. Bhabha.

## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT NAME

Struggles over names can be particularly fraught when referring to traumatic events and contested political histories. The following essays consider how naming reflects deeper ideological battles where the ability to commemorate or erase contributes to control over the past, present and future. Rémy Besson's piece offers a rather pointed reflection on the establishment of the term "Shoah" as the most current designation for the Holocaust in the French public sphere. Through a playful re-imagining of two more or less contemporary key moments in the history of filmic portrayals of the Holocaust (the production of the U.S. TV show *Holocaust* and Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*), the author draws attention to both the willful and the contingent dimensions of Lanzmann's title choice for his 9½ hour film. Lanzmann's *Shoah* contributes to the ways in which the Holocaust continues to be understood and discussed in France, establishing a clear link, according to the author, between "Shoah" and the Holocaust's irrepresentability. We then move from film to a monument-based memorialization. Erik Bordeleau's "Prises et entre-prises du commun" is an engaging and subtle examination of an act of collective naming in relation to the artist collective, of which he is a member, *Entrepreneurs du commun*. The author unfolds the multiple dimensions of the concepts of "the commons" and "common" that underpin the group's decision to address the ways in which the concept has been appropriated, particularly in the Canadian

context, with the recent, controversial case of the building of a proposed monument to the victims of communism in Ottawa.

Names take on a special significance when attached to cultural products, whether these are artworks, religious texts, fashion lines, or under conditions of network convergence, a broad swath of media vehicles, platforms, and consumer products. In “The Sublime Object of Iconology: Duchampian Appellation as Žižekian Interpellation,” Robert Kilroy provides a Žižekian reading of a few of Duchamp’s major works in order to zero in on the function of the title in relation to artworks. The author elaborates a dialogue between Duchamp and Žižek and the ways in which their understanding of the “radical contingency of naming” support each other. Kilroy works with Žižek’s approach to ideology to argue for a reconceptualization of the postmodern interpretation of the Duchampian readymade. Duchamp’s gesture of nomination in turn contributes to a revised reading of Žižek’s notion of ideology in which Kilroy emphasizes the function of “Art” as master signifier within the aesthetic field.

As with our previous issues, this year’s *Seachange* presents multiple angles on human experience refracted through the lens of our central theme. Taken together, these contributions reveal the extremely productive nexus occupied by naming as an act that negotiates the boundaries between individuals and

## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT NAME

their worlds. We hope you find these contributions to be compelling and rewarding reflections on an everyday practice that is nonetheless freighted with the unpredictable potentialities of language, situated in the uncertain terrain between cultural continuity and transformation.

**Cayley Sorochan** is a doctoral candidate in the department of Art History & Communication Studies at McGill University. Her thesis project, *The Participatory Complex*, develops a critique of the ideological function of “participation” in online culture, social movements and consumer capitalism. She has published essays in *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, *Reviews in Cultural Theory*, *Estudos Ibero-Americanos* and *Seachange*. She has also contributed book chapters to *Marxism and Urban Culture* (Lexington Books 2014) and *The Participatory Condition* (Minnesota Press, forthcoming 2016), and co-edited a special supplement on the 2012 Quebec Student Strike for *Theory & Event*. Since 2011, she has been a board member of *Seachange*. Her wider research interests include psychoanalytic approaches to political subjectivity and an insistence on the continued relevance of ideology critique in “post-ideological” culture. Her research has been supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Fonds de

SEACHANGE | NAMING

Recherche sur la Société et la Culture du Québec (FQRSC), and  
Media@McGill.

## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT NAME

### Bibliography

- Boltansky, Luc and Eve Chiapello. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London and New York: Verso, 2005.
- Edwards, Kasey. "The Subconscious Bias of 'Unisex' Baby Name Trends," *Nameberry.com*, February 4, 2016: <http://nameberry.com/blog/the-subconscious-bias-of-unisex-baby-name-trends> (accessed February 4, 2016).
- Fanon, Frantz. "The Fact of Blackness," in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). New York: Grove Press, 1967.
- Ogbar, Jeffrey O. G. *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Rocha, Esmerelda. "Boy's Names: 10 New Favorites," *Nameberry.com*, October 14, 2015: <http://nameberry.com/blog/boys-names-10-new-favorites> (accessed February 4, 2016).
- Rosenkrantz, Linda. "Behind the Baby Name Saint," *Nameberry.com*, December 7, 2015: <http://nameberry.com/blog/news-flash-kim-kanye-have-named-their-son-saint-west> (accessed February 2, 2016).
- Sandel, Abby. "The Royals are Coming: King, Prince and Princess," *Nameberry.com*, January 7, 2015: <http://nameberry.com/blog/the-royals-are-coming-king-prince-and-princess> (accessed February 2, 2016).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Name Sage: A Baby Name for Two Cultures," *Nameberry.com*, September 29, 2015: <http://nameberry.com/blog/name-sage-a-baby-name-for-two-cultures> (accessed February 4, 2016).
- Žižek, Slavoj. *On Belief*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.