



Naming and Unnaming: On Raymond Queneau (Stages)

Jordan Stump

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Naming and Unnaming is a dazzling study that centers on the work of Raymond Queneau, one of the most influential French novelists of the twentieth century. Jordan Stump takes as his subject the many implications—epistemological, political, literary, sometimes even physical—of naming in Queneau’s remarkable novels.

From the idea that the names of characters offer a more immediate and perhaps even a more intimate understanding of their souls than we might glean from their words and deeds has grown the broad field of inquiry known as literary onomastics. Stump argues that there is another approach to the literary proper name, one that concentrates not on the meaning of names but on the meaning of the use of those names—the ways in which the characters and narrator of a novel address or refer to others.

Naming and Unnaming considers the literary and philosophical implications of names and naming. Stump examines four issues in Queneau’s novels—the nature of writing and of creation in general, the possibility or impossibility of knowledge, the relationship between the individual and the group, and the uses of power and control—in relation to which naming emerges as a force both powerful and utterly impotent. By exploring these forces and their evocation, Stump reveals the complexity of both the act of naming and the novels of Queneau.

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