

2004–05: The Naming of Names, Ray Bradbury

2004–05: The Naming of Names

They came to the strange blue lands and put their names upon the lands. Here was Hinkston Creek and Lustig Corners and Black River and Driscoll Forest and Peregrine Mountain and Wilder Town, all the names of people and the things that the people did.

Here was the place where Martians killed the first Earth Men, and it was Red Town and had to do with blood.

And here where the second expedition was destroyed, and it was named Second Try, and each of the other places where the rocket men had set down their fiery caldrons to burn the land, the names were left like cinders, and of course there was a Spender Hill and a Nathaniel York Town. . . .

The old Martian names were names of water and air and hills. They were the names of snows that emptied south in stone canals to fill the empty seas. And the names of sealed and buried sorcerers and towers and obelisks.

And the rockets struck at the names like hammers, breaking away the marble into shale, shattering the crockery milestones that named the old towns, in the rubble of which great pylons were plunged with new names: IRON TOWN, STEEL TOWN, ALUMINUM CITY, ELECTRIC VILLAGE, CORN TOWN, GRAIN VILLA, DETROIT II, all the mechanical names and the metal names from Earth.

And after the towns were built and named, the graveyards were built and named, too: Green Hill, Moss Town, Boot Hill, Bide 'a Wee; and the first dead went into their graves. . . .

But after everything was pinned down and neat and in its place, when everything was safe and certain, when the towns were well enough

fixed and the loneliness was at a minimum, then the sophisticates came in from Earth.

They came on parties and vacations, on little shopping trips for trinkets and photographs and the “atmosphere”; they came to study and apply sociological laws; they came with stars and badges and rules and regulations, bringing some of the red tape that had crawled across Earth like an alien weed, and letting it grow on Mars wherever it could take root.

They began to plan people’s lives and libraries; they began to instruct and push about the very people who had come to Mars to get away from being instructed and ruled and pushed about.

And it was inevitable that some of these people pushed back. . . .

The End