

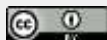


## Book Review

**Naming, Identity, and Tourism.** Edited by LUISA CAIAZZO, RICHARD COATES, and MAOZ AZARYAHU. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2020. Pp. vii + 233. £61.99. ISBN 13: 978-1-5275-4286-0.

For the year 2019, it has been estimated that travel and tourism (TT) contributed approximately 9.25 trillion US dollars to the global economy (Lock 2019). The importance of TT to the strength of the international market is underscored by the fact that the United Nations has a special agency, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), devoted to promoting “competitive and sustainable tourism policies” around the world (UNWTO 2020a). According to statistics gathered by the UNWTO, in 2018, there was a total of 1.4 billion tourists, marking the ninth consecutive year that international tourism experienced sustained growth (UNWTO 2020b). Today, it’s estimated that ten percent of the world’s employment is tied to the TT industry. This percentage represents 319 million jobs internationally (World Travel and Tourism Council 2019).

Indeed, in many countries around the world, TT account for a significant, often essential, share of the gross national income. The competition for attracting and maintaining travelers is, therefore, understandably fierce. To secure their share of the pie, governments and private industry regularly allocate a sizeable portion of their yearly budget to develop newer, more effective strategies to attract first-time tourists and repeat visitors. One of the principles of this destination marketing is creating positive associations in the minds of potential travelers (Kolb 2017; Vellas and Bécherel 1999). Over the years, some TT campaigns have been so successful that the names of certain localities have become tightly linked with tourism. From *Las Vegas*, *Paris*, *Maui*, and *Berlin*, to *Barcelona*, *Bora Bora*, *Machu Picchu*, *Rarotonga*, and *Beijing*, the mere mention of these and other placenames has become inextricably linked to TT. On the one hand, this connection has



brought these communities tremendous economic benefits (Bayraktar and Uslyay 2017). On the other hand, the costs to residents' personal, local, regional, and national identities are often significant. The complex relationship between names, tourism, and identity is the subject of the current work under review.

The original idea for this publication came in the spring of 2018, when Italy's University of Basilicata hosted an international conference on this fascinating thematic triad. Over this three-day event, researchers from around the world gathered to present their work on this innovative theme. The resulting book provides an intriguing selection of those papers. Not unlike that original conference, this publication represents a wide range of theoretical frameworks, geographical foci, and analytical approaches. And, just like any international scientific symposium, some of these examinations are superb, while others are comparatively lackluster.

After a brief introduction (1–10), Chapter One (11–28) begins with an examination of the relationship between “name-making” and “place-making.” As Maoz Azaryahu (University of Haifa-Israel) explains, “naming recognizes a certain geographical feature as an entity of its own and, as such, as constituent of culture” (13). This assertion is of course neither novel nor disputed.<sup>1</sup> However, some of the inferences Azaryahu then draws are. For example, the assertion that a “nameless geographical feature **needs** a name of some kind in order to be mentioned [emphasis added]” is simply not true and neither is the claim that a location without a name “cannot be spoken of and mentioned far from its immediate vicinity, and in this sense it does not exist” (13). These are not the only instances of inexactitude found in this chapter. Azaryahu also inexplicably asserts that Dickens was forced to explain the Parisian practice of eponymous street-naming to his 19th-century British readers as this form of public recognition was “largely unfamiliar” to them (17). Given the UK's centuries-old history of naming its thoroughfares after its leaders in science, religion, industry, politics, literature, the arts, and of course the aristocracy, this claim was surprising, to say the least (Mills 2011). Azaryahu's main point about toponymy's being used to establish a location's cultural significance is well-taken, however. Nevertheless, far more care could have been taken in constructing this argument.

The same criticism could be made of Chapter Nine (153–168) by Katalin Reszegi (University of Debrecen-Hungary). In this contribution, the thematic triad of names, identity, and tourism is examined from the philosophical framework of cognitive semantics. As with any philosophical exploration, rhetorical precision is essential. Unfortunately, throughout the chapter, this control was inadequately exercised. It is regrettable, for example, in the year 2020, that an academic work dedicated to names and identity would use such potentially offensive ethnonyms such as *Gipsy* and *Canadian Indian* without comment or qualification (156, 157). If that were not enough, Reszegi goes on to make the following unsubstantiated claim: “the name of Chicago usually evokes negative associations (crime, gangsters), and such a stereotype has a negative effect on the attraction of the city as a place to live in and as a touristic destination” (160). In point of fact, Chicago—the beloved city of the nation's first Black US American President, Barack Obama—consistently ranks among the top tourist destinations in the United States (*Travel and Leisure* 2019; *CNN Travel* 2019; *US News & World Report* 2019; *MarketWatch* 2019). In 2019, the year of the book's publication, the nation's indomitable *Windy City* was even ranked the “Best Big US City” for the third year in a row in Condé Nast Traveler's Readers' Choice Award, beating out New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco (Westenberg 2019). Obviously, the name *Chicago* is not as much of a deterrent as Reszegi would have international readers believe. Clearly, more care and attention to facts would have greatly enhanced the quality of this contribution.

A similar assessment is made in Chapter Four (65–78). Here, Elena Bellavia (University of Basilicata-Italy) examines the controversy surrounding the toponymy of *South Tyrol*, or *Alto Adige* and *Südtirol* in Italian and German, respectively. As Bellavia repeatedly states, this controversy has been marked by a set of extremely “painful historical events” (65). What precisely these events were, Bellavia sadly leaves largely to the imagination of readers who may be unfamiliar with this tumultuous history. Explained briefly, this region, and not “country” as Bellavia repeatedly and mistakenly labels it, was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before it was ceded to Italy in 1919 as a part of the Treaty of Saint-Germain (72–73). An aggressive pro-Italian language policy was introduced and German was progressively prohibited in public spaces, including all official toponyms (Steininger 2017). Then, in 1939, Hitler and Mussolini signed a pact which stipulated that German-speakers who resided in the area must either conform to the Italian-only doctrine or immediately leave the region to join the Aryan Reich (Latour 1965). Such a concise yet coherent explanation would have done much to help international readers appreciate the true complexity of toponymy in this region and relate it to other locations where similar toponymic battles wage. Instead, Bellavia devotes an inordinate amount of time to recounting a 2017 television debate over how best to market the region. Even more frustrating is the fact that many of the passages Bellavia provides from the debate are inaccurately translated. For example, “die Bevölkerung ist mehrheitlich deutschsprachig” is mistranslated as “the majority of the population is mother tongue German” [sic] (71). Putting the faulty English aside, a correct translation would have been “the population is predominately German-speaking.” Such errors and oversights made this contribution a missed opportunity for demonstrating how unresolved conflicts from the past can influence onomastic policies far into the future.

A chapter that more effectively examines placename changes over time is Chapter Thirteen (213–224). Here, Elsa Skënderi-Rakiplari (University of Tirana-Albania) analyzes naming during and after Communist

rule in the Albanian capital city of *Tirana*. As Skënderi-Rakiplari explains, such a diachronic comparison makes it possible to discern important alterations in the “linguistic landscape [...] where identity is shaped and performed” (213). Regrettably, the full potential of this research is reduced by the significant degree of conceptual overlap between the onomastic categories devised. For example, among the leading post-Communist patterns Skënderi-Rakiplari identifies, the first involves “names that bring to mind traces of communist or pre-communist legacy” (216). However, the second pattern Skënderi-Rakiplari uses is operationalized as “evokes the Communist past” (216). How exactly these two classifications differ is left to the reader’s imagination. Sadly, Skënderi-Rakiplari’s system of pattern classification is riddled with such problems. This methodological weakness does not, however, obstruct the overarching discovery of this study: the post-Communism emergence of multilingual naming. According to Skënderi-Rakiplari, the use of multilingual names in Tirana mirrors not only the residents’ increasing polyglotism, but also their collective desire to attract international tourists.<sup>2</sup> This chapter shows how naming can generally help shape communal public identity; and, in this specific case, help to create a group identity that at least appears to be culturally open and outwardly pro-European.

Another contribution that has Eastern Europe as its focus is found in Chapter Six (99–112). Written by Valéria Tóth (University of Debrecen-Hungary), this chapter provides a highly detailed description of a new resource that can facilitate the diachronic examination of place names, the “Hungarian National Toponym Registry.” As Tóth describes, the Registry not only aids in the restoration and protection of Hungary’s cultural heritage and national identity, but can also potentially assist in “updating of maps, including tourist maps” (110). Disappointingly, Tóth does not go on to explore the potential utility of this and other comparable automated place name resources for managing identity and tourism in any real depth. Without doubt, such a discussion would have been fruitful. It would also have helped to strengthen the conceptual tie of this chapter to the overarching theme of this publication.

The need for a stronger conceptual link to the book’s triadic theme is also found in Chapter Eight (135–152) by Esterino Adami (University of Turin-Italy). In this contribution, Adami examines Mark Twain’s descriptions of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR). According to Adami, onomastic references are largely absent from Twain’s 1897 depiction of the DHR. This absence, Adami asserts, invites readers to “mentally construct the DHR, on their own” (141). By contrast, Adami states that the modern-day travelogue of contemporary writer Monisha Rajesg creates a sense of pleasant familiarity in readers’ minds by likening the DHR to Thomas the Tank Engine. Although such literary comparisons are interesting, the examination of identity and tourism comes up comparatively short.

Luckily, the weaknesses of some of the chapters in this multi-authored reference help to underscore the brilliance of most others. Such was the case with Chapter Two (29–44). Written by Richard Coates (University of the West of England-United Kingdom), this chapter has the following premise: “Names function as addresses through which the probabilistic expectations of whole communities can be accessed, packaged, branded and commodified” (49). With engaging wit, Coates deftly explores how the collective cognitive processes of place-naming are systematically exploited by the TT industry. The only major weakness spotted in this contribution is found in the author’s tangential remarks about others’ beliefs. For instance, Coates scoffs at people who associate black cats with luck, questioning how “intelligent people can seriously believe” such things (30). Coates then goes on to state that people often believe “things which pass for truths [...] even though the ‘believers’ know perfectly well that they are not necessarily true [...] and] many religious ‘beliefs’ fall into that category” (30). Although Coates is careful to acknowledge that many may not agree, one is left to question whether it was really necessary to potentially offend so many readers to put forth his argument. A similar criticism could be made of his discussion of naming policies requiring the addition of Welsh language on public signs. According to Coates, this strategy “others the linguistic landscape for visitors to Wales” (40). This inference is, however, rather one-sided, for who or what is “other(ed)” depends upon one’s own standpoint. For those travelers and tourists, both domestic and international, who include Celtic culture as a part of their identity, the use of Welsh names may in fact invoke a sense of We-ness rather than Otherness. At the end of the day, whichever perspective one might have, the oft-contentious discussion of place names serves as a powerful reminder of the way toponyms can demarcate identity.

The historical tension between identity and place is also taken up in Chapter Ten (169–180). Written by Jean Louis Vaxelaire (University of Namur-Belgium), this contribution draws an interesting comparison between France’s policies for changing toponyms and anthroponyms. As Vaxelaire points out, the French government has tended to allow personal name changes when the previous name is found to expose the bearer to social ridicule or financial disadvantage. These reasons have not been accepted as valid justification for altering official place names, however, even if the potential loss of face and revenue is great. According to Vaxelaire, this paradox has meant only six of 101 departments in France have changed their names since 1790. In an attempt to circumvent this restriction, some French politicians have lobbied energetically for permission to change the names of their localities in hopes of bolstering TT. For his part, Vaxelaire questions whether official toponymic changes truly correlate with TT increases, especially in light of potential costs to residents’ thwarted identity. Vaxelaire’s question is exceedingly well-founded for, as many a politician has

been forced to concede, institutional name changes frequently bring many unanticipated social challenges, with no guarantee of fiscal reward.

Given this uncertainty, it is easy to see why some officials may be reticent to implement name changes for important public spaces, opting instead to invest precious municipal resources in image management. Precisely this strategy is the topic of Chapter Three (45–64) by Luisa Caiazzo (University of Basilicata-Italy). In one of the most enjoyable contributions to the book under review, Caiazzo shows how the “associative potential” of toponyms can make them “a powerful ideological and political tool” for managing a location’s public image and securing precious TT revenue, even when the history of that locality is painful (45). To illustrate this point, Caiazzo examines two different locations. The first has a name that can immediately conjure images of demon worship, mass hysteria, and bloodlust: *Salem*. Rather than attempt to hide its infamous history, the residents of this Massachusetts icon have learned to use the international notoriety of their hometown’s name to attract tourist dollars. Caiazzo skillfully juxtaposes this US example with an Italian one. According to Caiazzo, in this nation, there is one particular village with a past so marked by witchcraft that even to utter its original name is believed to bring bad luck.<sup>3</sup> Again, instead of rejecting this history by adopting a new toponym, this location has embraced its identity as the “village without a name” and has used this unusual moniker in successful tourist campaigns (56). What’s particularly intriguing about Caiazzo’s examples is the way in which both towns utilize real-life crimes to create a positive image.

In Chapter Eleven (181–202), Vincenzo Asero (University of Catania-Italy) and Douglas Ponton (University of Catania-Italy) present an analogous strategy, the use of fictional crime to create positive associations with real-life locations. More specifically, in hopes of cashing in on the extremely popular TV adaptation of Andrea Camilleri’s detective novels, several locations have begun to market themselves as the “real Vigata,” the fictional Italian town featured in Camilleri’s series.<sup>4</sup> As countless other communities have discovered, linking their identities with locations in the popular media can be extremely profitable, e.g., New Zealand’s *Hobbiton* and the film version of Tolkien’s classic, *The Lord of the Rings*<sup>5</sup>; the Austrian village of *Halstatt*, inspiration for the cartoon landscape in the Disney hit film, “Frozen.”<sup>6</sup> However, as Asero and Ponton sagely warn, aligning a community’s identity with fictional spaces may have many hidden costs. It is therefore imperative, the authors stress, to consider what may be “the long-term implications of an area’s marketing itself” not as an authentic location with its own unique history, customs, and lore, but as a “film set that happens to have been part of a successful media product” (195). As many residents of the above-mentioned communities would no doubt agree, one of the dangers of this marketing strategy is the gradual replacement of an authentic sense of the communal self with a hollow parody, robotically enacted for the sake of tourists’ dollars.

The repercussions of falling into such a trap are explored in one of the most outstanding contributions of this publication, Chapter Five (79–98) by Kathryn Hudson (University of Buffalo-United States). In this truly brilliant piece, Hudson explores Mesoamerica’s inflationary identification with the name *Mayan*. Initially, the adoption of this name was perceived as being unilaterally positive in that it helped call attention to the fabulous accomplishments of non-European peoples in Mesoamerica and, in turn, helped attract outside interest and revenue. However, as Hudson expertly demonstrates, over time, the indiscriminate identification with all things Mayan may have contributed to the gradual erasure of Mesoamerica’s true ethnolinguistic heterogeneity, both past and present. The powerful processes brought to the forefront in this chapter underscore the destructive potential of names upon those who bear them, despite the noblest of intentions by those who bestow them.

Chapter Twelve (203–212) picks up this theme and addresses the calamitous effects of onomastic reframing for the indigenous peoples of Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. In this captivating chapter, Eleonora Sasso (University of Chieti-Pescara-Italy) places her investigatory focus upon the competing toponymy used for the ancestral lands of the Inuit. Thankfully, as Sasso herself takes care to point out, the anthroponym *Inuit*, though a decisive improvement over the pejorative ethnonym *Eskimo*, is a problematic designator, for it tends to homogenize a complex group of peoples with differing languages, cultures, traditions, and identities. The denial of this diversity through the widespread unqualified use of this exonym is related to the dislocation of the indigenous peoples from their homelands and native customs via the imposition of exogenous toponymy. As Sasso explains, in the cultures of the Inuit peoples, toponyms contain critical information about the significance of a place for ensuring the health and welfare of a community. Excellent examples provided by Sasso include *Iqaluktuuttiaq* ‘good fishing place,’ *Mittimatalik* ‘the place where the landing place is,’ *Naujaat* ‘seagull’s nesting place,’ and *Iqalut* ‘the place of fish’ (204–05). In comparison to the European exonyms that were introduced to mark colonial possession, the native toponyms were used to store information critical for survival. Consequently, the progressive encroachment of exogenous place names not only has led to the gradual destruction of the Inuit’s toponymic legacy, but it has also perpetuated the erosion of the collective “cognitive map” of the native peoples and threatened their traditional relationship to their homeland (207). Putting aside Sasso’s somewhat distracting discussion of a 1964 film about an Inuit artist, this chapter serves as a telling reminder of the threat new linguistic forms can harbor for native varieties.

Seen as a whole, this book is very reminiscent of an international conference at which one or two lectures are excellent, most are average, and a few are rather poor. In this collection, the same is true but the direction of the skew is quite positive. While a few contributions are relatively fair to middling, the vast majority are innovative and will no doubt be thought-provoking for onomastic researchers and names enthusiasts alike.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In many ways, it is reminiscent of philosophical treatises popular in the 1970s as an outgrowth of the Prague Circle with de Saussure and Beneviste. From this perspective, culture is a mechanism that creates an aggregate of texts and texts are a realization of culture (Lotman and Uspensky 1971).

<sup>2</sup> Skënderi-Rakiplari voices some skepticism of this development and laments that “[t]he borrowed foreign elements interfere with the structural syntactic aspects of the Albanian language” (221). Although understandably frustrating, from a linguistic perspective, such “interference” is a natural product of language contact and forms the basis for processes which ultimately enrich and revitalize languages and cultures.

<sup>3</sup> The original name of the Italian town is *Colobraro*. According to Caiazzo, even today the town is more commonly referred to as *Quel paese* ‘that village’ or *Quel posto* ‘that place’ by Italian-speakers (2019, 56).

<sup>4</sup> Asero and Ponton contend that television series are more powerful than film in establishing these associations. The authors give no outside evidence to support this assertion. Moreover, I would contend that, thanks to the proliferation of internet streaming services, the historical lines between cinema and television have become so blurred that it is impossible to separate one from the other.

<sup>5</sup> The New Zealand government has estimated that between the books and films, Tolkien’s classic helps to contribute as much as \$500 million per year to the country’s income (Fletscher 2020). In 2009, after filming of the trilogy had been completed, the leftover movie set became a major tourist attraction. Drawing about 640 million tourists annually, the 12-acre farm that makes up “Hobbiton” is one of New Zealand’s biggest tourist attractions (Walker 2019; Meyer 2019). The set alone attracts about 17 percent of the country’s visitors and garners \$78 million for the Matamata-Piako district each year (Tantau 2019). Given this success, the New Zealand government has invested heavily in aligning the country’s name with that of the fantasy world of Middle-earth (Pinchefskey 2012). Visitors to the nation’s official website for tourism (<http://www.newzealand.com/>) will find, for example, the slogan “Home of Middle Earth” emblazoned across the top of the page.

<sup>6</sup> Despite initial euphoria over the sudden increase in TT revenue, the residents of Halstatt have become overwhelmed by the ever-growing number of tourists. Before the film “Frozen”, the Austrian village had less than 200 visitors per day. After the film’s release, that number soared to reach 10,000 a day, which is more than five times the number of people who pick Venice as a tourist destination (Coffey 2020).

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