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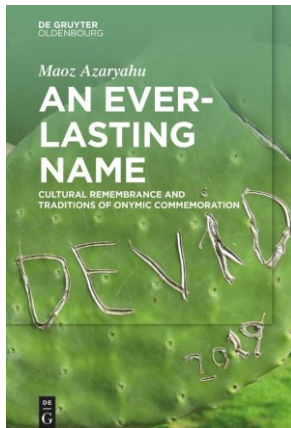
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*An everlasting name* is a major contribution to onymic scholarship by one of the leading researchers in the field. From the start of his career, Professor Azaryahu has published extensively and insightfully on the spatial and historical dynamics of place naming and place making, the cultural and historical geographies of public memory in Israel and in Germany, the spatialities of memory and narrative, and the cultural histories of places and landscapes. *An everlasting name* is, however, more than a playlist of Azaryahu’s greatest works across a distinguished career. Rather, this book is advancing an original and important thesis about the spatiality of onymic traditions and technologies that offers considerable insights into place-based commemorative

practices. Drawing from a career’s worth of scholarship and travel, Azaryahu employs a remarkable range of examples and photographs to support his arguments.

These insights will be of particular value given the recent upsurge in interest in the politics of place names in critical cultural geography, cultural studies, political geography, and landscape studies. But whereas much of this recent research has been preoccupied with issues of power and protest, a key feature of this book is its focus on the spatiality of the poetics that underlie commemorative practice. In this area, Azaryahu is making a very important contribution by looking carefully at the ways in which spatiality and geographical positioning of placenames help signify their meaning. Equally important are his analysis of how the spatial configuration of the technologies of commemorative practice can influence meaning. I have had the good fortune to discuss some of these points in person with Professor Azaryahu because we have worked on a handful of projects together. These productive collaborations may sway my overall judgment of this book, but at the same time, may help me to highlight the significance of this book’s contribution to onymic scholarship.

Of the book’s eight chapters, chapters 3 to 7 carry the weight of Azaryahu’s argument, with the first two chapters setting the context. Chapter 1 is a brief overview of the book’s argument, with Chapter 2 providing a concise review of previous research. Azaryahu is quick to credit previous scholarship that has explored the relationships among names, fame, immortality and remembrance. Citing both ancient sources and contemporary scholarship, Azaryahu shows that the name as a symbol of lasting fame and reverence is a powerful strategy to reach for immortality, a strategy that has flourished from early civilizations right up to the present.

At fifty-six-pages, the third chapter, “Remembered by their name: Practices

and Traditions of Onymic Commemoration,” accounts for a quarter of the book’s length but is, as its length suggests, one of the most important. In a deft marshaling of sources, Azaryahu first provides a comprehensive overview of commemorative technologies, traditions, and practices across assorted media, historical periods, cultural contexts, and geographical settings. Providing this background allows him to focus on what he sees as two of the most important, but least studied of these practices of commemoration: *placing names* and *naming places*. Placing names is about embedding names in writing to ensure their endurance for posterity, in inscriptions, poetry, literature, drama, casualty lists, graffiti, and memorial plaques. Naming places integrates remembrance of individuals and the language of the landscape – the roads, routes, buildings, and parks that are part of the routines of everyday life.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 dig further into the issues highlighted in Chapter 3. The fourth focuses on how names are ordered spatially in public displays of casualty lists. Here space and logic are often intertwined. Spatially the names may be arranged linearly or nonlinearly, or the ordering may be alphabetic, chronological, hierarchical, or based on other ordering or grouping principles such as “meaningful adjacencies” used to group victims’ names around the pools of New York City’s 9/11 Memorial.

Chapter 5, “Who are they?,” deals with the problem that naming fails as a mnemonic device if the viewer knows nothing about the person being honored. In response, a number of assistive techniques have been developed, such as explanatory inscriptions, plaques, or markers placed on or near street signs to remind viewers of the honoree. Other efforts employ poems and quotations to remind viewers of the person being honored. Azaryahu ends the chapter by noting the potential of digital and networked possibilities. Googling a place name already opens access to a wide range of background information. It may soon be possible to simply photograph a marker and have an AI-enabled cell phone recognize and respond with information.

Chapter 6, “Putting a Face to a Name: Pattern of Symbolic Accretion,” touches on an interesting feature of onymic commemoration. Once a place is named, it can act as a magnet for the further celebration of the honoree or event. This accretion of secondary commemoration can take place through the erection of statues, portraits, and plaques. In a sense, it is a slightly different solution to the problem addressed in the previous chapter – how to link a toponym to the person being honored.

Chapter 7, “A Matter of Endurance: *Damnatio Memoriae*,” addresses the precarity of onymic commemoration. Some commemorative honorifics last for millennia, but they are the exceptions. Paint fades, stone erodes, and metal corrodes in the face of change or indifference, or as a consequence of natural disasters, war and economic, cultural, social, and political upheavals. In some respects, Chapter 7 serves as a book end to Chapter 3. Whereas the third chapter explores onymic technologies, traditions, and practices of remembrance,

Chapter 7 explores the precarity of these technologies, traditions, and practices and the many ways they can be undercut or fail. In some respects, I wish this latter chapter explored technologies and practices of effacement and decommemoration in the same detail as was found in Chapter 3.

Chapter 8, a brief four pages, is a bittersweet reverie on the paradoxical nature of onymic commemoration – the irresistible human urge to be remembered, in the face of the almost certain knowledge that such efforts will be made in vain. As he concludes: “What is beyond dispute is the understanding that onymic commemoration, limited as it is in its capacity to fulfill the promise of immortality, does not impair one’s chance of being remembered, even if in name only.”

This may be a slim volume, but this book holds the potential to have a major impact on toponymics and studies of onymic commemoration. Azaryahu is drawing attention to the spatial form of commemorative texts – a sort of place or space poetics – that reveals nuances of meaning often overlooked in cultural geography and landscape studies. As such, Azaryahu’s arguments have great potential to contribute greater nuance and rigor to the growing body of research focusing on the politics of place names. Azaryahu alludes to these possibilities, but I found myself wanting more in the final chapter about the broader implications of his research and what he sees as some of the most promising next steps that would help to advance his theories still further.