In the current decade, *toponymic decolonization* has become one of the essential themes in place naming studies, geographically expanding from the traditionally discussed Global South and the European settler colonization regions to other realms (among others, e.g., ROSE-REDWOOD 2016; WANJIRU & MATSUBARA 2016; BIGON & BEN ARROUS 2022; GIRAUT & HOUSSAY-HOLZSCHUCH 2022; GNATIUK & MELNYCHUK 2023). In the contemporary world, with the ongoing implementation of the (neo)colonial symbolic politics of place names such as the recent renaming of the tallest peak in North America from the Indigenous *Denali* to *Mount McKinley* or the *Gulf of Mexico* to the "*Gulf of America*" (BASIK 2025), there is an essential need for the theoretical and practical recommendations for the decolonization of place names.

Without any doubt, *Naming No Man's Land* by Paul Carter, a professor of Design (Urbanism) at RMIT University in Melbourne (Australia), is a new significant contribution to the constantly growing segment of literature in place naming studies dealing with toponymic decolonization. The author of this book has been widely acclaimed among critical toponymists for one of his previous works, *The Road to Botany Bay* (CARTER 1987), which, in some ways, had preluded the emergence of this field of study (see, e.g., VUOLTEENAHO, BERG 2009: 7). Comprising the impressive breadth of the author's unpredictable real-life toponymic encounters during the applied place naming project in Western Australia, where the Aboriginal Noongar Elders played a crucial role, and the wide range of the toponymic examples from different parts of the planet, Carter's new fascinating and intellectually rigorous book underpins the (post)colonial toponymic landscapes from the unexpected perspective. As the author suggests in the Preface, toponymy "implicates the theology of *logos*, the taxonomy of Linnaeus, the psychology of belonging, and the magic of poetry" (CARTER 2024: X).

The book consists of a preface, a note on the figures, and eight chapters. In my view, this book breaks ground in a couple of ways, providing some promising thematic interventions throughout the volume into the theory and practice of contemporary place naming studies. First, in the "Introduction: Practicing toponymic decolonization," the author begins by setting out his original approach to toponyms, stating that "a placename might be constitutionally plural and, no less importantly, durational, able to accommodate retrospective and prospective senses of place" (CARTER 2024: 3). He calls for *toponymic plurality* (see also about this notion GIRAUT 2020), which is opposed to the official standardization of place names. The author states that the alternative approach to place naming should be considered "a process of continuous sense production." In the text, many Aboriginal names and terms are intentionally provided in multiple forms (Nyungar/Noongar; Waugul/Wakyl), maintaining the original plurality of oral language.

Second, and probably the most important intervention of the author, is the *creative* or *poetic* approach to toponymy, which is "the process of place naming prospectively rather than retrospectively" and is based on "the poetic logic" that makes a name acceptable (CARTER 2024: 6). Curiously, the "poetic" approach proposed by Carter seems multifaceted (for example, there are such terms in the book as "poetic toponymy," "poetic form of resistance," "poetic geography," "poetic practice," "poetic economy" and many others); however, it is first of all about the story, the continuous relationships between the places and their names. In Aboriginal Noongar tradition, all places are "events strung along a storyline," so if the name is omitted, the story becomes "unintelligible" (CARTER 2024: 6). The "poetic" essence of the process of toponymic decolonization is that "the new naming cannot be separated from the new semiotics of place" (CARTER 2024: 130).

From my standpoint, the most radical idea (and potentially arguable, especially for the professional linguists-onomasticians) is *critical etymology,* which "would treat the name of the place as all the variations that have been recorded, understanding these as a compacted history of a speech community's self-representation across time" (CARTER 2024: 17). The author contends that critical etymology should consider all the historical transformations and all versions of meaning of the place names equally and "without any prejudicial nostalgia" (CARTER 2024: 152) for only one correct original form. Carter argues there should be no reason to follow only one correct linguistic version of etymology.

There is also one component in the text that seems questionable. Continuing the discussion about "critical etymology," Carter focuses on the "Golden Moun-

tain," a Western philosophical concept of non-existent objects. As an illustration of the unnecessary or impossible process of distilling one etymology from various options, the author uses the Central Asian toponym Altai, known as "Golden Mountain," according to traditional etymology. Carter points out that with some exceptions, the name *Golden Mountain* "does not represent anything that could be found in the landscape" (Carter 2024: 154). Then, he provided several examples from an academic paper (Saparov et al. 2018) and one example from a non-academic popular blog, characterizing all these examples as "etymological reverie, one that ends in seeing the object evaporate into speculation." Instead, from the author's standpoint, if we consider it "the part of the story," *the Golden Mountain* would "emerge as a site of continuous meaning production, different interpretations emerging and descending in different directions" (Carter 2024: 155–156).

It should be mentioned that the name of this Central Asian system is one of the most etymologically "contested" among the oronyms (the names of the mountains and other geomorphological features) in the Eurasian realm. Turkologists agree that the mutual borrowings between Turkic and Mongolian languages existed from ancient times (see Sevortyan 1974: 45). For the Altai, the Mongolian root *alt* ("gold") and the pre-Mongolian suffix of place *-ai* could be merged, and the meaning "gold-bearing" (or, in simplified form, "golden mountain") can be real because gold was mined in the Altai Mountains since ancient time and found in ancient graves in the Iron Age archeological culture of Pazyryk Kurgan (Murzayev 1995: 123; see also cited by the author work of Saparov et al. 2018). Indeed, there is "a multiplicity of views" on the toponym in academic literature and in vernacular geographies, including some figurative ("beautiful mountain") and also one of the most geographically reliable based on the existence of the Mongolian generic term *altai* as the characteristic of the specific type of the mountains (the problem there can be which comes first - the term or toponym; see Murzayev 1984: 37–38). Significantly, in trying to understand this name, it is important to follow local vernacular geographies, the decades of the research expeditions, the works of the local researchers with their knowledge of current and ancient languages and regional natural landscapes as well as recognize the thousands of years of complicated regional history, the interactions between Turkic, Mongolic, and other ethnic groups, and the dynamic composition of local toponymic stratigraphy. Eventually, even though we cannot find the only answer from many etymologies for now, as for other well-known oronyms in Eurasia

(e.g., the Caucasus or the Carpathians), it would probably be problematic to say that "none of them true" (Carter 2024: 156).

Another minor detraction in the book is related to the interchangeable use of *toponymy* and *toponomy*. The latter is mentioned many times, starting from the preface and including a subchapter titled "Creative Toponomy: What Do Placenames Signify?" on page 195.

Fundamentally, the book shows the new possible ways of toponymic decolonization, and the variety of examples the author provides is impressively enriching. The proposed original *poetic toponymy* approach primarily considers place names as complex and relational semiotic signs. Besides, this book is elegantly written, making it an enjoyable read. The book will speak to a number of audiences, including academics and professionals in the fields related to place name studies, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and the general public.

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