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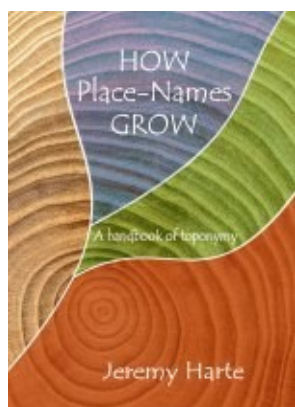
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(<https://www.hoap.co.uk/catalogue.htm#HPNG>)

This unusual and sometimes problematic little book sets out to be a guide for “anyone who wants to more fully understand place-name dictionaries”. The author is very properly at pains to emphasize the organic development of names in their contexts, and focuses on the processes involved and the terminology used to describe them. He is historically and onomastically knowledgeable, and he writes engagingly, in a stylistically friendly way – up to a point, as will be explained. He has a good eye for connections between ideas, and on more than one occasion this reviewer wished he had had Harte’s light touch when expressing analogies, as in the comparison of political leaders renaming their states with pub landlords changing their signs (p. 25), on the basis of shared clear lines of management. He is interesting on distinguishing ascriptive names from descriptive names (p. 37), and compound appellatives from “familiar compounds” (pp. 42–43). He deals insightfully with the complex issues involved in “name transfer” (pp. 19–25, 49).

The book is organized throughout into numbered paragraphs, carefully batched into analytic chapters, on the nature of names, name-history, levels of linguistic analysis (grammar and lexis), sociolinguistics, language change, and the often neglected and undertheorized notion of name motivation, before closing with the elastic concept of “connotation”. The earliest paragraphs are among the most problematic, especially those dealing with semantic concepts, where usage among specialists is far from standardized (witness e.g. *denotation* vs. *reference*). Some readers will know that the present reviewer has his own axe to grind about this, and it would be unfair to castigate the author for not solving discipline-wide problems. Nevertheless, there is a tension between the laudable intentions of the book and aspects of their realization.

The author reveals on p. vi that his book began as a dictionary of technical terms, but developed into its present and final form because he

concluded that the interdependence of so many such terms required them to be batch-processed. That shows; there are points where clarity has not been served. The last thirteen pages indicate the chief paragraphs relating to not far short of a thousand technical terms or themes. Harte has clearly drawn these from very wide reading, though the terminology is not laid at the door of individual scholars. Note for instance, on p. 90, that certain names “have been called reproduction names”, but how often and by whom or, more importantly, by what school of onomastics we are not told. Herein lies a problem for the book as a guide. Many of the terms are rare and some I had never come across at all (*aesthetonym*, *euphonymy*, and indeed *reproduction names*; “paratonymy (though some call this ideonymy)”). None of these has an entry in the ICOS Terminology Group’s online material, which may be regarded as setting the current norm, or at least as heading in that direction. On p. 62 we find “the redundant generic (or otiose, or repetitive)” – should we sense irony at play here?

Such a heaping-up of terms does not sit well with the avowed purpose of the book to be a “starting point”. In a sense it is good to make the novice aware of the pitfalls caused by the heterogeneity of technical expressions in use (and in so doing to make us as linguists and onomasticians ashamed of our discipline’s failure to standardize usage at an early stage of its development). But it might be suspected that some readers who would otherwise benefit from the book will be put off by word-cairns such as “category reassignment (also conversion, transonymisation or intra-onomastic transfer)” (p. 37); and others by the introduction of indexed, but unexplained, technical terms such as *semasiologically* (p. 23). It might have been better to avoid borrowed technical terms such as *noa* (p. 92) and *tatsama* (p. 58) altogether. A suitable overall policy might have been to fix on a single commonly used term where one can be identified (following ICOS usage where progress allows), and to relegate synonyms to a different place in the book – conveniently, perhaps, to the place where the common term is indexed. As for terminological holes, the author problematizes the absence of a term for “names which contain the residue of more than one language” (p. 61), but it is not clear to the reviewer that one is needed. On the other hand his neologism *block compound* (p. 44) for a compound in which one element is a pre-formed phrase could prove to be a useful one.

The material drawn on is geographically restricted. First, the book is based on place-names and name types in England, rather than generally. Whilst much of what is said will transfer without much effort to other toponymized landscapes, it necessarily omits types that do not figure (much) in England, such as the toponyms deriving etymologically from plain anthroponyms that typify North America (*Jackson*), or from ethnonyms (*Canberra*), or from place-descriptors in the form of subordinate clauses (*Toronto*). Second, it focuses exclusively on the London area, with the implication that London is typical of England (if not Britain). Given that this is not primarily an exercise in attributing names to their language of origin, that is acceptable; Harte is able

to draw on good historical and contemporary local knowledge of a wide range of toponym types, rural and urban.

How place-names grow is intended, then, as a book for beginners, offering a way to approach the question of how place-names come to take the forms they do, and weaning them off notions like “corruption” of older forms. The author is to be commended for attempting a systematization of a wide range of notions. The book succeeds in addressing many topics in an interesting way, often with sensible insights into the place of names in everyday life. But weighing against its aspiration is a terminological overload with the potential to blow a reader’s fuse. The reviewer does not agree with all the positions taken by the author or his definitions (especially in relation to grammatical terminology), nor with all his factual assertions, but acknowledges the need for the occasional simplification or corner-cutting in a book with the intentions embraced by this one. As noted above, there are points where such a policy could have been further applied. There are occasional proofreading and copyediting errors.