

Words, Names and History: Selected Writings of Cecily Clark. Edited by Peter Jackson. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995. xxvii + 448.

Reviewed by B. R. Hutcheson
University of Michigan

This volume is a selection of essays by the late Cecily Clark, the great onomastic scholar whose published writings span five decades. Clark's name will be familiar to most of those whose work focuses on medieval England—whether they are historians, philologists, numismatists, glossographers, or onomasts—and to many others as well, such is the breadth and quality of her work. The present volume contains a selection of Clark's essays, chosen by her friends and colleagues, and served up in six courses: "Studies in History, Literature and Language," "Essays in Onomastics" (subdivided into "Principles and Methodology," "Post-Conquest England: General Studies," and "Post-Conquest England: Case Studies"), "The *Liber Vitae* of Thorney Abbey," and "Diversions and Reviews." There is also an introduction by the editor, an essay in appreciation of Clark by Peter Clemoes (made more poignant by Clemoes's own recent death), a Clark bibliography and c.v., and useful indices of medieval personal names, modern personal names, place names, words and phrases (subdivided by language), and manuscripts.

I have only three negative comments about this book, and they are minor. First, several of the gatherings in the copy of the book I received for review were loose and kept flopping about. Second, insular *g* is represented throughout by the numeral 3, set on the line for upper case and subscripted for lower case, instead of by a proper yogh (ȝ); such typesetting would be more appropriate to the age of the typewriter than the age of the computer. Third, there are more typographical errors than one would like to see.

This last defect is usually merely annoying and does not produce any semantic difficulties, as when the word *Wincersterleode* is broken by hyphenation in the middle of a diphthong (*Wincersterle-ode*, 12) or *peodscypes* in the middle of a consonant (*peods-cypes*, 13). Occasionally, the result is nonsense, as *wæon* for *wæron* (12). (Lest this give the wrong impression, I should mention that pages 12-14 are by far the worst offenders, other typographical errors only occurring sporadically throughout the rest of the volume.) There is one other possible typographical error that bears mentioning, though it might also represent an interpretive error or

possibly merely a faithful reproduction of the manuscript. This appears in the quotation of an inscription in the Thorney Abbey *Liber Vitae*:

Ælfric & Wulfpine, Eadzife goldsmiðes, zeafen to broþrrædenne tþezen orn
þezhenes zoldes, þæt is on ilce boc herforuten zepired. (306)

Capitalization of *Eadzife*, if editorial, gives the impression that *Eadzife* is the name of one of the goldsmiths, which is unlikely since *Eadzife* should be a woman's name, or that they are *Eadzife's* goldsmiths, which would also be odd (the medieval name index contains, curiously, the entry *Eadzife goldsmiðes*). I think *eadzife* would be better interpreted either as a common noun ('prosperity-giver') or even as an adjective, giving loosely, "Ælfric and Wulfwine, generous goldsmiths, gave to the brotherhood [or: for their membership in the brotherhood] two öres' weight of gold, which is wired about on the outside of this very book."

The somewhat trivial nature of the last of these complaints and the utterly trivial nature of the first two should suggest that on the whole the book is sound; indeed, it is a model of good scholarship. There is, however, one *desideratum*: a more thorough treatment of statistics. Clark's admitted unfamiliarity with statistical analysis is a drawback, though not, perhaps, a serious one, considering the nature of the evidence she has to deal with. Nevertheless, one wonders why, in an essay like "Socio-Economic Status and Individual Identity: Essential Factors in the Analysis of Middle English Personal-Naming" (100-113), Clark did not either learn enough statistics to enable her to make sense out of her figures or hire a statistician to help her. The mere percentages that she gives are sometimes inadequate to the purpose of determining whether her figures are in fact significant. At one point, she characterizes the difference between a 4 percent rate of occurrence of patronyms and an 8 percent rate of occurrence as a "mere four percent difference" (107), and one wants to ask why she does not characterize it as a doubling of the rate of patronyms and whether the difference is, in any case, statistically significant. A more sophisticated statistical analysis is not, ultimately, really necessary; it simply would have made Clark's already impressive scholarship that much better.

Space does not permit a detailed treatment of the entire collection, or even of a good part of it, so I shall just briefly mention a few of the essays that seem, from my nononomastic perspective, to be particularly illuminating. The two essays on women's names, "Women in England after 1066: The Factual Evidence" (58-73) and "Women's Names in Post-Conquest England: Observations and Speculations" (117-43), both provide useful and detailed information on postconquest social history and, of course, onomastics. The first essay is in the best tradition of feminist scholarship—that which is firmly grounded in empiricism—and explores the roles and social standing of women in the postconquest years. In the second, Clark demonstrates that, although the records of women's names are relatively sparse,

they display a decidedly more English coloring than the men's names contained in the same records. Clark attributes this situation to two circumstances: the Norman incomers usually did not bring with them their wives (doubtless many of them were unmarried), and names given to female children were, perhaps as a result of the first circumstance, less innovative than those of male children.

Indeed, if there is a common theme to the essays in this book, it is that the influence of the French language in the years following the Norman conquest was not as pervasive as has often been imagined. Those linguists who have suspected this for years will be comforted by the copious empirical support for this view that Clark's essays provide. It is true that the picture of brutish Norman oppressors terrorizing their Anglo-Saxon subjects well into the thirteenth century was laid to rest long ago (except in such ludicrous Hollywood treatments as the recent *Robin Hood* with Kevin Costner, which featured, among other utter absurdities, Robin Hood and his Merry Men making arrowheads by pouring into molds molten steel, which they had reduced to liquid by the simple expedient of heating it over the campfire). Nevertheless, as Clark's essays demonstrate, there has been a strange persistence to the notion that Norman French survived as a common vernacular in England into the fourteenth century.

Three of the essays in the third section of the book—the second subsection under the general rubric of onomastics—address this point admirably. If the first section of the book is the appetizer and the second is the fish, the third must be the fowl; but if it is, it is certainly pheasant under glass (tender and not too gamey, a plump, corn-fed bird). “Towards a Reassessment of ‘Anglo-Norman Influence on English Place-Names’ ” (144-55), “Domesday Book—A Great Red Herring: Thoughts on Some Late-Eleventh-Century Orthographies” (156-67), and “The Myth of ‘the Anglo-Norman Scribe’ ” (168-76) all make similar points, though by different routes. Clark argues that apparently Anglo-Norman features of postconquest English names are often merely the result of English scribes Latinizing their texts or, when their Latin fails them, trying to appear learned by writing French. The first essay in this section, “Women's Names in Post-Conquest in England,” already discussed briefly above, provides the most extended treatment of a theme that Clark's essays return to repeatedly, which I present as a sorites argument: if there were few Norman women in postconquest England, then mothers and nursemaids of children born to the incomers must have been English; if their mothers and nursemaids were English, the cradle-tongue of the children must have been English; if the cradle-tongue of the children was English, then Anglo-Norman must have been at best a second language; if Anglo-Norman was a second language, it cannot have had the drastic influence on English orthography and pronunciation that it is often believed to have had.

Several other of Clark's essays deserve mention. “On Dating *The Battle of Maldon*: Certain Evidence Reviewed” (20-36) provides strong evidence in favor of

a relatively early date for the poem; “Clark’s First Three Laws of Applied Anthroponymics” (77-83) introduces a sound basis for approaching the study of personal names; “*Willelmus rex? vel alius Willelmus*” (280-98) attempts to determine whether English use of continental names was determined by local or remote influence; here Clark’s conclusions succinctly sum up another theme that seems to run through the book:

True, we cannot uncover the motivations behind eleventh- and twelfth-century English christenings; we cannot find out whether the English followers of imported name-fashions were moved by simple snobbery, by desire to curry favour, by the charm of novelty, or by genuine admiration for the name-bearers whom they copied. What we can observe . . . is . . . apparent absence of any nationalistic or xenophobic reaction against the cultural patterns associated with the new rulers and settlers. (291)

Lastly, the final section of the book, which must be the dessert, is, like the best of desserts, light and sweet. In it we find two short essays and four reviews, all six as entertaining as they are learned. My particular favorite is the review of Adrain Room’s *Dictionary of Trade Name Origins*, in which Clark admits to “taking an axe to crack monkey nuts, dismembering on the desk what was meant only to beguile on the pillow” (376); rather too much sauce, one might think, but who could possibly find distasteful an essay that speaks of “confectionery, ice-creams, and savoury nibbles” (376)?