 Anglia 2017; 135(3): 573–580

Fran Colman. *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England: The Linguistics and Culture of the Old English Onomasticon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, xii + 310 pp., £ 75.00.

Reviewed by **John Insley,** Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg
E-Mail: john.insley@as.uni-heidelberg.de

https://doi.org/10.1515/ang-2017-0053

Starting in the mid nineteen-seventies, Fran Colman has produced a considerable body of research, chiefly, but not entirely, on the linguistic features of the moneyers' names of the Anglo-Saxon period. The work reviewed here can be regarded as an attempt to fit the results of these anthroponymic studies into some sort of theoretical context. It has received important impulses from the work of John Anderson, which the author freely acknowledges. The book is opened by a fairly lengthy introduction (1–18). Dr Colman defines the (mental) onomasticon as "the repository for lexical information about names" (1). At the same time, she takes the view that there is "no such thing as The Old English Onomasticon" (*ibid*), since the onomasticon will vary from speaker to speaker and be subject to diachronic variation. On the other hand, the individual variation from speaker to speaker is subject to the constraints of a collective onomastic consensus among the body of the speakers. Her survey is based on the personal nomenclature of the period between the eighth and the eleventh century and her material is taken from the corpus of Anglo-Saxon moneyers' names supplemented by written records (see 9–10). The moneyers' names are unequivocally contemporary sources and form a primary record for the study of historical phonology and anthroponymic lexis. The introduction includes full discussion of gender and the name data (10–18), and she is rightly sceptical, despite the existence of moneyers named Gifu and Hild, about the possibility of female membership of the corps of Anglo-Saxon moneyers. As Colman suggests (13), *Gifu* may be a nickname derived from the substantive OE *ġi(e)fu* f. 'gift' which had replaced the original baptismal name. *Hild* is more straightforward. Despite it being known as the name of the famous Abbess Hild of Whitby (*ob*. 680), it may also be interpreted as a short form of such masculine names as OE *Hildefrið*, ON *Hildólfr*, ContGerm *Hildebert*.

Colman follows conventional notions on the structure of Germanic personal nomenclature in that she uses the categories of dithematic, monothematic and extended monothematic names. This is an acceptable morphological taxonymy, but, in the case of monothematic and extended monothematic names, it fails to deal with semantic ambiguities. For example, she links the monothematic names *Lēofa*, *Swēta*, *Brorda* and *Wulf* to OE *lēof* 'beloved', OE *swēte* 'sweet', OE *brord* m.

'point, lance, javelin' and OE *wulf* m. 'wolf', respectively (2). Of these, only *Brorda* is unequivocally a derivational item belonging to a specific lexical item. The other three can be equally explained as hypocoristic forms of dithematic formations; cf. such names as OE *Lēofwine*, *Swētrīċ* and *Wulfmǣr*. The interrelationship between onomasticon and lexicon is examined in some detail and due attention is given to morphological categories. All the same, more attention should have been given to the semantics of naming systems in Germanic and the link between the lexical units employed in the formation of dithematic personal names of the 'primary' type and the (Indo-European) poetic language (see below).

Part I of Colman's monograph (21–95) consists of three chapters under the general heading "On names". This is an investigation of the lexical and morphological properties of names in relation to those of the general lexicon. There is a good deal here that is open to question. For example, the statement that personal names "are more central to a language than place-names" (21) is open to dispute if one contrasts the dynamism and fluidity of anthroponymic systems with the more static nature of toponymic registers. Equally, the assertion that "Old English personal names fall into general early Germanic naming patterns" (21) is as banal as it is true, but begs the question of regional and diachronic variation. Again, the observation that name elements sometimes behave differently from their cognates in the general vocabulary (23) requires qualification. Colman notes that the name elements *Ælf-* and *Heaðu-* only appear in non-West Saxon forms "and never in the West-Saxon forms <ielf>, <haðu>" (23). In the case of OE *ælf* m. 'elf, sprite, fairy', the West Saxon genitive plural form *ylfa* is on record and the personal name **Ielfmund* forms the first element of the place-name Elmscott in Devon (Watts 2004: 214). Personal name forms in *Haðu-* are also attested in southern England (as well as in Northumbrian); cf. the examples of OE *H(e)aðuburh* (fem.) listed by Boehler (1930: 83).

Questions of "connectedness" and "unconnectedness" (following on from Sweet) and that of motivation are examined in some detail and there is an extensive discussion of the secondary literature. Colman repeats her dictum that the onomasticon is "the repository for lexical information about names" (25). She goes on to discuss the relationship between names and nouns. Here there is some fuzziness at the edges. The functions of names are discussed at some length, but the referential, non-semantic character of proper names should have been analyzed more critically. The connotative aspect of names is rightly subject to detailed investigation. Perhaps even more relevant is a consciousness of semantic motivation in earlier naming systems. The example of the Germanic dithematic personal names of 'primary' type and their motivation through the poetic language is a case in point, but, given the dynamic nature of onomastic systems, we always have to reckon with processes of semantic emptying. For example, the name *John* in

Modern English is semantically opaque, but this is not necessarily true of its Hebrew ancestor. As always, diachronic and synchronic oppositions must be kept separate. Later in the book (118–125), the author discusses the consciousness of etymology and meaning and the nature of popular etymology in the perception of names. As Colman makes clear (40–45), personal names can have societal or even cultic functions. Their role as social markers has been the subject of a good deal of academic research and anecdote. Here we should not limit our observations to Modern English, but should consider earlier periods. For example, in Viking Age Scandinavia, certain personal names, such as *Haraldr*, *Hǻkon* and *Rǫgnvaldr*, seem to have been of aristocratic or even royal status. We also have comital or seignorial names, such as *Baldwin* (Dutch *Boudewijn*) used by the counts of Flanders, or *Amalric* (French *Amauri*) and *Simon* used by the family of MONTFORT-L'AMAURY (Dép. Yvelines), the ancestors of Simon [V] de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, the leader of the baronial opposition to Henry III. There is also a political context to naming. Thus, when the Danish king of East Anglia, Guthrum (ON *Guðþormr*) took the Old English name *Æðelstān* at his baptism, it was a significant political act symbolizing his binding himself to the West Saxon dynasty of his godfather King Alfred. Although names are primarily linguistic artefacts, the socio-historical context plays a major role in their definition and development. It would have been useful if Colman had given this aspect more extensive coverage. As it is, her Part I is overloaded with theoretical discussion, though it admittedly provides a comprehensive examination of the literature.

Part II of the book (97–276), with the heading "Towards the Old English onomasticon", consists of a short introduction/synopsis followed by five chapters. The first chapter, "Old English personal name formation" (101–150), begins by examining dithematic personal names and provides an extensive discussion of the literature dealing with their morphological and semantic properties. The role of alliteration in the naming patterns of individual kindred groups is duly treated as is the principle of variation. Colman also goes into the question of the link between the selection of name elements and the vocabulary of Germanic heroic poetry. The fundamental text here is still that of Gottfried Schramm (1957). Colman (104, 109) cites Schramm's work, but does not go into detail. This is regrettable. Schramm distinguishes between 'primary' dithematic names, which are semantically meaningful and formed according to the same principles as the *kenningar* of heroic poetry, and 'secondary' formations, which are arbitrary compounds. An example of the first type is OE *H(e)aðuwulf* 'battle-wolf' (cf. Beowulfian *heaðorinc* m. 'warrior', *heaðosīoc* 'wounded', etc.), while the second type is represented by OE *Wulfstān* ('wolf' + 'stone'). There is also the question of gender. Colman questions the old idea that there is a general correlation between natural and grammatical gender in the second elements of dithematic personal names. As

she indicates (110–111), there are indeed clear exceptions, such as the element *-lāf*, which appears to be confined to masculine personal names in Old English, e.g., *Ordlāf*, *Wīġlāf*, which are inflected according to the Germanic *a*-declension, but whose base is a feminine noun, OE *lāf* 'remnant, relic, widow' (see Feilitzen 1937: 307). Here we are concerned with a process of grammatical and etymological dissociation. An apparent exception, cited by Colman (114), is **Oslaf** (*Oslaua*, *Oslaue*), wife of the Kentish *regulus* Eormenred (*c.* 640) (see Boehler 1930: 105). This may be explained as an isolated secondary feminine variant of the usual masculine element *-lāf*; cf. ON *-leif* fem. beside masc. *-leifr*. There is also the case of the nun *Eadulfu*, the grantee of a charter of 939 preserved in a thirteenth-century copy (S 448). In a fairly involved discussion (114–115), Colman takes the second element of the name to be a feminine counterpart of the common masculine element *-wulf*. It is probably better to regard it as scribal error for the feminine name *Ēadlufu* (see Boehler 1930: 60).

The next section of the chapter discusses monothematic names. These are divided into three groups: a) lall names; b) bynames; c) 'reductions' of dithematic names (125). The discussion of lall names and their relationship to the language of infants (126–131) is fairly comprehensive, but suffers from a certain lack of precision around the edges. Colman (129) is uncertain about the ability of lall-elements to form dithematic personal names. She cites **Dud-** and the extended forms *Duding*, *Dudecil* and *Dudman*. She takes the last of these names to be dithematic, but this is a misconception, since *-man* has the function of a hypocoristic suffix here. However, **Dud-** is used to form the dithematic names *Dud(e)mǣr*, which occurs in (to, of) *dudemæres hele* in a boundary clause belonging to a charter of 1015, and Dvdpine, the name of a moneyer of Æthelberht and Alfred of Wessex and of Burgred of Mercia (Insley 2003: 381). Here, **Dud-** is a semantically empty name word and no longer has the connotations of a lall word. Colman returns to this group several pages later (143) in connection with hypocorism of dithematic names and mentions *Dudwine* within this context.

The next section (131–134) has the heading "Bynames", and the author somewhat boldly states that "bynames are to be subsumed under nicknames" (133). Strictly, we can only speak of a byname when this is preceded by a personal name. Personal names of the type *Snell* [< OE *snell* 'bold'] or *Hafoc* [< OE *h(e)afoc* 'hawk'], that is, bynames deriving from substantival or adjectival bases which have acquired the status of personal names should be designated 'original bynames' (see Feilitzen 1937: 15–18). Colman (134) believes that lall names as well as bynames should be subsumed under the category 'nickname', a classification, which in her opinion, should also be extended to include hypocoristic forms. Her discussion of hypocorism (135–146) is conventional and offers few new insights. It owes much to the work of her predecessors, notably Redin (1919), Ström (1939)

and Barley (1974). There is too little consideration of social factors in naming patterns and an overemphasis on formal categories. For example, OE *Totta*, when it appears in the ninth-century Northumbrian *Liber Vitae* of Durham, is a perfectly acceptable hypocoristic form of such Northumbrian 'aristocratic' names as *Torhthelm* or *Torhtmund*, whereas the diminutive *Tottel* with an *-l*-suffix, which occurs in a mid-eleventh-century list of serfs from Wouldham in Kent contained in the early-twelfth-century *Textus Roffensis* (S 1481f.), may be a diminutive of a lall name or of a nickname; cf. ME *tot(te)* 'fool, simpleton', ModE *tot* 'tiny child'. Suffixes, particularly the *-k-* and *-l*-suffixes, are part of the repertoire of hypocorism, as is expressive consonantal gemination. Colman's discussion of the *-k-*, *-l-*, *-ede-* and *-ing*-suffixes is thorough and competent, but, again, adds little to the results of previous work. Some typological comparison with other Germanic dialects, in particular with Gothic, which represents a more archaic type of Germanic than Old English, would have been helpful. The discussion of forms showing consonantal gemination (143–146) is equally solid and unremarkable. She duly draws attention to the assimilated type, e.g., *Æffa* and *Beonna*, short forms of names in *Ælf-* and *Beorn-*, respectively (144), but some discussion of the 'blended' type, e.g., *Beoffa* < *Beorhtfrið*, *Ċĕolla* < *Ċēollāf*, would have been appropriate. The chapter is closed with a perceptive examination of the processes involved in the formation of nicknames (147–150).

The sixth chapter (151–189) has the heading "General lexical formation" and the application of the principles elucidated here is the concern of the seventh chapter, "Structures of Old English personal names" (190–219). In the initial section, "'Complex' versus 'compound' Old English names?" (190–196), the author seeks to apply the hypothesis that common-word compounds may reduce to either suffixed (complex) or simplex forms to dithematic personal names. The use of the group **Brun** – **Bruning** – **Brunman** to illustrate these principles is unfortunate, since, as is pointed out above, *-man(n)* is not a 'true' deuterotheme, but has the function of a hypocoristic suffix. As Colman is aware (194), common-word compounds have semantic content, whereas dithematic personal names do not, and, as a consequence, lack denotation. I would agree with her (194) that the elements of dithematic names should be considered as part of the onomastic system and not as part of the lexicon. As she observes (195), certain elements, such as *Ælf-* or *Bēag-*, only occur as protothemes, while others, such as *-lāf*, only occur as deuterothemes, and others, such as *Siġe-*/*-siġe* and *Wulf-*/*-wulf*, are found in both positions. The element *Helm-*/*-helm* belongs to this last category (cf. OE *Helmstān*, *Wulfhelm*), though Colman wrongly takes this element to occur only as a deuterotheme. According to Colman (196), the (mental) onomasticon does not contain complete names, but the elements required for their creation. The problem, as she recognizes in the second section of the chapter, "Dithematic

names and the Old English onomasticon" (196–198), is that the system is not as tidy as it would ideally be and that it is subject to diachronic variation, so that Domesday Book *Aileua* for OE *Æðelġifu* (fem.) is not readily recognizable as a compound of *Æðel-* and *-ġifu* (cf. 197–198). The third section of the chapter, "Reduction of dithematic names: to complex or simplex?" (198–208), examines reduced forms of the type AÐVLF, AÐELVLF, AÐELVF (beside the full form AÐELPVLF) [coinage of Edward the Elder] for OE *Æðelwulf* or PVLFINE [coinage of Edward the Confessor] for OE *Wulfwine* (200). Colman rightly rejects the notion that reduced forms like *-ulf* < *-wulf* or *-ere* < *-here* have assumed the properties of suffixation. She correctly maintains (208) that the deuterothemes of dithematic names cannot become suffixes. A name like *Ōsulf* < OE *Ōswulf* is therefore best described as an opaque compound resulting from phonological change. In the fourth section of the chapter, "Neutralization" (208–219), Colman interprets these processes in terms of the neutralization of the phonological realization of the distinctions between compound and complex structures.

The eighth chapter, "On the role of the paradigm as a marker of lexical-item formation" (220–269), contains a long discussion of the function of the "weak suffix" *-a* in Old English anthroponymy. Final *-a* in weak masculine names of the type *Dodda*, *Lēofa*, etc., is formally identical with the nominative singular ending of masculine nouns of the Germanic *n*-declension and with the masculine nominative singular ending of the weak adjective. Colman (221) takes final *-a* in personal names of the type *Dodda* to appear to be inflectional without notional content. In contrast to the *-k-*, *-l-* and *-ing*-suffixes, she does not assign derivational status to final *-a* in monothematic personal names (220–223), and, as a logical corollary, excludes it from entry into the (mental) onomasticon. However, final *-a* in monothematic personal names would seem to be more than a merely morphophonological feature and it would be better to interpret it as a derivational feature with the function of an anthroponymic marker.

In Indo-European, *n*-stems are generally associated with a quality of "definiteness", and Colman associates the concept "identification" with *n*-class nouns and names to which words of other classes were converted (224–225). She accepts that the *n*-suffix originally had a derivational function, but maintains that "the reflexes of an originally derivational /n/-containing suffix had become inflectional by the time of Germanic texts" (225). But what does Colman mean by "Germanic texts"? Does she mean the Gothic bible or the early runic inscriptions or does she mean the earliest witnesses in Old English and Old High German? She just does not say.

In dealing with weak monothematic names derived from adjectival bases, e.g., *Brāda* < OE *brād* 'broad, wide', Colman prefers to speak of "conversion" (228). This can also be applied to substantival derivatives, such as *Wiċġa* < OE *wiċġ* n. 'horse', but, at the same time, it begs the question of the function and

status of final *-a*. It should also not be forgotten that the deverbal *nomen agentis* type is well represented in Old English, examples being *Tella* [< OE *tellan* 'to tell, estimate'] and *Wada* [< OE *wadan* 'to go, proceed, move']. Such names are formally identical with substantives like OE *hunta* m. 'huntsman' [< OE *huntian* 'to hunt']. This type appears to hark back to an original function of the *n*-stems as deverbal agent nouns.

Olof von Feilitzen (1937: 16–18) assigned Old English monothematic names to two categories, namely, a) original bynames, and b) "other formations" [simple hypocoristic forms, lall names, *nomina agentis*, etc., formations with the *-l-*, *-k-*, *-ing-* and *-ede-*suffixes], and this forms the framework for Colman's discussion of Old English *n*-stem monothematic personal names (247–262). She maintains (252) that a masculine name which is formally identical with a weak noun base can only be a byname rather than a hypocoristic reduction of a dithematic name, because weak nouns are not known as the bases of the themes in masculine dithematic names. I would have had more confidence in her arguments here if she had backed them up with evidence from other Germanic dialects, in particular from those, like Gothic or the early runic language, which belong to a more archaic stage of Germanic. Her view (252) that weak names with adjectival bases may be bynames formed by conversion to an *n*-stem fails to take into account the possibility of ambiguity. For example, as Colman recognizes (135), we could indeed interpret OE *Dēora* as an onomastic reflex of the adjective *dēor* 'brave, fierce' (rather than the adjective *dēore*, *dīere* 'beloved, precious' favoured by her in 135), but equally well as a hypocoristic form of OE *Dēormōd*, *Dēorwulf*, or the like. In the case of *Lēofa*, Colman concedes (257) that this name may be a hypocoristic form of such names as *Lēofsiġe*. As she points out (266), some weak names of the *n*-stem have strong counterparts. So, in the corpus of moneyers' names, we find Diar beside Diora and Dvd(d) beside Dvd(d)a. The strong forms appear to represent a secondary shift from the original *n*-stem to the strong *a*-declension.

The ninth and last chapter, "An Old English onomasticon" (270–276) includes a specimen of Colman's concept of an Old English onomasticon (274). This is surprisingly conventional, being a tabular list of sample elements found in dithematic and monothematic names. Again, the final masculine *-a* and feminine *-e* of the nominative of weak monothematic names is not given derivational status and, as a consequence, we are presented with such meaningless lemmata as Abb (in OE *Abba* masc.) and Æbb (in OE *Æbbe* fem.) The book is rounded off by a somewhat idiosyncratic and selective bibliography (under the heading "References"; 277–292) and by indices of authors, personal names and subjects (293–310).

It may well be that there is a real need for a theoretical treatment of Old English anthroponymy, but Colman's effort fails to convince, in part because its

material basis is too slender. The moneyers' names are not enough and the range of name elements examined is too small. Also, some of her contentions, in particular those involving the non-derivational character of final *-a* (masc.) and *-e* (fem.) in weak names are open to question. A more thorough examination of the different types of suffix in extended monothematic names would have been appropriate. I do not wish to appear churlish, but the standard of proofreading could have been better. Mistakes like "Jönsö" for "Jönsjö" (39), "Eanric" for "Eanred" (135), "Beford" for "Bedford" (136), "Apellativen" for "Appellativen" (263) and "pThree" for "Three" (270) could have been avoided with a little more care.

Works Cited

Barley, N. F. 1974. "Perspectives on Anglo-Saxon Names". *Semiotica* 11: 1–31.

Boehler, Maria. 1930. *Die altenglischen Frauennamen*. Germanische Studien 98. Berlin: Ebering.

Feilitzen, Olof von. 1937. *The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book*. Nomina Germanica 3. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell.

Insley, John. 2003. "Pre-Conquest Personal Names". In: Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich and Heiko Steuer (eds.). *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde.* 2nd ed. Vol 23. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter. 367–396.

Redin, Mats. 1919. *Studies on Uncompounded Personal Names in Old English*. Uppsala universitets årsskrift 1919. Filosofi, språkvetenskap och historiska vetenskaper 2. Uppsala: Akademiska Bokhandeln.

S = Sawyer, Peter Hayes. 1968. *Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography.* Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks 8. London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society (The Electronic Sawyer: <www.esawyer.org.uk/searchfiles/index.html>).

Schramm, Gottfried. 1957. *Namenschatz und Dichtersprache. Studien zu den zweigliedrigen Personennamen der Germanen*. Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung Ergänzungshefte 15. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Ström, Hilmer. 1939. *Old English Personal Names in Bede's History. An Etymological-Phonological Investigation*. Lund Studies in English 8. Lund: Gleerup.

Watts, Victor. 2004. *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names. Based on the Collections of the English Place-Name Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.