

scores 10 per cent, the fourth most popular after Christian, Janet, and Marion; Calyvorri reaches 2 per cent, More, Calybrid, Calycrist reach 1 per cent, while Morgell and Calypatric are mentioned only once.

Surnames once fixed preserve the tradition in a fossilized form; it is the choice of forenames that indicates the direction in which public taste is moving, and even as early as the sixteenth century it seems in Man to be turning its back on its Gaelic inheritance.

#### CASTLETOWN, ISLE OF MAN

#### NOTE

- \* This is a revised version of the paper given on 23 March 1985, at the XVIIth Annual Conference of the Council for Name-Studies held at Christ's College, Cambridge.

#### THE OSSIANIC NAMES - A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF CELTIC PERSONAL NAMES IN SCANDINAVIA\*

##### I. Literary backgrounds

What has appropriately been termed the pre-Romantic period in English literature is characterized by a vigorous revival of imagination, a recognition of the claims of emotion, and a sense of mystery in life. Budding Romanticism with its spiritual alienation from the tedium of present-day reality would naturally turn to the national past for contentment and feel itself particularly in sympathy with the Middle Ages.

It is this imaginative return to the romance of Britain's past and the endeavour to bring back its wild picturesqueness, mystery and pathos into that age of rational lucidity and dry precision which delighted to term itself the 'Augustan Age' that has remained the essential feature of pre-Romantic evocation.

The passionate idealization of the Middle Ages had already tentatively materialized in the interest taken in Old Norse literature by poets like Hickes, Temple and Gray and in the renewed interest in old English balladry which was to culminate in Percy's 'Reliques'. A kindred leaning towards the past is visible in Thomas Chatterton's 'Rowley Poems' and in the neo-Gothic affectations of Horace Walpole.

With a keen sense of the need of the hour the Scottish schoolmaster James Macpherson threw into the midst of seething Romanticism certain Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland (1760), which he averred to be 'translated from the Gaelic or Erse language', but which were actually adapted or invented after earlier Irish or Scottish Gaelic literature (Thomson, 1951).

The success of this collection prompted him to roam the Highlands for further material which supplied him with Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem (1762) and Temora (1763), afterwards collected into one single volume under the title The Poems of Ossian (1765).

Macpherson's Ossianic sagas were drawn from a large treasure house of legendary lore centred around the exploits of the hero warrior Fionn and his comrades the Fianna Éireann. The legends were current mostly in oral form among the Irish and Scottish Gaelic-speaking populations, and Macpherson claimed his translation to have been based on the bardic poetry of Ossian, the son of Fingal.

The tales of love, chivalry, internecine conflict and heroic simplicity are set in the wild nebulous country of the north, on the wind-swept heaths among rocks, torrents and sinister mossy castles. Macpherson's Ossian is in matter and spirit wildly romantic when it passes in review the heroic imagery of the forgotten past. Steeped as it is in emotion, melancholy and love of the supernatural it could not but captivate readers in revolt from their own time and bored with the polished academic diction of drawing-room poetry.

The tremendous success of Macpherson's achievement can be succinctly ascribed to the one fact that it fell in with, in fact apotheosized, all the new currents that were already then closing in on Augustan literature from every side.

Though the consensus of authoritative opinion has decided that Macpherson's Ossian is essentially a literary forgery<sup>1</sup> and no genuine rendering of ancient Celtic originals (and he never made any serious attempts to vindicate himself against that charge), no single work in British literature has exercised so wide-reaching an influence abroad as have the

Ossianic tales of this skilful Scottish artificer. There is hardly any major work in the European Romantic movement which is not permeated by them.

\* \* \*

## II. The onomastic legacy of Ossian

The names of the Ossianic dramatis personae or Gaelic Olympus that are relevant for the present paper are Orla, Oscar, Fingal, Ossian and on the distaff side Selma, Malvina, Minona.

Ossianic names like Dora, Lona, Aldo, Tora, Rotha and Craca have been excluded as they coincide with already existing names or their hypocoristic forms, and thus do not point unambiguously to the Celtic bard. It has long been the entrenched view amongst our onomastic authorities that the relatively great popularity of the Ossianic names in Denmark can be traced back directly to the literary craze for Macpherson in the early nineteenth century. It will be the aim of the present paper, however, to demonstrate on the basis of onomastic material culled from a century of usage that this traditional explanation applies to only two of the names, namely Malvina and Minona. The rest seem to be foreign imports that owe little or nothing of their vogue to our literary preoccupation with Ossian.

The name corpus stems from the microfilmed records of eleven Copenhagen and Aarhus parishes between the terminus a quo 1790 (the date of our first translation of Ossian into Danish) and 1890 when the names seem to be regularly recurrent. The subsequent history of the two most frequent names, namely Oscar and Orla, has been traced down to 1930, but only in the Aarhus parishes, as the church records, in the absence of microfilm copies, had to be studied in situ.

### a) MASCULINE NAMES

OSCAR<sup>2</sup> owes its existence on the Continent to the Ossianic passion of the Emperor Napoleon I, who bestowed the name upon the first-born son of one of his marshals Jean Baptiste Bernadotte in 1799. Bernadotte became King of Sweden as Karl XIV Johan, and his son succeeded him on the throne as Oscar I in 1844.

My earliest recordings of the name appear in the material from 1821 onwards, but remain sporadic throughout the following decades. However, there is little to suggest any connection between the name Oscar and the Ossianic craze of the early nineteenth century. For this speak its late emergence in Danish baptismal records and its low incidence in middle and upper-class families where literary interest could be presumed. The first bearers of the name are predominantly working-class, and it is in typically working-class parishes (like Trinitatis, Copenhagen) that we meet the highest concentration of the name.

There is ample evidence, on the other hand, that points to Sweden where Oscar, supported by its royal background, had come to enjoy popularity much earlier in the century. There as early as 1812, in honour of the Crown Prince, it was entered in the calendar under December 1st, replacing St Eligius.

A very large proportion of the earliest scattered examples of the name in Denmark seem to be borne by immigrant Swedes, witness surnames like Ölund, Wallenström, Everlöf, Holmström, Abrahamsson, Ekman, etc. It is difficult to decide whether these early immigrants are ultimately a product of that stormy political and cultural rapprochement between the two nations which is usually referred to as Scandinavianism, or whether they should simply be

viewed as the precursors of the so-called Scanian or Swedish immigration, a veritable influx of cheap labour that swept over the country in the second half of the nineteenth century. But there is other evidence that points to Sweden. The decisive year in the history of Oscar in Denmark seems to be 1848 when the occurrence of the name more than doubled almost overnight in all parishes. The overwhelming majority of its bearers at that time seem to be Danes.

The onomastic stimulus for its sudden spread can have been no other than the decision of King Oscar I of Sweden to side with Denmark in her war against Schleswig-Holstein, a step that was greeted with wild enthusiasm all over the country. That Oscar had become an idol name (Kisbye 1984, p.58 'Royalty Names' and p.65) is further borne out by the fact that it underwent an appreciable decline when the war was over and the national fervour had abated.

The future existence of the name Oscar, however, was saved and even cemented by a wholesale immigration of Swedish workers chiefly between 1850 and 1914 (for further details, see Willerslev 1983 *passim*). When the immigration passed its peak between 1870 and 1880, more than one third of the total number of Oscars in the Trinitatis records (Copenhagen) appear to have been bestowed by Swedish immigrant families.

Throughout the rest of the century the name Oscar continued to be fairly popular in Denmark but a noticeable decline set in shortly after 1907 when the Swedish royal house shifted from Oscar to Gustaf. Its royal background gone, the name became restricted to only occasional usage. In four Aarhus parishes between 1920 and 1930 the name averages a timid 0.25% of the total corpus of boys' names.

Today the name Oscar (including its spelling variants) is borne by only 6637 persons, chiefly of the older generation, according to the 1973 CPR print-outs from the National Registration Office. But in its cradle-land Sweden there are still 68,091 occurrences of the name (Allén and Wählin 1979).

The name makes its appearance in Denmark too late for it to have yielded patronymics of the type \*Oskarsen. The five Oskarsons and the seven Oskarssons that figure in the 1973 CPR print-outs are manifestly Swedish immigrants.<sup>3</sup>

There is one occurrence of the name Oscarsdottir and one in the variant form Oskarsdottir, both of Icelandic extraction. In only seventeen cases (including the spelling variants) do we find the name Oscar as a (suspiciously home-grown) surname in its own right.<sup>4</sup>

ORLA is the only case where one of the petty heroes of Ossian has left traces in our personal nomenclature.

The name is first attested in 1810 when a member of the German congregation of St Petri had his son christened Peter Martin Orla Lehmann, inspired by the King of Lochlin in Ossian's fifth song of Fingal.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, however, the name is extremely rare and seems to have spread only to members of the German congregation (in other parishes in a couple of instances only to people of apparently German extraction).

The name owes its increasing popularity in the latter half of the nineteenth century to the tremendous popularity of its first bearer Orla Lehmann, the statesman and leader of the National Liberals.

That the name was slow in taking root and that its incidence remains on the low side of what one might have expected, however, is difficult to

account for. But it might have been formal obstacles that precluded its spontaneous inclusion in our name-inventory. It looks very much like a feminine name and remains even today our only masculine name with an -a suffix.

It is only after 1900 that the name Orla seems to be steadily gaining ground in the birth registers. Today it is still productive, being borne by 7556 persons according to the 1973 CPR-count. The 58 examples registered by Allén and Wåhlin (1979) and confined in distribution predominantly to south-western Sweden are to all intents and purposes a Danish deposit. The name is non-existent in Germany and in the Anglo-Saxon world (the existence of Orla in Ireland as a feminine name can hardly be ascribed to any literary influence!)<sup>5</sup> - so Denmark would seem to be the only country where the name of this curious Ossianic hero has survived to the present day. But its emergence was due to the inspiration of one German Ossian votary and its subsequent spread to the influence of one popular bearer, to the fact that it became an idol name.

**OSSIAN** (Gaelic *Oisín* 'baby deer') is of extremely rare occurrence in Denmark, being borne by only 49 persons (CPR 1973), but, curiously enough, there are 17 persons using Ossian as a surname.<sup>6</sup>

It is very difficult to trace the provenance of this name as my entire material yielded only three examples. But as these few names seem to be given by working-class families of Swedish descent and seem to occur in the period of the Swedish Immigration, they may with reasonable certainty be attributed to influence from that country. In Sweden, according to Allén and Wåhlin (1979), there are still 3625 bearers of the name Ossian.

**FINGAL** (known as Fionn in the genuine Ossianic cycle: *Fingal* seems to have been coined by Macpherson) has been included although my material yielded no examples of the name. A small deposit might have been expected for the name was fairly common in Sweden at the time of the immigration and there are still 1167 present-day occurrences of Fingal registered by Allén and Wåhlin (1979). The name does not appear in the Danish CPR print-outs, and is not even included in the list of approximately 6000 first names approved by the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs (1981).<sup>7</sup>

#### b) FEMININE NAMES

**SELMA** is the only part of our Ossianic legacy which is not an original personal name. It is the name of Fingal's castle in the Kingdom of Morven<sup>8</sup> where the Celtic bards repeated their songs before Fingal at an annual feast.

That posterity has erroneously taken it to be a feminine personal name is due to the translators (in Denmark, Alstrup 1790 and Blicher 1807), who more often than not left their readers confused as to what Selma actually was.<sup>9</sup>

The emergence of the name Selma in Denmark in 1845 seems to be attributable to the immigration from Sweden where the famous Selma poems of the Finno-Swedish poet Frans Mikael Franzén (1772-1847) had given the name a much earlier popularity.

Swedish immigrants were the first bestowers of the name in Denmark and the social status of its bearers was typically working-class with a dense concentration in Trinitatis (Copenhagen) where no less than 71% of the total number of Selmas were given at the font by Swedish families.

Today the name is borne by 1353 persons (CPR 1973), notably of the older generation. In Sweden the figure is 10,140 (Allén and Wåhlin 1979).

The increasing popularity of the name Selma in Denmark after 1900 seems due to the Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf (1858-1940), but my material clearly

shows that its introduction into this country has by some onomastic authorities been erroneously ascribed to her.<sup>10</sup>

**MALVINA** is the name of Oscar's betrothed. Many of the Ossianic poems are dedicated to Malvina. The name was probably invented by Macpherson.

Unlike the Ossianic names so far mentioned there is every indication that the name Malvina is of purely Danish growth. It appears as early as 1811 in my material, and is sufficiently frequent in upper and middle-class families in the first half of the nineteenth century to be ascribed to direct literary influence from the Celtic bard. Among the Swedish immigrants I have come across only two examples of the name.

The name Malvina (among the working classes soon with our national -ine suffix grafted on to it) is fairly widely used in the second half of the century. Its rapid spread downwards from the upper-class cultured circles is quite astonishing but seems primarily due to the fact that Malvina coalesced structurally with names that enjoyed great popularity at the time (e.g. Alvina (-e), Maline, Elvina (-e), etc.).<sup>11</sup>

Today (CPR 1973) the name Malvina is rare, being borne by only 177 persons (including a vast majority of the -ine variant). In Sweden (Allén and Wåhlin 1979) there are 1171 occurrences including 23 cases with the typically Danish -ine suffix.

**MINONA** is in Ossian the name of a princess appearing frequently in the songs of Selma. Again, it was probably coined by Macpherson.

Minona is of late growth, emerging in my material only about the middle of the nineteenth century, and it remains sporadic in the records. All the Copenhagen parishes under research yielded a total of only seven examples, none of which, however, were found among the Swedish immigrants.

Again much points to Minona being of purely native inspiration, and its early appearance in upper-class circles would suggest literary influence from Ossian.

However, like Orla, its strangeness of form has precluded any spontaneous incorporation in our national name inventory. Its later history shows it to have lingered on only in occasional usage. Today (CPR 1973) the name is borne by only 41 persons, in Sweden (Allén and Wåhlin 1979) by a timid 19, which might be imports from Denmark.

UNIVERSITY OF AARHUS

#### APPENDICES

I Sample from Ossian's Fifth Song of Fingal in William Sharp's edition (1896). The passage (pp.86-7) describes the defeat of Swaran, King of Lochlin, by Fingal, Ossian and Oscar. It also contains the death of Orla, a petty king of Lochlin - one of the marginal heroes of the book.

"Sons of distant Morven," said Fingal, "guard the king of Lochlin! he is strong as his thousand waves. His hand is taught to war. His race is of the times of old. Gaul, thou first of my heroes; Ossian, king of songs, attend. He is the friend of Agandecca; raise to joy his grief. But, Oscar, Fillan, and Ryno, ye children of the race! pursue Lochlin over Lena; that no vessel may hereafter bound on the dark-rolling waves of Inistore!"

They flew sudden across the heath. He slowly moved, like a cloud

of thunder, when the sultry plain of summer is silent and dark; his sword is before him as a sun-beam; terrible as the streaming meteor of night. He came toward a chief of Lochlin. He spoke to the son of the wave. "Who is that so dark and sad, at the rock of the roaring stream? He cannot bound over its course: How stately is the chief! his bossy shield is on his side; his spear like the tree of the desert! Youth of the dark-red hair, art thou of the foes of Fingal?"

"I am a son of Lochlin," he cries, "strong is my arm in war. My spouse is weeping at home. Orla shall never return!" "Or fights or yields the hero?" said Fingal of the noble deeds; "Foes do not conquer in my presence: my friends are renowned in the hall. Son of the wave, follow me, partake the feast of my shells: pursue the deer of my desert: be thou the friend of Fingal." "No," said the hero; "I assist the feeble. My strength is with the weak in arms. My sword has been always unmatched, O warrior! let the king of Morven yield!" "I never yielded, Orla! Fingal never yielded to man. Draw thy sword and choose thy foe. Many are my heroes!"

"Does then the king refuse the fight?" said Orla of the dark-brown shield. "Fingal is a match for Orla; and he alone of all his race! But, king of Morven, if I shall fall; as one time the warrior must die; raise my tomb in the midst: let it be the greatest on Lena. Send, over the dark-blue wave, the sword of Orla to the spouse of his love; that she may shew it to her son, with tears, to kindle his soul to war." "Son of the mournful tale," said Fingal, "why dost thou awaken my tears? One day the warriors must die, and the children see their useless arms in the hall. But, Orla! thy tomb shall rise. Thy white-bosomed spouse shall weep over thy sword."

They fought on the heath of Lena. Feeble was the arm of Orla. The sword of Fingal descended, and cleft his shield in twain. It fell and glittered on the ground, as the moon on the ruffled stream. "King of Morven," said the hero, "lift thy sword and pierce my breast. Wounded and faint from battle, my friends have left me here. The mournful tale shall come to my love on the banks of the streamy Lota; when she is alone in the wood; and the rustling blast in the leaves!"

"No!" said the king of Morven, "I will never wound thee, Orla. On the banks of Lota let her see thee, escaped from the hands of war. Let thy grey-haired father, who, perhaps, is blind with age; let him hear the sound of thy voice, and brighten within his hall. With joy let the hero rise, and search for his son with his hands!" "But never will he find him, Fingal," said the youth of the streamy Lota. "On Lena's heath I must die; foreign bards shall talk of me. My broad belt covers my wound of death. I give it to the wind!"

The dark blood poured from his side, he fell pale on the heath of Lena. Fingal bent over him as he dies, and called his younger chiefs. "Oscar and Fillan, my sons, raise high the memory of Orla. Here let the dark-haired hero rest, far from the spouse of his love.

II Sample illustrating the incidence of Orla, Oscar and Ossian in three Copenhagen parishes between 1800 and 1900. The bracketed figures indicate how many of the names occur only in non-initial position (type: Peter Oscar Hansen, Jens Henrik Orla Nielsen, etc). Full statistics of all Ossianic names are available in Kisbye (1983), p.83 ff.

## Frue Parish

	Orla	Oscar	Ossian	total
1830-39		2(1)		1499
1840-49		28(19)		1960
1850-59		65(38)	1(1)	3163
1860-69	3(1)	47(25)		3002
1870-79	7(3)	51(17)		2657
1880-89	5(1)	34(21)		2053

## Trinitatis Parish

	Orla	Oscar	Ossian	total
1830-39		1(0)		3442
1840-49	2(0)	77(55)		4640
1850-59		179(109)		6499
1860-69	1(0)	66(30)	1(0)	3194
1870-79	4(3)	71(30)		2771
1880-89	3(1)	66(31)		2336

## St Petri Parish (the German congregation)

	Orla	Oscar	Ossian	total
1810-19	1(1)			995
1820-29		3(2)		927
1830-39	1(0)	1(1)		740
1840-49	4(2)	22(17)		650
1850-59		19(17)		657
1860-69	1(0)	20(11)		772
1870-79	2(0)	15(9)		527
1880-89	2(2)	13(9)		346

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## NOTES

\* This is a revised version of the paper given on March 23rd 1985 at the XVIIth Annual Conference of the Council for Name Studies held at Christ's College, Cambridge.

1. The publication of Macpherson's Ossian engaged the leading men of letters in Scotland and in England at that time, but the rumour of forgery was soon to trigger off one of the most virulent literary controversies of the century. Dr Johnson, it will be remembered, took sides with vociferous acerbity when in his Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland (1775) he denounced Fingal as an imposture and Macpherson as 'an insolent and stubborn liar'.  
Gerstenberg, however, is the earliest reference I have noted expressing doubt about the genuineness of the poems (Achter Schleswigscher Literaturbrief, 1767).
2. Old Irish Oscar is of purely Gaelic derivation, despite a spurious Germanic one often cited.
3. In Denmark shifting (or primary) patronymics were forbidden by a law in 1828 compelling families to settle on a fixed inheritable surname. In Sweden where the shifting patronymics flourished right down to the end of the nineteenth century there were much better chances of Oscarsson becoming one of the current surnames.
4. The only place where the name Oscar is still productive seems to be Scandinavia. In the Anglo-Saxon world the name was almost killed off by the Oscar Wilde scandal (1895). In the USA it was popular in the late nineteenth century, probably because of the influx of Scandinavian immigrants. Dunkling (1977), p.129, ranks it among the top fifty of American names in 1875, but it is now rare. In England, Canada and Australia the name is moribund and is borne by less than one out of 10,000 persons (Dunkling 1977, p.230).

In Germany the name Oscar is registered by Drosdowski (1968), and seems to have been common in the last century (Oscar Straus, Oscar von Hindenburg, Oskar Kokoschka, etc.), but its popularity has been waning since. That Günter Grass chose the name Oskar Matzerath for his protagonist in 'Die Blechtrommel' (1957) does not reflect the onomastic realities of his day.

5. Orlaith was common as a feminine name in 12th-century Ireland, but that may be merely a variant of Gormlaith. Orla itself was probably Macpherson's own invention.
6. This peculiar name usage has probably occurred through the practice recently referred to as '-sen name dropping' (Kisbye 1984, p.82). A person christened Peter Ossian Hansen might, in search of a more distinctive surname, feel tempted to drop the -sen name and use the middle name in its stead. This usage is extremely common in a country where over 60% of the population bear a name ending in -sen.
7. Oscar Wilde was christened Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty. There is every reason to assume that his two Ossianic names should be viewed in a Swedish context. His father Sir William was for a time physician-in-ordinary to King Oscar I of Sweden.
8. That it is a place-name is also clear from passages like 'I behold thy towers, O Selma, the oaks of thy shaded walls' (p.387); 'the echoing walls of Selma' (p.215), etc.  
In his introduction to the poem 'Darthula' William Sharp (1896) has the following comment (p.341), 'Dar-thula, the daughter of Colla . . . resided at that time in Seláma, a castle in Ulster. This affirms my supposition relative to the site of Selma being where Grey Abbey now stands, on the shore between Belfast and Carrickfergus'.
9. To give their translation the proper flavour of ancient epic poetry they often rendered the appositive of-phrases in Macpherson's English by archaizing Danish definitive -s genitives ('the castle of Selma' becomes 'Selmas Borg' and not 'Borgen Selma'). They might have been tempted by Macpherson himself whose translation abounds in the same poetic device ('Lubar's vale' (p.252), 'on Lena's resounding plain' (p.89)) often interchanging with the more modern construction ('on Lena's heath' (p.87) but 'on the heath of Lena' (p.87)).  
Conducive to the misunderstanding may also be the fact that the name Selma often appears in situations where to the uninitiated it may instinctively be associated with a woman ('the sons of Selma fled' (p.80) = Selmas Sønner . . . ; 'raise the lovely song of Selma' (p.391) = Selmas liflige Sang; or in numerous apostrophes like 'ye children of Selma' (p.77). The false association is the more understandable if we bear in mind that in Scandinavia a name in -a almost invariably denotes a female bearer.
10. In Germany the name seems to have been introduced by Goethe (translation of the songs of Selma in 'Werther' (1773)) and particularly by Klopstock who in 'Selma und Selmar' (1766) also appears to have mistaken it for a feminine name. According to Drosdowski (1968) the name was 'noch um 1900 beliebt', but seems to be unproductive now. It is not registered by Bahlow (1967).

In the Anglo-Saxon world the name is seldom if ever met with. Dunkling (1977) does not mention it for England and the Commonwealth. The few American examples registered by Stewart (1979) may well have been transplanted by Scandinavian (alternatively German) immigrants. Its aftermath of typically American names in -elma (Delma, Velma, Thelma, etc.), however, suggests that it must have been quite popular a few generations ago.

11. The swift descent of literary names from the upper classes to the social strata below them has always puzzled me (Kisbye 1981, p.607; 1983, p.97; 1984, p.74). It is usually only a matter of decades before the names cease to be class-distinctive. Maids and servants, however, would seem to have been the catalytic agents in the process. Recently I accidentally came across a direct reference to the common practice among the domestic staffs of upper-class families of imitating the name-giving practices of their employers (Emanuel Sejr 1959, p.41). Their names become status-names (see Kisbye 1984, p.74 ff).

## SETTLEMENTS AND TOPOGRAPHY

A review of MARGARET GELLING, Place-Names in the Landscape, Dent: London and Melbourne, 1984, x + 326 pp., 8 maps, £15.

This book is about the meaning and significance of topographical settlement names, the type of village name which defines a settlement by reference to its place in the landscape. In seven chapters devoted to water-courses, waste, roads and tracks, valleys, hills, woodland, and ploughland and pasture, it analyses in alphabetical order the use of some 140 elements, British, Old English and Old Norse, found in settlement name formations, based primarily on the materials in Ekwall's Dictionary of English Place-names. Easily the longest entry is that for dūn, but there are substantial discussions of feld, halh, hamm, hop, lēah, trēow and other neglected items. Important new material occurs in the accounts of æcer, ānstīg, bæc, crūg, cumb, dūn, ēg, feld, fyrhō, grāf, hop, hyrst, lēah, ric, trēow, wasse and windelesōra. The 70 page index serves as a dictionary of over 5000 names in England and in Scotland south of the Forth-Clyde line; translations only are provided, no forms. It is, indeed, a little irritating to have to turn time and again from the text to the index to see, for instance, why 'superstition gives rise to . . . Purbrook', to find that it is in fact 'puckbrook', information that could have been included in the text; and while mentioning minor irritations, why have Ekwall's well established county abbreviations been abandoned, and why do their successors appear so distractingly in capitals?

It is widely held that words possess meaning primarily by virtue of their participation in a complex structure or system of signification. Structuralist awareness is evident in this book, that is to say, the notion that any field of meaning is mediated by a vocabulary the members of which in some sense mutually define each other: in principle fenn, mersc and mōr, or hyll, clif and dūn are not synonymous. Literary usage is not much help: the vocabulary of Old English poetry with its rich resources of synonym and parallel evolved to satisfy the demands of alliterative versification actually undermines the principle of semantic structure. It seems unlikely that the vocabulary of name giving was like that: names, after all, are functional, they define locations primarily for practical tenurial, agricultural, economic, commercial, migratory purposes rather than poetic pleasure. The main method, therefore, is to turn to the reality mediated through the linguistic code to see what correlations may be established. The task is fraught with difficulty: the broad physiography of the landscape remains constant, but forest has disappeared, rivers change course, villages move site or become urbanised, and land management is revolutionised. Nor does the language stand still, words vary in meaning both diachronically and synchronically, according to regional usage. To recreate imaginatively the landscape of the past, and furthermore to see it through past eyes, is what is required. Dr Gelling makes out a good case for a variety of new or refined interpretations. But, as she readily admits, this exercise is but a beginning. By no means all the material available in the county surveys is studied here in detail - how could it in one 300 page volume? Detailed local knowledge is of vital importance for refinement of the broad picture. Detailed and exhaustive studies of individual elements are urgently required. The importance of this book, apart from redressing the balance of attention given to habitative and topographical names, and the individual insights, is as a stimulant to future work. There are great and exciting tasks awaiting students in search of Ph.D. topics. But will our universities continue to be able to produce researchers qualified to undertake them?