The book concludes with an appendix titled "The Language of Names," which, broadly speaking, discusses proper nouns in literature and in various uses of individuals' names for common nouns. The author provides a brief introduction to the *Cratylus*, as well as to descriptivist theory and causal theory of reference, and she shows how a name poses an inherent untranslatability. This generally interesting appendix, which presents some complex issues clearly, is marred by an etymology error on page 137 that references Wikipedia (*nomen* and *calere* are the origin of "nomenclature," not "nomination"). This is an unfortunate slip and another indication that another round of editing may have done more justice to the author.

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The Naming of the Shrew: A Curious History of Latin Names, by JOHN WRIGHT. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. 304 Pp. $26.00 (HB). ISBN 9781408816981

Taxonomy, one of the lessons in the science curriculum long forgotten or deliberately abandoned by most humanities students after taking the unit quiz, is essential in scientific study (Kiser 2014). Scientists, especially biologists, spend their professional – even personal – lives studying and contributing to taxonomy, that is, the classification of the natural world. Few outside the science world would consider this venture valuable or interesting. Possibly the only other profession that might appreciate this dedication to classifying items is librarianship. And even that would be limited to those library cataloguers who consider the MA chine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) record and its endless subfield codes and delimiters valuable and interesting.

Natural historian John Wright's chance encounter with an unusual plant that sparked his childhood curiosity and undeniably incited his lifelong fascination and passion with the complexity of the natural world culminates in *The Naming of the Shrew*. Its titular parody of a Shakespeare comedy and its subtitle, *A Curious History of Latin Names*, do not readily reveal the subject unless the reader is aware that many consider the term "Latin name" synonymous with the term "scientific name." While the title and a cover adorned with miniature illustrations of various flora and fauna may not be tempting at first, the prologue – in which Wright provides readers with his personal history of interest in this subject and a glimpse into the complexity of the Latin names employed by scientists – is welcoming and enjoyable. The casual reader should be impressed with his enthusiasm and prompted to continue reading.

Although his self-proclaimed passion is mycology (for non-mycologists, the study of fungi), Wright's knowledge and appreciation encompass all flora and fauna. *The Naming of the Shrew* naturally complements his titles in the "River Cottage Handbook" series, *The Hedgerow Handbook*, *The Edible Seashore Handbook*, and *The Mushroom Handbook*, all showcasing his 50-year fascination with the natural world. Very noteworthy is that Wright, a member of the British Mycological Society and a fellow of the Linnean Society (Parr 2014), has cultivated personal and professional acquaintances spanning all scientific fields, and these colleagues are often mentioned and named as consultants for *The Naming of the Shrew*.

Ten chapters provide a succinct history and explanation of taxonomy for the non-scientist. In the first chapter, Wright explains Latin's trifold reason for use: history, stability,

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and the ability to accommodate the binomial structure (Heard 2016). Of interest to onomastic study are the next four chapters, in which Wright explains what the names are, the language of naming, the naming process, and the rules employed. Although those who have studied Latin may find this text more palatable, Wright nicely weaves explanations with abundant examples while unfolding the meticulous use of language structure by scientists. Wright's "eponymouse" hero, the *Sorex araneus* (common shrew) does appear throughout these chapters and the entire work, but not as often or as humorously as do his beloved fungi (17).

Within these four chapters, subdivided into manageable sections, the reader discovers the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of scientific nomenclature that Wright admires. He suggests such name categories as mythological, fictional, honorary, misnamed, plain silly, and rude, i.e. employing anatomical parts of humans. Many of these names, e.g. *Dracorex hogwartsia*, *Scaptia beyonceae*, and *Spongiforma squarepantsii*, do not require knowledge of Latin, only an appreciation of scientific humor.

Wright includes information throughout these chapters that enlightens the reader on a variety of topics. Other sources for names include self-naming and selling the right to name a new species. While these practices may call scientific ethics and integrity into question, Wright's admonition that names change and may not be as long-lasting as the self-namer or purchaser would like should surprise no one (39). He adds two observations worth noting. First, since there is no authoritative body that accepts a new species, its acceptance depends solely on a validly published, peer-reviewed taxonomic paper. Therefore, the paper itself becomes a nomenclatural act (96–97). Second, nearly every named genus and species will have a dried or bottled specimen stored in a university, botanical garden, or museum; hundreds of thousands of these items exist somewhere and are referred to as the type specimens. Rarely does a picture suffice; an actual specimen – the first ever identified – is the physical object to which the name is permanently attached (115).

At this point in the work – in chapters six, seven, and eight – Wright offers a history of taxonomy, starting, of course, in the Garden of Eden. He includes a brief historical and biographical overview of those individuals who have made significant contributions in the field of taxonomy, beginning with Aristotle. Carl Linnaeus, the father of taxonomy, rightly deserves his own chapter. While paying homage to Linnaeus's groundbreaking contributions to the field, Wright dutifully acknowledges his shortcomings – mainly those based on the scientific knowledge of the time, often originating from long-standing, predominant religious beliefs. The last chapter in this trio includes brief biographies of scientists who, after Linnaeus, made significant advances in the field.

The final two chapters present concerns and challenges for contemporary scientists. Also highlighted are modern technological advances that have contributed to the study and understanding of the natural order, knowledge that is not available to the naked eye or through the lens of a microscope, such as DNA analysis. In the epilogue, Wright summarizes his argument regarding the use of Latin names, in a system created in the eighteenth century, by reasoning: "They are simply too useful to discard, and no sensible replacement is even imaginable, let alone practical" (265). His sentiment should resonate with readers of *Names*: "To me, and to everyone whose curiosity knows no sensible bounds, names are not mere appellations, but things in themselves. Each has its own history and revealing etymology" (267).

Illustrations are limited to line drawings of representative flora and fauna preceding each chapter, and charts reminiscent of a biology classroom: the hierarchy of taxa; the *scala naturae*; a modern view of the "tree of life"; a simplified cladogram indicating interrelationships of species; and a phylogram indicating relationships among taxa. A modest glossary, notes to the text, a bibliography, acknowledgements, and an index complete the work.

Favorable comments and reviews from a variety of sources and individuals are available. In his *Scientist Sees Squirrel* blog review, Stephen Heard states: "*The Naming of the Shrew* is best dipped into, rather than read cover-to-cover. But it's a quick read and full of amusing tidbits" (Heard 2016). Another online site, *Caught by the River*, includes a review by Kev Parr, who writes: "It would be a subject easy to get bogged down within, but John nudges us along with a wry grin and weaves a structure through a thousand facts that could easily be lost in a run-of the mill reference book" (Parr 2014).

Finally, Barbara Kiser – books and arts editor of *Nature* – notes that Wright's "cabinet brims with verbal curiosities" (Kiser 2014).

Paralleling his forays into sylvan arenas and along shorelines, in explaining the mysterious world of flora and fauna, Wright's *The Naming of the Shrew* leads the reader along the road of taxonomy, uncovering its purpose, its value, its history, and its carefully guarded secrets, known only to taxonomists. This popular read just might be a catalyst to some for better appreciating nature's beauty and bounty, as well as acknowledging those individuals who have dedicated their lives to discovering and studying the natural order of things.

The power of Wright's tome lies not only in the information it contains but also in its ability to make taxonomy interesting to readers who eagerly forgot all those species and genera many years ago. Wright successfully enlightens and convinces the reader that this vibrant discipline deserves a better image than that of aged and desiccated specimens collecting dust on the laboratory shelves of aged and desiccated naturalists (xvi). As a Classicist and librarian, this reviewer may never be able to identify the pink flowers or oblong mushrooms discovered during an afternoon walk in a metropark; however, she will smile knowing that they have official scientific names based on sound classification rules, and she will be more appreciative that each of them has a Latin name.

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