

## Kemp Malone, Onomatologist

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KEMP MALONE WAS A FOUNDATION member of the American Name Society. His "Royal Names in Old English Poetry" appeared in *Names*, 1 (September, 1953), 153-62; his "Epithet and Eponym" in *Names*, 2 (June, 1954), 109-12; and his "Meaningful Fictive Names in English Literature" in *Names*, 5 (March, 1957), 1-13. It should be of interest to members of the American Name Society that he thought well enough of the first two of these to republish them in his highly selective *Studies in Heroic Legend and in Current Speech*, ed. Stefán Einarsson and Norman E. Eliason (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1959). The third is his presidential address to the Society. He also wrote two reviews for this journal.

What was to become an enduring interest in names began to manifest itself early in Kemp Malone's distinguished career. The work which first brought him to the attention of the scholarly world, *The Literary History of Hamlet* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1923), deals prominently with names. His expert knowledge of Germanic and Celtic phonology enabled him to identify many of the figures of Germanic and Celtic prehistory with figures of later legend. It is not surprising that many of these identifications are not immediately apparent to the untrained eye, for example, that of Amlópi (Saxo's Amleth, Shakespeare's Hamlet) with the Onela of *Beowulf*. It should be mentioned for the benefit of conventionally trained Shakespearean scholars, who might be misled by its title and for the most part mystified by its subject matter, that this brilliant book does not get within four centuries of Shakespeare's play, but deals only with the legendary, historical, and literary materials up to Saxo.

Until at least 1907, when he graduated from Emory College (as it then was) at the age of 18, Kemp Malone sometimes signed himself R. K. Malone. His full name, Raiford Kemp Malone, appears twice (once opposite his formal graduation portrait) in a yearbook published by the Pan-Hellenic Council of Emory; elsewhere, notably beneath a very Tennysonian poem which he contributed to the volume, only the initials occur before the surname, except in a list of members of a literary society, where a third style appears - R. Kemp Malone.

*Raiford*, which was the maiden name of Kemp Malone's grandmother, is a local surname of English origin, probably meaning "the ford in the stream." It is likely that very early in his bookish life Kemp Malone

became aware of the more interesting etymology of what was at his christening his second given name – his mother’s maiden name, conferred upon him as the eldest son. It is not too fanciful, I think, to speculate that from that time on he strove – successfully, as we all know – to live up to its heroic significance, at least symbolically.

The word *kemp*, still current in British dialects, comes to us directly from Old English *cempa* “a brave and powerful warrior.” It has cognates in the other West Germanic languages and in the North Germanic languages. It ultimately goes back to Latin *campiō*, a derivative of *campus* “field, battlefield,” and is one of the considerable number of Latin loan-words which were in prehistoric times the common property of the Germanic peoples. *Champion*, from the same Latin source, was borrowed from Old French in Middle English times.

Obviously Kemp Malone liked the name which his family called him from the beginning and which, with the sloughing off of *Raiford*, became to all intents and purposes his first name. Furthermore, the combination with his Irish surname seems a particularly happy and attractive one – or is it merely an impression of those who knew and admired him that it seems so aptly to fit its bearer? He uses *kemp* again and again in his superb translations of Old English poetry, not only for *cempa* itself, but also for *eorl*, *hæle*, and *hilderinc*. In his *Ten Old English Poems* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1949) there are eight occurrences of the word, only one of them rendering Old English *cempa*.

Though not in the least bellicose, Kemp Malone was indeed a man of courage and valor, and a champion of all things of the mind and the spirit. It is altogether appropriate to say of him, in that form of our language that he loved so much, that “he wæs æðele cempa.”

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