

21. Cf. above n. 3.

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ONOMASTIC NOTES AND QUERIES

THE MIDDLE ENGLISH NICKNAME KEPEHARM

While presuming, in a review published in *NOMINA* III, 113-14, to set right the author of a book, I myself perpetuated an untenable interpretation of the by-name Kepeharm (cf. also *Journal of Medieval History* II, 20), alleging in its support inappropriate references to MED.

The better dictionary to have taken as base would have been *Bosworth-Toller*, which cites, s.v. cēpan, several *Ælfrician* and other instances of an OE idiom hearmes cēpan 'to intend injury (to someone)'. Similar meanings of this verb continued into ME, but with such shifts of construction as were necessitated by the disuse of synthetic genitives as verbal objects (cf. T. Mustanoja, *A Middle English Syntax*, I (Helsinki, 1960), 87-8): therefore, kepe harm, instead of older h(e)armes. Being datable approximately to the early twelfth century, this syntactic change marks the bynames found in twelfth-century records as recent formations.

This revised interpretation squares well with the *Canterbury interchange*, for the same name-bearer, between the simplex H(e)arm and the phrasal Kipeharm, that is, 'injury' as short for 'intend injury' (the i-spelling for OE ē found in the *Black Book of St. Augustine's* is paralleled elsewhere in *Kentish* usage).

I apologize to the author I so arrogantly presumed to correct, and to any readers whom I may have vexed or misled.

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THE INTERPRETATION OF MIDDLE ENGLISH NICKNAMES

A review of JAN JÖNSJÖ, *Studies on Middle English Nicknames, I Compounds*, *Lund Studies in English* 55, CWK Gleerup: Lund, 1979, 227 pp., no price stated.

Students of Middle English have long been indebted to research by scholars associated with the English Department of the University of Lund, particularly through the publication of doctoral dissertations and other projects as volumes in the series *Lund Studies in English* (founded by Eilert Ekwall). In the most recent volume, which maintains the series' very high standard of printing and production, Dr Jan Jönsjö examines a collection of over 1000 compounded nicknames found in the six northern counties and Lincolnshire between 1100 and 1400. The names are presented in dictionary form, following the format and methods established by Fransson, Löfvenberg, Thuresson, and Seltén in earlier volumes. Entries consist of: a headform; citations, organised by county, and accompanied by date and source of document; and explanations, etymological, denotative, and connotative. The material is drawn from a mixture of printed and manuscript sources. Besides the Dictionary we are provided with a List of Elements, a Bibliography, and an Introduction of thirty-five pages in which are discussed the formal and semantic categorisation of the names, the non-native elements, and the use and inheritance of the nicknames as bynames.

It should be evident from this brief description that Jönsjö, in line with his eminent predecessors at Lund, has performed an important service in gathering together in one publication such a large and valuable body of material. This is not the first study of Middle English bynames from nicknames, but it is the first to take comprehensive monograph form, as Jönsjö acknowledges (Introduction, p.14). It is therefore the most substantial, and in prospect the most ambitious, undertaking on this topic, particularly in its attempt to make general statements about the formal and semantic patterns of this extraordinarily difficult class of names. Furthermore, the monograph is meant to be not only a basic work of reference but also, one presumes, a model for research into the medieval nicknames of other regions of England. For these reasons it is worth looking beyond the obvious, immediate usefulness of this study and subjecting it to a more taxing analysis, in order to test how far the methods and approaches adopted here constitute a standard for others to follow.

We may begin with the formal aspects. At first glance, the size of this collection of nicknames seems sufficient to give substance to the statistical comparison of morphological types set out in the Introduction, pp. 30-35. Almost half the compounds are composed of adjective + noun; more than a third are evenly distributed among the types verb + noun and noun + noun; the remaining twenty-five categories provide less than a fifth of the total number of names. However, Jönsjö has deliberately incorporated in his figures many names that do not indubitably qualify as compound nicknames or whose morphological interpretation is questionable (see the Introduction, p.29). These include a quantity of names like Cristenmes, Monenday, Pacok, Lemman, Styrop, and Lord, which, as 'obscured' lexical compounds, are not, properly speaking, onomastic compounds, and also names which could, and in most instances probably did, derive from the patronymic or metronymic use of lexically transparent Christian names: Colbain, Derman,

Dunman, Gladman, Godelif, Langlif, Richeman, Romfare, Widfare, and some forty more, all of them attested OE or ON personal names. In citing Godmanno (parvo), (Rob. fil.) Deremanni, Richeman (Colier), and Richemann (Calle) in his nickname material, Jönsjö seems wilfully to ignore their unambiguous role as Christian names. Similar arbitrariness is evident in his handling of a group of bynames ending in -son, -daughter, and -wife. Some of these may be OE personal names (e.g. Brünsunu). All of them could have arisen (in the northern counties especially) as bynames composed of an uninflected Christian name or surname with a kinship suffix: Brounson 'son of Broun', Brunwif 'wife of Brun', Doucedouther and Douceson 'daughter/son of Douce' (the ME equivalent of Lat. Dulcia), Whytson 'son of White' (a man's surname or a woman's Christian name; cf. Blanche), and Youngson 'son of Young'. For similar instances see P. H. Reaney, The Origin of English Surnames (London, 1967, abbreviated here as OES), p. 313 ('Yorkshire Surnames in 1379'), and George Redmonds, Surnames of the West Riding of Yorkshire (Chichester, 1973), pp. 30-31. Yet Jönsjö resolutely glosses such names as 'brown son', 'brown wife', 'sweet daughter', and so on, with only an occasional and often inexplicit concession to alternative interpretations, usually by reference to Reaney's Dictionary of British Surnames (London, 1976, abbreviated here as DBS). Other bynames for which a possible Christian name origin is not considered are Percival (which in one instance occurs as a sole, independent name; cf. PN Ch V, l.ii, 419, but Reaney also ignores this potential source of Percival in OES, p. 285), Palman ('servant of Paul', if we may assume Pal- as an unrounded variant of Pol-), Haghene (ON Hagni, CG Hagen, which on formal grounds alone would be more plausible than a nickname 'hack hen'), and Langhus (ME Langus, probably a hypocoristic of a dithematic name in Lang-, for examples of which see Gillian Fellows Jensen, Scandinavian Personal Names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire (Copenhagen, 1968), p. 184, and compare Hinghus for Ingus, ibid. p. 354). In its single-minded search for nicknames, this study shows an overriding, and at times reductive, bias towards the analysis of names as words with lexical meaning.

The most difficult names to explain confidently are those that employ ambiguous vocabulary, or whose onomastic application entails metonymy, metaphor, or irony. Quite rightly, Jönsjö acknowledges 'that for many nicknames we cannot pretend to offer definite answers and that the interpretations must be tentative' (Introduction, p. 17). But even tentative suggestions must be clearly reasoned and allow for a full range of interpretations derived from consistently applied principles. In these respects the explanations often do not satisfy. Piksmall is translated as 'pick little' and is interpreted as a name for 'a slow or lazy reaper'. Likewise, Pykhauer, 'pick oats', is said to signify 'reaper, gleaner'. The idea that ME pikken could mean 'reap' is derived from Bo Seltén's interpretation of Pickesmal, Pickebarli, Pikkeble, and Pykorn ('pick corn') in Early East-Anglian Nicknames: 'Shakespeare' Names (Lund, 1969), pp. 11-12. There is no evidence, as far as I know, for attributing this sense to ME pikken (though we must await the relevant fascicle of MED), and the imagination needs little stretching to find acceptable meanings for all four names by reference to one or more of the various ME senses that are attested in OED, s. v. pick v. 1: 'pierce, dig, hoe; probe; clear, cleanse; detach (with the fingers), pluck (this is quite distinct from the actions involved in reaping); peck (at), eat in small bits (concerning persons, this sense is not recorded in OED before the 16thc.); choose carefully; rob, steal; separate by picking'.

Swetalday and Sweteblood are taken to mean 'sweet all day' and 'sweet blood',

assuming them to be formed of adjective + adverb and adjective + noun, respectively. The possibility that the first element might be the baseform of the verb sweten 'sweat' is not entertained, in spite of the idiomatic nature of the resulting collocations. Wetherhog is glossed simply as 'a young male sheep', excluding the common northern dialectal sense 'a young castrated ram', with its even more uncomplimentary implications as a nickname. Hogg was widely used to denote a young sheep, as well as a young pig. Jönsjö correctly defines Skerhogg as 'shear-hog, a lamb after the first shearing until the second', but then forgets this sense of hogg when interpreting Cothog exclusively as 'cut pig', Fathogge as 'fat pig', Pallehog as 'knock pig' (like Cothog assumed to be a nickname for a butcher), Podihog as 'stout pig', Wythehogges as 'with the swine' (and thus a name for a swineherd), and Geldehogg as 'castrate pig' (i.e. verb+noun, which further ignores the fact that gelde may be the adjective, 'barren, sterile, castrated', as it may also be in Geldegrise and Geldsowe, with quite different onomastic implications). It is unsatisfactory that in the List of Elements hogg is glossed as 'pig' only; this, in spite of the inclusion of Skerhogg and Wetherhog among the names listed with the element. The same narrowness of interpretation is found in DBS, s. n. Hogg, and in OES, p. 263, and this is not the only instance where one suspects that Jönsjö may be taking for granted an arbitrary or incomplete explanation found in the work of Reaney and others. Of course, in attempting to explain names such as these, polysemy, homonymy, and homography are ever-present challenges to one's knowledge of Middle English, one's intelligence, and one's working methods, and I am not suggesting that one can be expected to think of every possibility in every case, or to adjudicate authoritatively between them on every occasion.

With regard to names employing metonymy or metaphor (or both), uncertainty of meaning is onomastic rather than lexical. Here, too, Jönsjö not infrequently fastens onto one interpretation to the exclusion of others no less probable. From the foregoing examples one can guess how he may have come to suggest that Smalhaur 'small oats' might have been used of 'a (lazy) reaper', but this is hardly the only, or the most likely, hypothesis that ought to have come to mind. Doggelegg is assigned to 'one who runs like a dog, a fast runner', a somewhat different inference from that which would arise if, as seems to me more plausible, the nickname were used of someone with a leg shaped like a dog's, a crooked leg. Feldefare (from the name of a migrant bird that winters in England) is considered to be a metaphor for 'a person who is cold and without warmth of feeling' (an interpretation presumably derived from the reference to the 'frosty' fieldfare in Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls, cited in OES, p. 271); but everyone familiar with Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde will remember Pandarus's 'Farewel feldefare' (III, 861), a ME expression that acknowledges the inevitable departure of all birds of passage. Further examples of the catchphrase may be found sub F130 in B. J. Whiting's Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases . . . Before 1500 (Camb. Mass. and London, 1968), an essential reference work for the student of ME metaphorical nicknames, but which Jönsjö has not consulted. On this evidence, Feldefare would make a most suitable nickname for someone who travelled away from home during the warmer months of the year. The potential moral implications of allusive names are handled at times with a similar limitation of knowledge and viewpoint. To Jönsjö, Hareye (denoting 'one who has hare's eyes') suggests the hare's well-known timidity (Introduction, p. 17, and cf. OES, P. 261), but for Chaucer, anatomising the Pardoner of the Canterbury Tales, it was apparently associated with sexual abnormality: 'Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.' In medieval times the hare was renowned for its lasciviousness and was popularly believed to be bi-sexual, male one month, female the next. A useful discussion of medieval notions about the hare (and other animals) can be found in Beryl Rowland's Blind Beasts : Chaucer's

Animal World (Kent State University Press, 1971), another book which should not have been missing from Jönsjö's Bibliography. It is regrettable that the author of a study of Middle English nicknames should appear not to be fully familiar with the poetry of Chaucer and (to judge by many gaps in the Bibliography) with the standard scholarly works on medieval beliefs, sayings, and attitudes.

Whether or not the nickname Hareye connoted particular moral qualities, one would have expected an explanation of it to spell out the obvious physical allusion to 'glarynge' or bulging eyes. This is one of several instances where, for no apparent reason, a metaphorical name is glossed by reference to the 'vehicle' but not to the 'tenor' of the metaphor. One reason for the inconsistency of practice is perhaps the attitude, traditional to lexicographically minded students of Middle English bynames, that the identification of the etymon is a sufficient minimum. Certainly, the techniques of name explanation are more fully developed with respect to lexical than to onomastic meaning. To do justice to the latter we need a new and better methodology that involves both an awareness of the contextual criteria that will direct and limit choices of onomastic meaning (such as whether an occupational term is being used as a literal descriptor or as a metaphorical nickname), and also a repertoire of semantic analogues that will stimulate and control the appropriate range of possible interpretations. The next topics to be considered, obscenity and irony, illustrate further the necessity for a considered framework of semantic options.

With OES (pp. 289-95) at his elbow, Jönsjö alerts us to possible sexual implications in a number of anatomical nicknames. Not that one can avoid the explicit naming of parts in Clevecunt, Cruskunt, Fillecunt, Twyhecunt, Strekelevedy, Strektail, Scrattayl, Shaketaille, Brountail, Coltepyntel, Wytepintell, Tupballok, Blakballok, and Gildynballokes, though the bare translations we are offered do not suggest what the onomastic significance of the colour words might be. More difficult to identify are obscene names that employ slang sub-senses (often by metaphorical extension) of otherwise innocent-looking words. One group, notably including Shakespeare, is alluded to by Reaney (OES, p. 292), who points out that ME burdoun 'staff, lance' was also used to mean 'phallus'. Accordingly and rightly, Jönsjö allows a possibly obscene meaning for Shakeshaft, Shakestaf, Waggespere, Waggestaffe, and Waghepol (but with startling inconsistency, for neither Schakesper nor Shakejauell). Neither Reaney nor Jönsjö indicate that it is the verbs as well as the nouns which have sexual significance, though it is implied in Shaketaille and Shakelaedy. Unfortunately MED is no help; the relevant parts have not been published yet, and in any case such senses may not occur in the documentary records from which the Dictionary's word-senses are drawn. Later slang may give some clues, however, and the obvious place to look is Eric Partridge's Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English (London, 1961, shortened and revised as The Penguin Dictionary of Historical Slang, Harmondsworth, 1972). There, under shake n. and v. 1, shakebag, and wag-tail, is unambiguous evidence, admittedly mostly nineteenth-century, for sexual senses of shake and wag. In post-medieval slang, brown, too had associations with genitalia, the fundament, and with fornication, so similar notions might sometimes lie behind ME names like Brunwif and Brountail. Compare Partridge's entries under brown, brown Bess, brown madam, and Miss Brown (op. cit.).

It is a pity that, in relying so heavily on Reaney's incomplete treatment of

obscenity in nicknames, Jönsjö fails to explore the genesis and implications of the whole type more fully. The Introduction provides no list of the relevant names, nor any discussion of them as a group, and when, in the dictionary section an indecorous sense of Haripok is expressed only by an oblique reference to 'an alternative interpretation' in OES, p. 295, one begins to wonder if there has been a degree of unwillingness to give this type of name its due measure of attention. Certainly, potential obscenities are simply ignored in names like Serueledy, Folhorn, Smalhorne, Pluckrose, Spurenrose, and Touchepryk (which Jönsjö supposes to be a name for an archer who hits the prick or bull's eye). If for this purpose Jönsjö's personal knowledge of English slang, ancient and modern, was too limited, there was even less excuse for not turning to Partridge (op. cit.) and consulting the entries under horn, pluck a rose, rose, touch up (ME touchen often means 'stroke, rub, caress'), and prick. Significantly, not one of Partridge's works on English slang, not even those used by Reaney (Shakespeare's Bawdy and Slang Today and Yesterday), nor any of the older works by Farmer and Henley, Grose, and others, appear in Jönsjö's Bibliography. These sources, though dealing with later periods of English, are an invaluable repository of usage from which parallels may be cautiously sought for all kinds of low speech in Middle English.

As a further illustration of the deficiencies in Jönsjö's approach to glossing, I take the ME nickname Goldfynch. I have to begin by examining Reaney's treatment of the name, in order to demonstrate, not for the first time, the dangers of regarding his work as uniformly reliable and authoritative. Besides providing in DBS the obvious lexical sense, 'goldfinch', Reaney alludes to ME examples of the surname in OES, p. 272, where he (inaccurately) cites a line from Chaucer's Cook's Tale (correctly, 'Gaillard he was as goldfynch in the shawe'). Unfortunately Reaney's sentence, of which the quotation forms part of the subject, vanishes from sight without predication or punctuation, and no onomastic interpretation is actually offered. However, the Chaucerian expression would support Cecily Clark's reasonable suggestion that the nickname might have been used of 'a flashy dresser' (proposed - without reference to Chaucer or Reaney - in her forthcoming review of Jönsjö's monograph in English Studies, and which I thank her for allowing me to mention in advance of publication). Other ME sayings, recorded in Whiting's Proverbs, confirm the likely sense of the nickname as 'a gay, lively person': 'as glad as any goldfinch' (Whiting, G 320) and 'To leap like a goldfinch on the hedge' (idem, G 321). Reaney begins the next sentence: 'Goldfinch is one of a number of surnames from birds of the finch family, including Goldspink, Finch itself, with Fink and Vink, perhaps 'simpleton', Spink . . .'. The vague syntactic relation of the gloss to the rest of the sentence leads Jönsjö to believe that Reaney thought Goldfinch also meant 'simpleton' (which I would guess he did not). Either way, this interpretation is not supported by any evidence. I imagine that what Reaney had in mind was the well-known line in the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, in which Chaucer says of the Summoner, 'Ful pryuely a fynch eek koude he pulle'. It is a common error, initiated by Tyrwhitt (1775-8) and perpetuated by OED and MED, to interpret the basic phrase as 'dupe a simpleton' or 'pull a clever trick', but it has long been known that it actually means 'have illicit sexual relations with a girl' (see G. L. Kittredge, 'Chauceriana IV', Modern Philology VII (1909-10), 475-7. As far as I know the only evidence ever cited for finch meaning 'dupe, fool, simpleton' has been the Chaucerian verse just quoted. Though we may forgive Reaney his mistake about finch, on the grounds that OED and MED give sanction to it, there is no excuse for anyone ignoring the qualifier gold in Goldfynch. It is a colour of many associations, not the least of them being money and ostentatious wealth. It is therefore of interest to note that, according

to Partridge's Dictionary of Slang (which Reaney did not use), goldfinch in seventeenth-century low speech denoted 'a rich man', though this does not seem to me so probable a sense of the ME name as 'a gay, lively person'. So we come to Jönsjö's gloss, a characteristic instance of unthinking 'follow-my-leader':

OE goldfinc (gold 'gold' + finc 'finch') 'goldfinch'. The name may denote a 'simpleton'. Cf. Feldefare above, DBS s.nn. Goldfinch, Goldspink and OES 272.

An uncritical repetition of part of Reaney's ill-aimed commentary on finch-names hardly qualifies as an adequate treatment of this nickname.

Since one of its principal functions is to tease, there is nothing more typical of nicknaming than irony. Once in a while, when Reaney's comments provide the authority for it, Jönsjö permits an ironic interpretation: 'Belamy could be a courteous form of address like Beausire, unless it had a mocking and ironic connotation' (Introduction, p.18, and cf. OES, pp.242-3). But he does not conceive that irony might be a basic mode of expression in nicknames that identify physical and social deviations from the norm or mean. Elsewhere in the Introduction (p.16), we are informed that a name like Langshank 'long leg' is 'straight and simple, and there is no need to search for an underlying meaning . . .'. Legions of short-legged schoolboys called Lofty or Longshanks (not to speak of the long-legged boys called Tich or Shorty) would think otherwise. In modern nicknaming, terms alluding to size or quantity are especially liable to inverted usage, and I know of no reason why one might assume differently of medieval practice. Gretschank, Shortshank, Smalbayn, Smalbyhind, Smalman, Smalpas, Haksmall, Piksmall, and Singsmall are all treated here as if only the literal sense were of onomastic relevance. The same problem arises with names whose face-value is flattering: 'complimentary are Fairman, Hendman, Belhom, Hendefelagh, Fayrbarn, Fayrchild, Belfant, Fairknaue, Fairday and Hendwyf'. As with Ayredy, Joyfull, Lightfot, Swetemouth, and many more, Jönsjö contemplates neither irony nor sarcasm, a compliment to his own good nature but perhaps not to his familiarity with medieval habits of mind.

In seeking plausible meanings for unfamiliar names, Jönsjö has sensibly looked for semantic and formal parallels among names whose interpretation is more certain, or at least for which a suggestion has been made by another scholar. If I do not always concur with him, it is partly because analogy comes in many shapes, and no two scholars are likely to agree in every instance on which of several parallels is the more persuasive. As a final example of this problem I cite the case of Cokelberd, which Jönsjö translates as 'cockle (weed)' + 'beard', thus 'one who has a weedy beard', on the analogy of Thistilberd. In the latter name one can readily see the point of the simile (a beard can be as white and prickly as a thistle-head), but one is left to wonder what it may be about the weed that grows among corn that could provide a suitable element of comparison for a beard. A quite different analogy might have been invoked: in accordance with Reaney's discussion of Whitbread in DBS, Jönsjö rightly observes that Whiteberd might be either 'white beard' or a metathesised form of Whitebred 'white bread', but gives no consideration to the interesting possibility that Cokelberd might be a metathesised form of a ME *cokelbred. The kneading of cocklebread was associated in the seventeenth century with indecent sexual games performed by women. (See OED, s.v. cockle bread, and compare the north country game of Hot Cockles and the 18th-19thc. slang term cockles for the labia minora,

noted in Partridge's Dictionary of Slang.)

Lack of certainty in interpreting ME nicknames is a source of frustration for all who study them. What one desperately needs is what so seldom occurs, the conversational contexts in which they were originally used. Knowing something about the individuals who bore particular nicknames at least helps one to control one's selection of possible interpretations, and for this purpose it is necessary to identify the same person or family in as many documents as possible. I am particularly disappointed to find that Jönsjö has studied these names largely in philological isolation from such biographical information as can be gleaned from the records (including those from which his collection of names is drawn). It is not surprising that the discussion of hereditary naming (Introduction, pp.44-6) is so brief and inconclusive, and relies for its generalisations on quotations from other scholars. The name Rotenheryng, interpreted as 'one who sells rotten herring', is a case in point. The cited forms all refer to John Rotenheryng and Robert Rotenheryng. They were brothers, so the name is almost certainly an inherited one. (Jönsjö and Reaney, Origins, p.276, are apparently unaware of this.) They were citizens of Hull. (Jönsjö always omits documentary information about where the bearers of names were taxed, bought and sold property, and so forth.) John became a citizen of York (hence the appearance of his name in the York Freeman's Rolls). Moreover, John and Robert were neither fishermen nor fishmongers but leading merchants and woolmongers. That evidence - all of which is easily obtained in any of the standard histories of Hull, none of which appear in the Bibliography - does not rule out the possibility that an ancestor of John and Robert sold rotten herrings, but it warns one not to jump over-confidently to occupational conclusions from an uncontextualised nickname. There are other ways in which 'product' nicknames can come to be coined (cf. Cecily Clark's comments in her article, 'Nickname Creation', published in this issue of NOMINA, (pp.91-2). I wonder, too, how many of the nicknames that are assumed in this book to be occupational in origin would make sense as such if one looked at the size and character of the settlements in which the name-bearer lived. If one dimension of information is chiefly lacking in the comparative methods used in Lund Studies of ME bynames it is that of local and biographical history. The name is treated as 'word' rather than 'person', as a manifestation of linguistic form rather than social life.

An outstanding example of missed contextual evidence has been pointed out in a review of this monograph by Gillian Fellows Jensen ('On the Study of Middle English By-Names', Namn och Bygd 68 (1980), esp. p.115). Jönsjö suggests that the nickname Wodemus 'may refer to a very small man'. So it may, but had Jönsjö taken the trouble to look further in the printed Wakefield Court Rolls from which his Yorkshire example is derived he would have found that in 1286 William Wodemous 'drove out Moll de Mora and her son from her house, and killed her dog and carried off a web of 10 ells of cloth'. I quote the text as it is given in Surnames of the West Riding of Yorkshire, p.16, where Redmonds aptly remarks that the man's name seems a trifle ironic in the circumstances. It is unfortunate that Jönsjö failed to read not only the texts in which his name-material occurred but also (apparently) the one existing monograph on Yorkshire surnames. Redmonds' study, though it is more concerned with post-medieval ramification of Yorkshire family names, is a notable omission from the Bibliography.

Fellows Jensen draws attention to another and important area of doubt in the

interpretation of ME bynames when she suggests (*op. cit.*, pp. 111-12) that a number of names classified as nicknames in Jönsjö's study may be asyndetic forms of locative surnames. She instances Cokheved, Haukesheued, Henheued, Wodheued, Holey, and Brunside (all of which might be identified with place-names in the northern counties), Wynferthing (which might allude to Winfarthing Nf), and six which might derive from French place-names: Toutlemonde, Creuker, Escorceboef, Petipas, Saunper, and Tailboys. To these one may add Styrop, Stirrappe, which could be from Styrrap in north Notts. In principle the point is well made, but in applying it to names in northern documents it requires a caveat. As Reaney observes (*DBS*, pp. xvi-xvii), absence of preposition in locative surnames is quite common in late thirteenth and early-fourteenth-century documents in the South of England, but is rare in northern documents until the late fourteenth century. Whether this reflects a regional difference in colloquial usage, or only in scribal habits of rendering names in quasi-Latin form, has not been determined. For Jönsjö's material, asyndetic locatives are not to be supposed without special reason. Of course, one factor which could easily induce an asyndetic form would be similarity, and therefore confusion, with a known nickname. At the same time we need to consider how likely it is that a person resident in such-and-such a place in one of the northern counties would have migrated there from the place with which we propose to identify the pseudo-nickname. A name like Creuker is at least as likely to be from one of the many places in Normandy called Crèvecoeur, literally 'break-heart'. Descendants of migrants from Normandy were common enough in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in northern England, and most Englishmen, being unfamiliar with the names of villages and hamlets in Normandy, would readily interpret Crèvecoeur, Creuker as an anthroponymic, rather than a toponymic, nickname and would not think of prefacing the name with a preposition in speech or in writing. In the case of a York surname like Wynfarthing, on the other hand, one must bear in mind that locative surnames from Norfolk were rare in York, only four unambiguous examples occurring among the surnames listed in the York Freeman's Rolls 1272-1300, 1312-27, 1360-65, and in the Poll Tax of 1381. That fact increases the chances that, in York, Wynfarthing was a person's nickname. In the same way, Cokheved and the other candidates for locative origin must be judged according to how well they fit the appropriate criteria.

One should always try to allow for the habits and predilections of different scribes, with respect to spellings and onomastic formulae. Jönsjö nowhere discusses the scribal characteristics of his sources. Nor does he sufficiently consider the possibility of scribal mis-copying and modern errors of transcription and printing. When confirmatory evidence for an unusual name is unobtainable, it is unwise to take the name on trust if a simple emendation, on the assumption of a common copying error, yields a well-attested name, or a name made up of commoner lexical items. The first element of Pilkebene (taken from a printed transcript of a Yorkshire Assize Roll) is tentatively assumed to be the relatively uncommon ME verb pilken 'peel, pluck'. Since -lk- and -kk- are often confused in medieval court hand, one cannot disregard the possibility that the name should read Pikkebene, or, with mistranscription of -e- for -o-, Pikkebone (for which see Seltén, *loc. cit.*). The hitherto unrecorded Langedraper (taken from a printed transcript of the York Freeman's Rolls) is explained as 'tall draper'. While the name is not improbable (Jönsjö justifiably compares Langgesmyht 'tall smith' from the Yorkshire subsidy roll of 1297), I cannot help thinking that it might be an error for the common Lingedraper 'linen draper', which is also found in the York Freeman's Rolls. A

particularly unreliable printed source is the Rotuli Hundredorum, published 1812-18, from which Jönsjö has extracted the name Spilring. This name, he says, 'probably denotes a maker of bad rings'. I would not want to accept this, or any other name from the printed Rotuli Hundredorum, without checking correctness of transcription against the original MSS. Finally, Jönsjö is perhaps too casual in his presentation and use of printed forms like Howsaldi (silently subsumed under the head form Houshald), Lipestast's (subsumed under Lipestast - 'the name refers to a philanderer'), and Rugbagge's (subsumed as Rugbagge). What are the original MS. forms of these names, and in what syntactical context do they appear?

In order to draw attention to the special difficulties in studying medieval nicknames, I have concentrated on the weaknesses that run through this monograph: the tendency to harvest the field of bynames indiscriminately, increasing the bulk of the material claimed for the compound nickname category at the expense of a more discerning analysis of name origins and name meanings; an insufficient alertness to potential polysemy, homonymy, and homography when searching the dictionaries and other scholarly publications for word and name meanings; an uncritical acceptance of published name-etymologies; an imperfect acquaintance with English idiom, slang, medieval life, literature, and thought, as is sharply underlined by the narrow scope of the Bibliography; an insensitivity to the social functions of nicknaming; and a failure to give due attention to palaeographical and biographical contexts. In total, that may seem a severe judgement on the work, and by standards that would probably find faults in the very best of published scholarship in this field. These criticisms must be put into perspective. The number of names whose explanation falls well short of what would be desirable amounts to perhaps fifteen per cent of the whole. Judged in its entirety, this study broadly achieves what it is intended to do, presenting in a clearly organised manner a large corpus of material (much of it hitherto unknown), and providing an explanatory apparatus that, with few exceptions, sets each name into the framework of previously published onomastic scholarship. On these grounds, students of Middle English bynames will be properly grateful for the publication of this, the first part of Jönsjö's doctoral thesis. It is, no doubt about it, a useful addition to the literature on nicknames, a labour well justified, for all that it has a mixed success.

Looked at from the point of view of future research, there is a wider and more important consideration. The unsatisfactory entries in Jönsjö's dictionary of northern nicknames are not usually, I think, the result of slips in concentration (a certain amount of which would be understandable in a work of this size). Most of them appear to be the inevitable consequence of limitations in conceptual approach, background knowledge, and explanatory method. Each of these needs to be minimised as far as possible before anyone (Jönsjö not excluded) ventures into further research and publication on this topic. As it stands, Studies on Middle English Nicknames is not a recommendable model for subsequent investigations. It could be argued that, in respect of explanatory method, Jönsjö has applied himself to a large and often baffling subject with conscientious endeavour, depending on a methodology successfully employed in a number of the Lund onomastic monographs. But that is a source of difficulty in itself: substantial and fundamental though the achievements have been, the techniques pioneered by Fransson and others need improving as our knowledge of the complexity of the subject grows, and they must, of course, be appropriately adapted to meet the problems posed by different kinds of name. A more advanced model on which to build is to be found in the studies of

London bynames by Eilert Ekwall, who paid meticulous attention to the nature of his source materials, to local and biographical history, and to the development of suitable comparative methods. We are promised another volume from Dr Jönsjö, dealing with the simplex nicknames from the same body of documents. I do hope that further thought will be given to the research, presentation, and explanation of the material, before it goes to press.

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A. L. F. RIVET and COLIN SMITH, The Place-Names of Roman Britain, Batsford: London, 1979, xviii + 526 pp., 33 maps, 2 plates, £45.50.

This is a magnificent book. It is a pity that the price is so high, but there is no alternative to ownership, since every future discussion of any Romano-British place-name must start from here. If Rivet and Smith had been available two years earlier, the task of writing Chapter II of my Signposts to the Past would have been lighter, and the result better. No-one will ever again set off into this particular jungle so ill-equipped as I was, but I am not altogether sorry to have made my amateur sortie. The conclusions I reached about the general nature of the material do not appear to be hopelessly at variance with those put forward by Rivet and Smith; though now that the full complexity of the subject has been made visible I feel that any success on my part must have been due more to luck than to judgment.

The Preface names a number of scholars who have answered queries, but, as Professor S. S. Frere commented in an early review, the authors eschewed large-scale systematic consultation, and most reviewers will probably note points they would have been glad to comment on if given the opportunity. Perhaps the authors felt that the only hope of reaching journey's end lay in paddling their own canoe.

Despite its great authority, the book is probably not definitive in any respect other than the assemblage of names to be discussed. Now that the material is easily available between these covers everyone will join in the discussion, and the reviews which have so far appeared indicate that there is scope for alternative proposals about both the location and the interpretation of some of the place-names listed.

The Preface states that though the work is to be seen as a joint production, C.C.S. has been primarily responsible for Chapters I, V, VI and VII of the Introduction and for the linguistic discussions in the list of names, A.L.F.R. for Chapters II, III and IV, and for the identifications and cartography.

Chapter I is uneven in quality. The section on the history of the subject is witty, and the first pages of the section on the languages of Roman Britain contain a full and authoritative discussion with a stimulating passage (pp. 14-16) on the possibility of the British language having been written in Roman letters, though no evidence of this survives. But the discussion which begins on p. 20 with the words "The names of wholly British origin are so numerous and diverse that few general remarks can be ventured about them" is not well-organised, and fails to give a clear impression of the types of statement which British people felt to constitute serviceable place-names. The material does lend itself to analysis, as I tried to indicate in Chapter II of Signposts to the Past. A statement on p. 24 - "Germanic invaders took over their Latin and Celtic names --- freely interpreting the elements to suit themselves" - and the footnote - "There are numerous instances of Celtic-Latin elements being assimilated to more meaningful elements in Germanic" - are misleading. There are a few such instances (like York and Speen), but these only serve to emphasise the general abstention from such popular etymologising on the part of the Germanic invaders. The same footnote says that the true derivation of Hrofæcæstre, the Old English name of Durobrivae (Rochester) could have been explained to Bede by "any available Briton". Since Professor Smith accepts Ekwall's involved (and to my mind not compelling) equation of Hrof- with Durobrivae, the