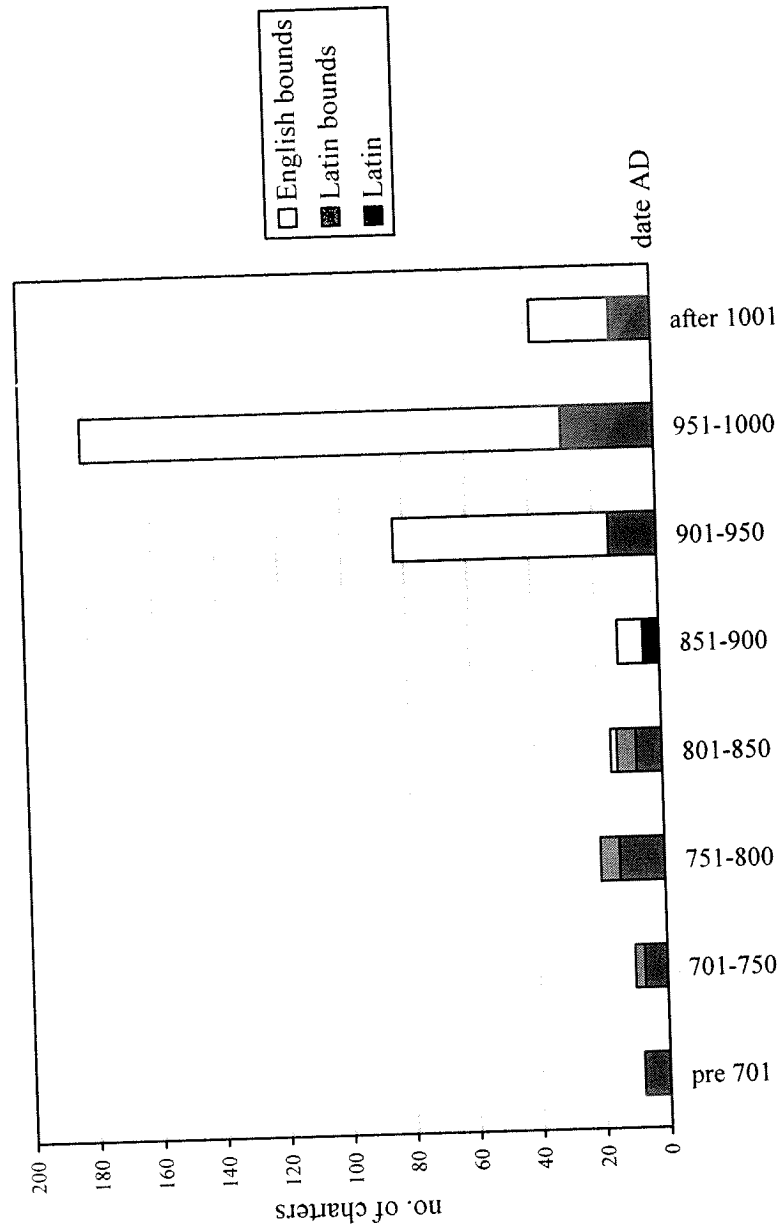


Figure 2: non-contemporary copies of genuine diplomas



The Interpretation of Hypocoristic Forms of Middle English Baptismal Names

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Most of the name forms I am going to discuss are correctly termed Middle English, but a few are possibly Welsh or Gaelic (or are Anglo-Celtic hybrids) and a handful belong truly to Scots. For our evidence of the spoken forms of medieval names we are of course entirely dependent on written sources, particularly administrative, fiscal and legal records where, until well into the fifteenth century, scribes generally represented baptismal names in conventional latinised forms. Nevertheless, colloquial forms do appear in these records, sometimes as forenames, more often as bynames or surnames, and from this large body of evidence we can be sure that baptismal names were used in a wide variety of hypocoristic or pet forms, especially by ordinary folk.¹ The problem is to know

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¹ A conclusion endorsed by the literature of the period. The *locus classicus* is *Vox Clamantis*, I, 783-91, in *Complete Works of John Gower*, edited by G. C. Macaulay, 4 vols (Oxford, 1899-1902), where the rioting peasants of the 1381 poll tax revolt are epitomised as *Watte, Thomme, Symme, Bette, Gibbe, Hykke, Colle, Geffe, Wille, Grigge, Dawe, Hobbe, Lorkyn, Hudde, Judde, Tebbe, Jakke* and *Hogge*. For comments on this passage (and the tavern scene in Langland's *Piers Plowman*, passus V) see C. W. Bardsley, *Curiosities of Puritan Nomenclature* (London, 1888), p. 6, E. Weekley, *Jack and Jill: a Study in Our Christian Names* (London, 1939), pp. 151-52, and C. Clark, 'Onomastics', in

which hypocorisms belong to which baptismal names.

I

How, for instance, should we explain the byname of Ric[ard]i Malyn de Gedelyng who appears in a Nottinghamshire coroner's roll of 1356?² The standard historical dictionaries of English personal names agree that Middle English (ME) *Mal*, *Mall* or *Malle* and its various diminutive forms, such as *Malin*, *Maly*, *Malkin*, *Malot* and *Molet*, are pet forms of *Mary*.³ Since they give no proof of this etymology I guess they are relying on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century evidence in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Mary Magdalene is addressed as 'little Moll' in a morality play dated 1567) and in Bardsley's *Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames* (which cites 'Mall, or Maria Frears, of Ulverstone', 1624).⁴ The earliest proof I have met with is mid-sixteenth century ('Maly alias Mary ap David', 1548), though it could be of Welsh rather than English origin.⁵

The Cambridge History of the English Language, II, edited by N. Blake (Cambridge, 1992), 542–606 (pp. 565–66).

² Kew, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), Just 2/120, m.14. Names quoted from manuscripts appear in their original form, except where I expand contraction marks, the supplied letters being placed within square brackets.

³ P. H. Reaney, *A Dictionary of English Surnames* (Oxford, 1995), 3rd edn of *A Dictionary of British Surnames* (London, 1958), with corrections and additions by R. M. Wilson, (hereafter *DES*), s.nn. *Malin*, *Malkin*, *Mall*, *Mallet*, *Mallot*, *Moll*, *Mollet*, and *Molson*; and E. G. Withycombe, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names*, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1977), s.n. *Mary*.

⁴ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, edited by J. A. H. Murray and others, 2nd edn prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (Oxford, 1989), s.v. *moll*, *sb.*, 1, and C. W. Bardsley, *A Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames* (London, 1901, hereafter *DEWS*), s.nn. *Malleson* and *Mallinson*.

⁵ See T. J. and P. Morgan, *Welsh Surnames* (Cardiff, 1985), p. 35. I am grateful to Dr Prys Morgan for supplying me with the date of the citation. The Morgans also give medieval examples of Welsh women called *Mali*, but since *Mary* was uncommon in medieval Wales, I think *Mali* in these instances may have been a (Welsh?) pet form of *Marret* (i.e. Margaret, see below, n. 29) as apparently it was in Dyffryn Clwyd (*ex inf.* Oliver Padel). Compare *Iolo* for

The chronology of this usage is pertinent because all the medieval evidence I have been able to gather indicates a quite different source. The *Promptorium Parvulorum*, a fifteenth-century Anglo-Latin dictionary from Lynn in Norfolk, states that *Malkin* was a form of ME *Mald* or *Maud* (also *Mold*, hence *Mol*).⁶ This name was adopted from Old French *Mahald*, *Mahold*, ultimately Continental Germanic *Mahtild(is)*, whence Medieval Latin *Matildis*, *Matillis* and *Matilda*.⁷ Bardsley, though he knew the gloss in *Promptorium*, was nevertheless convinced that *Mary* was the regular source of all names in *Mal-*, dismissing ME *Malkin* for *Maud* as just a peculiarity of the south-east of England.⁸ This is not so. In the court rolls of Dyffryn Clwyd in north-east Wales (1340–52), *Malkin* wife of *Hustas le Schepherde* is also named (in the same case) as *Maud* wife of *Heustacus bercarius*,⁹ while in two separate cases *Maud Moton* is probably the same woman as *Malkin Moton*.¹⁰ Among some

Iorwerth, *Welsh Surnames*, p. 140. Modern Welsh *Mali* for *Mary* could have been formed in the same way or adopted from English usage.

⁶ *The Promptorium Parvulorum*, edited by A. L. Mayhew, Early English Text Society, e.s. 102 (London, 1908), col. 280: 'Malkyn, or mawte (MSS *varr.* Mawde, Molt), propyr name: *Matildis*'.

⁷ See M.-T. Morlet, *Les Noms de personne sur le territoire de l'ancienne Gaule du VI^e au XI^e siècle*, 3 vols (Paris, 1968 and 1985), I, 166, col.b; T. Forssner, *Continental-Germanic Personal Names in England in Old and Middle English Times* (Uppsala, 1916), p. 181; *DES*, s.n. *Maud*.

⁸ *DEWS*, s.n. *Malkin*, where Bardsley seeks to justify his view by citing *Malkin* as a name for Maid Marian, but the earliest evidence for this is seventeenth-century (see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *malkin*, l.c). *DES*, s.n. *Malkin*, ignores the evidence of *Promptorium* altogether.

⁹ My thanks to Oliver Padel for drawing my attention to these examples, which can be found at SC2/4/717 and 762 (Ruthin court, 1.6.1344 and 22.6.1344), i.e. roll 4, record nos 717 and 762, in the database record prepared as part of the Dyffryn Clwyd Court Roll Project. See A. D. M. Barrell, R. R. Davies, O. J. Padel and Ll. B. Smith, 'The Dyffryn Clwyd Court Roll Project, 1340–1352 and 1389–1399: a methodology and some preliminary findings', in *Medieval Society and the Manor Court*, edited by Z. Razi and R. Smith (Oxford, 1996), pp. 260–97.

¹⁰ SC2/1/1427 and 5/349 (Ruthin court, 15.5.1341 and 12.4.1345). On the use of *Malkin* in these rolls see O. J. Padel, 'Names in *-kin* in medieval Wales', in

early-fourteenth-century deeds relating to Everingham in the East Riding of Yorkshire, a lease dated 1315 refers to lands formerly tenanted by a woman named *Malot quond' uxor Heruy*, who, in four other leases, is named as *Matild' ux' Heruy* (post 1290), *Matild' ux' Herwy* (1310), *Matild' q' fuit ux' Herui* (1316) and *Matild' Heruy* (post 1316?).¹¹ In the early-fourteenth-century Wakefield court rolls there are several women named *Maud* who are almost certainly alternatively known as *Malkin* or *Malin*.¹² It is probable, therefore, that Richard *Malyn* of Gedling was identical with Richard son of Maud of Gedling, who owed rent for property in Gedling in 1328.¹³ I have found no-one connected with Gedling called 'Richard son of Mary'.

Mal for Mary clearly belongs to a set that includes *Hal* for *Harry*, *Dol* for *Dorothy* and *Sal* for *Sarah*, none of which has yet been definitely evidenced before the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁴ As we know from *Shal*

Names, Time and Place, Essays Presented to Richard McKinley, edited by D. Postles and D. Hooke (London, forthcoming).

¹¹ University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library, Arundel Castle MSS (E), DDEV/9/11, 8, 9, 12 and 7 respectively.

¹² *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield*, 2 (1297–1309), edited by W. P. Baildon, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series, 36 (Leeds, 1906). Compare *Maude de Fekesby* (of Rastrick) with *Malina de Fekesby* (of Rastrick), p. 7; *Maude de Sourby* (of Wakefield), p. 216, with *Malina de Sourby* (of Wakefield), pp. 119 and 163; *Maud Godesaule* (of Wakefield), p. 215, with *Malkine* or *Malkyn Godesowel* (of Wakefield), pp. 119 and 149.

¹³ *Abstracts of the Inquisitiones Post Mortem and other Inquisitions relating to Nottinghamshire, 1321–1350*, edited by T. M. Blagg, Thoroton Society Record Series, 6 (Nottingham, 1939), p. 151.

¹⁴ Bardsley assumed that ME *Halekyn* must be for *Harry* and that ME *Hawkin* was a diphthongised form of it (*Curiosities*, p. 11 and *DEWS*, s.n. *Hawkin*). For alternative explanations see *DES*, s.nn. *Alkin* and *Hawkin*. I know of no earlier proof of *Hal* for *Harry* than Shakespeare's *History of Henrie the Fourth* (1st quarto, London, 1598) [Part I], I.1.1 and *passim*, with which compare W. Camden, *Remains Concerning Britain* (London, 1605; 4th edn, 1674, reprinted 1870), p. 140. For *Dol* see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.vv. *doll*, *sb.* 1, 1, and *dolly*, *sb.* 1, 1, and for *Sal* see 'Nick-names or Abbreviations of English Christian Names' in A. Littleton, *Linguae Latinae Dictionarius Quadripartitus* (London, 1678) [unpaginated]. See also E. J. Dobson, *English Pronunciation*

for *Sharon* and *Tel* for *Terry*, hypocoristic substitution of *l* for *r* is still popular today. The question is whether it was ever current in Middle English. Proven instances of ME *Pelle* and *Pelly* for 'Peter' (Lat. *Petrus* translating ME *Per*, one supposes) and *Gelle* for *Gerard* suggest that it probably was, though *l/r* substitution is not the only possible explanation of these equivalences.¹⁵ But even if *Mal* for *Mary* was a possible ME alternation, there are onomastic reasons for believing that *Maud* must have been the principal source of *Mal* at least until the middle of the fifteenth century. From the late twelfth century onwards *Maud* was a very common name indeed while *Mary* was not.¹⁶ In the court rolls of early-fourteenth-century Nottingham, for example, *Matilda* occurs as the name of roughly ten per cent of women and *Mary* about one per cent.¹⁷

1500–1700, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Oxford, 1968), II, §60 (6): 'Diminutives like *Hal* (which has *ǣ* in Gil and Butler) and *Mal* 'Mary' (which has *ǣ* in Butler) probably lack diphthongization because they are ModE formations (or reformations) from *Harry* and *Mary* (of which the latter could have eModE *ǣ*).'

¹⁵ See *DES*, s.n. *Pell*, and G. Redmonds, *Surnames and Genealogy: a New Approach* (Boston, Mass., 1997), p. 46. Alternatively *Pel(le)* might be a syncopated form of an *-el* diminutive of *Per* such as *Perel* or *Peronel*, and *Gel(le)* might be a syncopated form of *Gerald*, which was used interchangeably with *Gerard* (see *DES*, s.n. *Gerald*). *DES*, s.n. *Gell*, however, derives the name from *Jelion*, a variant of *Julian/Gilian*.

¹⁶ For general statements (not backed by figures) see Withycombe, *Dictionary*, s.nn. *Mary* and *Matilda*, P. H. Reaney, *The Origin of English Surnames* (London, 1967), pp. 132 and 135, and Weekley, *Jack and Jill*, p. 69. For specific figures see D. Postles, 'The distinction of gender? Women's names in the thirteenth century', *Nomina*, 19 (1996), 79–89 (pp. 83–84); G. Morgan, 'Naming Welsh women', *Nomina*, 18 (1995), 119–39 (pp. 129–30); G. Redmonds, 'Christian names in the West Riding, 1379—part 2', *Old West Riding*, n.s. 15 (1995), 15.

¹⁷ The figures are based on the forenames of the first hundred women listed by byname in T. Foulds, 'Calendar of the Nottingham Borough Court Rolls, 1303–1455. Index of People and Places, 1303–1336' (unpublished). [This forms part of the Nottingham Borough Court Rolls Project, for which see T. Foulds, J. Hughes and M. Jones, 'The Nottingham Borough court rolls: the reign of Henry VI (1422–57), *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 97 (1993), 74–87.] Out of 23 different names, *Matilda* (10 exx. in the first

Of the several hypocorisms based on *Mal*, *Malkin* in particular came to be widely used as a slang term for a servant woman, a young woman of the lower classes or a woman of loose morals, while *malkin* and *malin* were employed as words for oven rags.¹⁸ It would be perverse to suppose that these were normally pet forms of the sometimes-used *Mary* rather than the much-used *Maud*.

By the fifteenth century, however, use of *Maud/Matilda* as a baptismal name was significantly declining. In the mid-fifteenth-century Nottingham court rolls *Matilda* occurs as the name of only around two per cent of women, while *Mary* (*Marion*, *Mariot*) remains at around one per cent.¹⁹ For the sixteenth century I have no material from Nottingham but during the course of the century *Maud* was becoming quite scarce and *Mary* (also *Marion*) moderately common in places as far apart as Cottingham (East Riding of Yorkshire),²⁰ Norwich²¹ and

hundred women listed) is in fifth position behind *Margery* (18), *Alice* (14), *Cecilia* (12) and *Agnes* (11).

¹⁸ *Middle English Dictionary*, edited by H. Kurath and others (Ann Arbor, 1954–, in progress), s.v. *malkin* (varr. *malin*, *makin*), which the editors correctly derive from *Maud*.

¹⁹ The figures are derived from the names of the first hundred women listed by byname in Foulds, 'Calendar... Index of People and Places, 1422–1455'. Out of 18 different names, *Matilda* is in eleventh position behind *Joan* (19 exx.), *Margaret* (18), *Agnes* (13), *Alice* (12), *Isabella* (6), *Margery* (5), *Emma* and *Emmota* (5), *Magot* (3), *Katherine* (3) and *Cecilia* (3). In the entire index, listing well over 400 women, there are only nine examples of *Matilda* and five of *Mary*, *Mariot* or *Marion*.

²⁰ Of the thirty different names given to girls baptised between 1566 and 1575, *Maria* was used thirteen times and *Mariona* once, together representing over five per cent of the total of 255 namings, and lying in seventh place behind *Anna* (13%), *Elizabeth* (13%), *Margaret* (11%), *Johanna* (7%), *Barbara* (7%) and *Alicia* (7%). *Matilda* occurs once only. Source: K. McClure, unpublished analyses of forenames in the Parish Registers of Cottingham, 1563–1660, Beverley, East Riding of Yorkshire Council Archives Services, MS PE2/1.

²¹ The following figures derive from the names of the first hundred women listed in the *Index of Wills Proved in the Consistory Court of Norwich, 1550–1603*, compiled by M. A. Farrow, Norfolk Record Society (Norwich, 1951). Out of 26 different names, *Mary* (or *Marion*) lies in eighth position at five per cent,

south-west Wales.²² Such evidence disproves Withycombe's (unsubstantiated) view that '*Mary* suffered an eclipse after the Reformation and was seldom used during Elizabeth's reign'.²³ Rather, use of the name throughout England steadily increased during the period 1500 to 1650 so that by the second half of the seventeenth century *Mary* was nationally the most frequently chosen name for girls while *Maud* is hardly to be found.²⁴ The semantic shift in *Mal*, *Mol*, *Malkin* and so on from 'Maud' to 'Mary' was thus (in part at least) a consequence of the changing fortunes of these two names.

II

This re-examination of the origins and history of *Mal* has illustrated some of the difficulties commonly experienced by students of Middle English personal names. It has also pointed the way to some methodological remedies. I am not concerned here with the important, but separate, problem of explaining the origins of particular family surnames,²⁵ but with the correct identification of the medieval hypocoristic name stock. I suggest that there are three principal kinds of evidence that need to be taken into account—linguistic, onomastic and prosopographical—and that

behind *Elizabeth* (15%), *Margaret* (12%), *Alice* (12%), *Agnes* (10%), *Joan* (8%), *Katharine* (6%) and *Anne* (6%). *Matilda/Maud* is absent.

²² See Morgan, 'Naming Welsh women', p. 133.

²³ *Dictionary*, s.n. *Mary*.

²⁴ See the important new study by Scott Smith-Bannister, *Names and Naming Patterns in England 1538–1700* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 196–201, where it is shown that among baptismal namings in forty different English parishes *Mary* already ranked in seventh place both before and during the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign, rising to third place by 1600 and first place during the 1650s; *Maud* figures only once in the top fifty girls' names (joint forty-fifth in the decade 1560–69). Percentages are not given.

²⁵ For dissatisfaction of English family historians with many of the etymologies proposed in surname dictionaries, see Redmonds, *Surnames and Genealogy*, *passim*, and D. Steel, 'Walls and bridges: the case for co-operation between demographers and family historians', *Genealogists' Magazine*, 25 (1997), 504–08.

they must be considered in conjunction with each other.

Linguistic Evidence

Inaccurate explanations of hypocorisms arise mostly from an over-reliance on linguistic appearances and a failure to allow for ambiguities of form. Some ambiguities are the result of sound changes while others are merely orthographical, but most stem from the hypocoristic process itself, whose numerous patterns have neither been fully identified nor comprehensively classified. As I see it, the underlying principle is *alternation*, or *variation*,²⁶ which is expressed by devices that appear to mimic language and concepts associated with early childhood. These are *abbreviation* (simplification through the deletion of linguistic segments), *extension* (diminutivisation through the addition of segments) and *substitution* (playful variation through the exchange of segments).

The most characteristic aspect of abbreviation is that deletion can affect segments of any length, from the loss of a single phoneme to the elision of any sequence of weakly stressed phonemes, syllables or morphemes, and that it can occur in any position, whether initial (*aphesis*, as in *Col* for *Nicol*²⁷ and *Naud* for *Reynaud*),²⁸ medial (*syncope*, as in *Maret* for *Margaret*²⁹ and *Phip* for *Philip*), final

²⁶ See P. McClure, 'Nicknames and petnames: linguistic forms and social contexts', *Nomina*, 5 (1981), 63–76 (pp. 65–66).

²⁷ Also spelled *Cole*, *Coll* and *Colle*, and similarly, *mutatis mutandis*, all monosyllabic names cited hereafter. Derivations of hypocorisms cited in this section will be found under the appropriate entries in *DES* or in the present paper. See also Reaney, *DES*, pp. xxxvi–xxxviii, and *Origin of English Surnames*, pp. 149–56.

²⁸ In the Nottingham Borough court rolls *Nawde Burnett*, 1411, in Foulds, 'Calendar', CA 1306/II/216 (m.9), is almost certainly *Reynald Burnett(e)* of Beeston, 1432 and 1435, CA 1322/II/531 (m.20) and 1327/217 (m.9).

²⁹ As in *Seynt Marets* alias *Seynt Margarets* (Edingley, Notts.) 1497, *Calendar of Nottinghamshire Coroners' Inquests, 1485–1558*, edited by R. F. Hunnisett, Thoroton Society Record Series, 25 (Nottingham, 1969), p. 3. This may be the origin of some, even all, instances of the surname *Merret*, though *DES*, s.n. *Merrett*, conflates it with *Merriot/Meryett*, which has different origins. Compare *Marret* (also spelled *Marreth*, *Mareret*, *Maruret*, *Maruereth* and *Merret*) in the

(*apocope*, very common as in *Bet* for *Be(a)trice*, *Gef* for *Geoffrey*, *Teb* for *Tebald* and *Mal* for *Mald*), or multi-positional (as in *Til* for *Matilde*, *Ib* for *Isabel* and *Heb* for *Herbert*).

In contrast, extension is typically morphemic, by the addition of vocalic suffixes such as *-y*, *-in*, *-on*, *-un*, *-el*, *-et* and *-ot*, double vocalic suffixes such as *-elet*, *-elot*, *-elin*, *-onel*, *-inet* and *-inot*, and *k* suffixes such as *-k*, *-kin*, *-cok*, *-cot* and *-cus*.³⁰ These diminutivising suffixes are sometimes added to a full name (e.g. *Philipot*) but more often to a short form, including abbreviated forms of existing pet-names (e.g. *Potkin*). Most suffixes are found added to names of either gender.

The third device, substitution, can operate in principle at any linguistic level (and does so in modern English nicknaming). In Middle English hypocorisms, only phonological substitutions have so far been identified, in the alternation of vowels (as in *Mog* for *Mag*) and consonants (as in *Gep* for *Gef*, and probably *Pel* for *Per* and *Gel* for *Gerard*). When an initial consonant is substituted it produces a rhyming form, as in *Dick* for *Rick*, *Pog* for *Mog* and *Nund* for *Mund* (probably an aphetic form of a name like *Edmund*).³¹ Rhyming forms of names beginning in a vowel are achieved by means of a prosthetic consonant, which may in turn be alternated, as in *Lib*, *Nib* and *Tib* for *Ib* (Isabel). Often this consonant anticipates a following one, as in *Bib* for *Ib* and *Nan* for *An* (Anes, i.e. Agnes). Such prosthesis could be categorised as extension (by prefixation) but as a hypocoristic device it more logically belongs with the other rhyming formations as a form of substitution, the initial consonant in effect replacing a zero alternant. It is desirable, but not always easy, to distinguish these playful phonological substitutions

Dyffryn Clwyd rolls, e.g. *Merret*, *Marret* or Margaret daughter of Cadwgan, SC2/1/719 and 3/169. But it is not clear whether its use among Welsh women reflects an adoption of a ME form or an independent Welsh development.

³⁰ Apart from *-k*, *-cot* and *-cus*, which are not mentioned by Reaney, illustrations of these suffixes can be found in *Origin of English Surnames*, pp. 151–56 and 209–17, and (for *-y*) in *DES*, snn. *Addy*, *Batty*, etc.

³¹ John and Roger *Nunde* of Sutton in Ashfield (manor of Mansfield, Notts.), 1294–95, Rental, PRO, Special Collections, SC11/537, m.1, are identical with John and Roger *Munde* of Sutton, 1297, Rental (Mansfield manor), PRO, Special Collections, SC2/196/10, m.2.

from the (much commoner) conditioned sound changes which accompany hypocoristic abbreviation—as in the loss of *r*, *l* and diphthongal *u* before a consonant in forms like *Bat* for *Bartelmew*,³² *Gib* for *Gilbert* and *Larkin* for *Laurence*³³—and from the allophonic variations which occur generally in Middle English speech, such as voicing of intervocalic consonants (e.g. *Digun* for *Dicun*), progressive devoicing (as in *Atkin* for *Adkin*) and unrounding of *ō* to *ǎ* (as in *Rab* for *Rob*).

This brief outline of hypocoristic formation in Middle English leaves much unsaid but is sufficient for the present purpose. It is clear that, even if used singly, let alone in combination, each of these alternating devices (especially abbreviation) will produce instances of formal convergence or homonymy, all the more so because the segments that are deleted, added or exchanged can vary so much in length and position. ME *Han*, for example, has been shown to be a short form of both *Johan* and *Hanry*,³⁴ and was probably also a rhyming form of *Ran(dal)*.³⁵ *Nel* is undoubtedly the usual vernacular equivalent of Latin *Nigellus*,³⁶ but it is also found as a rhyming short form of *Ellis*³⁷ and could as well be of *Elen*, too, or else an aphetic form of *Pernel*. *Gel*, as we have seen (above, notes 15 and 32), could be the result of apocope (*Gelion*),

³² Similarly *Bab* (Barbara), *Bet* (Bertilmew, Bertram), (*H*)*eb* (Herbert), *Jud* (Jurdan), *Mag(ge)*, *Meg(ge)* (Margery, Margaret) and *Pen* (Pernel); also *Gem* for *German* (f.), established by Redmonds, *Surnames and Genealogy*, p. 46; and perhaps *Pel* for *Perel* and *Per(o)nel*, and *Gel* for *Gerald*. See, too, the discussion of *Tol* in section III below.

³³ Loss of weakly stressed diphthongal *u* is also found in *Lorkin* (Lourence), *Pol* (Poul, a common variant of Paul) and perhaps therefore *Pal* (?Paul), though it might otherwise be a rhyming form of *Mal* (just as *Pol* could be for *Mol*). *DES*, s.nn. *Palcock*, *Paley* and *Pall*, less convincingly derives ME *Pal(le)* and *Pally* from either a postulated Old English **Palla* or Old Danish *Palli*. ME *al* was commonly vocalised to *au*, so forms like *Maddy*, *Raf* and *Wat* can be derived from *Mald* or *Maud*, *Ralf* or *Rauf*, *Walter* or *Wauter*.

³⁴ See *DES*, s.nn. *Hann* and *Hancock*.

³⁵ Camden, *Remains*, p. 141, alludes to 'Hankin for Randol, as is observable in Cheshire, in that ancient family of Manwaring, and many others'.

³⁶ See *DES*, s.n. *Neal*.

³⁷ See Redmonds, *Surnames and Genealogy*, p. 45.

syncope (*Gerald*) or apocope combined with phonological substitution (*Gerard*). It is the sheer variety of possible segmental changes that makes it so difficult in many instances to ensure an accurate explanation based on formal grounds alone. An improved knowledge of the linguistics of Middle English hypocoristic formations will help considerably in forming plausible hypotheses about the origins of particular names, but it is still going to be impossible to discriminate between competing hypotheses without knowing the onomastic and prosopographical contexts in which the names are used.

Onomastic Evidence

The most obvious onomastic rule of thumb is that the frequency of a hypocorism should correspond to a baptismal name of equal or greater frequency at the same time and in the same locality. No national name counts and very few regional ones have been published for any generation before the sixteenth century, so it is not surprising that personal name dictionaries have made little use of this kind of evidence when proposing name etymologies, or that the generalisations they do make are sometimes wide of the mark. A further difficulty is that our terminology for describing and evaluating the relative frequency of medieval names—'common', 'rare', 'popular', and so on—is limited, vague and easily misunderstood. Even percentage ratings and name rankings, with their appearance of precision, hardly define these terms with any great accuracy, giving us only a crude measure of a complex phenomenon whose causes are rooted in individual family histories and social networks.

Most of our evidence for ME hypocorisms is contained in bynames, so it may sometimes be helpful in forming an opinion on the likely origins of hypocorisms to make comparisons between the frequencies of forenames and the frequencies of bynames thought to have derived from them. In doing so we have to be wary of drawing over-simple conclusions. A rare forename is unlikely to be the source of a common patronymic, but it doesn't follow that a common patronymic must derive from an equally common forename. A byname was chosen principally for its capacity to distinguish one person or family from another, and this would inevitably moderate the number of bynames from the commonest forenames while encouraging selection of bynames from less common

forenames. It is therefore the middle ranking forenames that gain most in byname selection.³⁸ Being common to many communities yet fairly distinctive within any one community, they are more likely than other forenames to produce numbers of bynames out of proportion to their general currency.

One difference of onomastic dialect that has been regularly acknowledged is that between the baptismal name stocks of communities in eastern and northern England heavily influenced by Scandinavian settlement and those in the rest of England that were not.³⁹ Nevertheless, the difficulty of distinguishing some of the Old Norse, Old English and Continental Germanic name forms from each other has come to be well recognised.⁴⁰ The corresponding chronological yardstick is no easier to apply. The most radical change in the English baptismal name stock took place around the beginning of the thirteenth century, when most of the insular (Old English and Old Norse) names were abandoned for names of largely continental origin favoured by the Church and the Anglo-French ruling classes. No doubt because of their subsequent distinctiveness, insular names are nevertheless encountered well after 1250, embedded in patronymic and metronymic bynames which had presumably become hereditary. When names of this type are formally convergent with short forms of the 'new' continental baptismal names they create etymological ambiguities that are not always recognised by the dictionaries.

The surname *Gilkin* is explained in *The Dictionary of English Surnames* as a pet form of Old Norse *Gilli*, but the morphology, provenances and dates of the medieval citations—the forename of a man from Brabant (1296) and two bynames from Surrey (1317–18) and Worcestershire (1332)—agree better with a derivation from one of the

³⁸ As David Postles shows in his *Surnames of Devon* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 158–59.

³⁹ See, for example, C. Clark, 'Clark's first three laws of applied anthroponymics', *Nomina*, 3 (1979), 13–19 and J. Insley, 'Regional variation in Scandinavian personal nomenclature in England', *ibid.*, 52–60.

⁴⁰ As, for instance, in C. Clark, 'The early personal names of King's Lynn: an essay in socio-cultural history. Part I—baptismal names', *Nomina*, 6 (1982), 51–71.

'new' names, especially Old French *Gilles*, ME *Gil(le)*, modern *Giles*, and perhaps Old French and ME *Gillard* and *Gil(e)bert* or ME *Gilian* (Julian).⁴¹ Under the headform *Bill*, the same dictionary attributes the ME byname *filius Bille* (1301, Wakefield, W. Yorks.) to one of two (by then) long obsolete names, Old English *Bil* or Old Norse *Bíldr*. But in terms of the local onomastic currency of the late thirteenth century, *Bil(le)* would be just as easy to explain as a pet form of the Old French and ME names, *Amabil/Anabil* and *Sibil*, both of which occur as women's names in the Wakefield court rolls of the period. The bias in Reaney's and Wilson's dictionary towards the Old English and Old Norse name stocks is found in most scholarly publications dealing with the etymology of ME personal names, and it is one that should be allowed for and, if necessary, resisted.

Prosopographical Evidence

Information about the individuals and their families who bear the names we wish to interpret is invaluable for the precision and insight which it can bring to all anthroponymical studies.⁴² For the interpretation of hypocorisms there is a self-evident advantage in knowing the gender of the name-bearer, but far more important than this is a type of prosopographical evidence where, as we saw with *Malot* or *Matilda Hervy* and so forth, the same person is known by variant name forms. I am going to call these forms prosoponymical variants.

⁴¹ See *DES*, s.nn. *Giles*, *Gill(son)* and *Gillard*. Flemish *Gilkin* is from Middle Dutch *Gillis*, Old French *Gilles*; see F. Debrabandere, *Verklarend Woordenboek van de Familienamen in België en Noord-Frankrijk*, 2 vols (Brussels, 1993), s.n. *Gillekens*. For an exclusively Old Norse interpretation of ME *Gil(le)* see G. Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire* (Copenhagen, 1968), pp. 100–01, and J. Insley, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Norfolk* (Uppsala, 1994), p. 139.

⁴² On the importance of prosopographical evidence in name studies see C. Clark, 'Socio-economic status and individual identity: essential factors in the analysis of Middle English personal-naming', in *Naming, Society and Regional Identity*, edited by D. Postles (Oxford, forthcoming), and in *Words, Names and History: Selected Writings of Cecily Clark*, edited by P. Jackson (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 100–13 (pp. 109–13).

Identifying prosoponymical variants is not without its own problems. Explicit aliases, where a clerk deliberately records alternative versions of a person's name, are infrequent and one needs to ensure that they are linguistic variants of one name and not different, unrelated names by which the same person happened to be known. This applies to forenames just as much as bynames. *Ricardus dictus Hudde de Walkden* (1345 Lancs.) is cited by Bardsley and by Reaney and Wilson as proof that *Hud* could be a pet form of *Richard* ('taken from the second syllable', as Bardsley puts it), even though the phonetic changes are quite anomalous.⁴³ More convincingly, Reaney and Wilson suggest that *Hud* was normally a pet form of Hugh,⁴⁴ so an alternative explanation of this alias would be that the man was known as both 'Richard' and 'Hugh'. Of course, if other definite examples of a correlation between *Hud* and *Richard* were to be found, it would change one's view of the matter, but isolated prosoponymical data cannot validate an interpretation that has no support from either linguistic or onomastic arguments.

Because explicit aliases are so scarce, we have to make as much use as we can of implied aliases, inferred from separate references to the same individual. Documents referring to named persons are exceedingly numerous in most parts of England from the late thirteenth century onwards, but series of records dealing with the same people occur only sporadically, and in most cases offer only a patchy record of those who were active in the community. Partly for this reason but mainly because of scribal conventionality, implied aliases involving prosoponymical variation usually turn up in a scattered and unpredictable fashion. Having found potential examples, we must beware of circular reasoning. We have to establish that different name forms are likely to allude to the same individual without relying too heavily on the onomastic evidence itself for proof that the same individual is involved. Some contextual criteria can provide real or virtual certainty—a dispute involving the same parties, for instance, or tenancy of the same property, or repetition of the order in which persons are listed in a rental or a tax roll. Less

⁴³ *DEWS* and *DES*, s.n. *Hudd*.

⁴⁴ *DES*, s.n. *Hudd*, adduces prosoponymical variants from Yorkshire to substantiate this more plausible derivation.

specific information, such as residence in the same neighbourhood or unrelated pleadings in the same court, can also be helpful in identifying likely prosoponymical variants, though circumstantial evidence of this kind can be too vague to rely on when common names are involved. Such evidence may at best be indicative rather than conclusive.

Linguistic and onomastic considerations can point us to what is possible, likely or probable, but for verification we must turn either to definitions like those provided by *Promptorium Parvulorum* (which are few in number) or to the more plentiful and locally more specific data of prosoponymical variants.

III

With the foregoing criteria in mind I am going to reconsider several more of the explanations offered in the dictionaries. The new evidence is largely drawn from medieval Nottinghamshire, with additional material from the court rolls of Wakefield and Dyffryn Clwyd.

ME *Ab(be)* is said by Bardsley and by Reaney and Wilson to be an abbreviated form of either *Abel* or *Abraham*.⁴⁵ In the Sherwood Forest Eyre roll of 1287, however, it is found as a woman's forename, *Abbe ux' Henr' Lotefyn*,⁴⁶ and this proves to be a short form of *Albrei* or *Aubrey* (Latin *Albreda*).⁴⁷ In documents relating to Gringley on the Hill (Notts.), *Rog's fil' Abbe*, tenant in an extent of 1297,⁴⁸ is identical with *Rog'o fil' Albrede*, tenant in a rental of 1272 x 1307,⁴⁹ where the order

⁴⁵ *DEWS* and *DES*, s.n. *Abb(s)* and *Abson*. Other possible sources are Old English *Abba*, Old Danish *Abbi* and Old Swedish *Abbe*, as suggested in Insley, *Scandinavian Personal Names*, p. 1, and Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Personal Names*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ PRO, Justices of the Forest, E32/127, m.12.

⁴⁷ Continental Germanic *Alberada*, Old French *Albree*, *Aubree*, for which see *DES*, s.n. *Aubray*, Forssner, *Continental-Germanic Personal Names*, pp. 21–22 and Morlet, *Noms de personne*, I, 29, col.b. It was a favoured name in Normandy and Picardy according to M.-T. Morlet, *Dictionnaire étymologique des noms de famille* (Paris, 1991), s.n. *Aubrée*.

⁴⁸ PRO, Special Collections, SC11/534, mm.2 and 3.

⁴⁹ PRO, Special Collections, SC12/13/72, m.1.

in which the tenants are listed is the same as that in the extent. No doubt *Ric'o fil' Aubray*, a juror in the 1297 extent, is also to be identified with *Ric'o fil' Abbe*, who was assessed in Gringley for the 1327 lay subsidy.⁵⁰ Formally *Ab(be)* belongs therefore to a hypocoristic set that includes *Wac(ke)* for *Walkelin* or *Waukelin*⁵¹ and *Wat(te)* for *Walter* or *Wauter*.⁵²

The Gringley documents also provide evidence for a more convincing interpretation of ME *Tol(le)*, which occurs sporadically as a forename in the thirteenth century, as in *Tolle le grangier*, 1218 (Lincs.)⁵³ and *Tolle de Retford*, a tenant in Blyth (Notts.) in 1273.⁵⁴ Reaney and Wilson state that it was either a survival of an Old English **Toll* or else a pet form of the Old Norse names *þorleifr* and *þorleikr*,⁵⁵ but in Gringley, at least, the actual origin is another Old Norse name, *þóraldr*, for *Rog's fil' Tolle*, a tenant in the 1297 extent, is identical with *Rog'o fil' Torald* in the 1272 x 1307 rental. From a purely linguistic point of view any one of these names is an acceptable source, *r* assimilating to the following *l* in the short forms of the Old Norse names, but in terms of usage there are considerable disparities. *þorleikr* is occasionally recorded in independent use in twelfth-century England⁵⁶ and **Toll* and *þorleifr* only in place-names,⁵⁷ whereas *þóraldr* was common as a baptismal

⁵⁰ PRO, Exchequer, King's Remembrancer, Subsidy Rolls, E179/159/4, m.4.

⁵¹ *Wacke de Monsorel*, 1269, is identical with *Walkelino de Monsorel*, 1270, *Records of the Borough of Leicester*, edited by M. Bateson, 3 vols (London, 1895–1905), I, 138. This pet form is not noted in *DES* (s.n. *Wake*) but for ME *Walkelin* and *Waukelin* see *DES*, s.n. *Wakelin*.

⁵² See n. 33 above and *DES*, s.nn. *Watt* and *Walter*.

⁵³ Cited in *DES*, s.n. *Toll*.

⁵⁴ *The Cartulary of Blyth Priory*, 2 vols, edited by R. T. Timson, Thoroton Society Record Series, 27, and the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, JP 17 (London, 1973), II, 394.

⁵⁵ *DES*, s.n. *Toll*.

⁵⁶ See Insley, *Scandinavian Personal Names*, p. 420.

⁵⁷ As in Tolleshunt and Tolleshunt, for which see P. H. Reaney, *The Place-Names of Essex*, EPNS, 12 (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 304–06, and in Tollerton, Notts., and Thurlaston, Leics. and Warwicks., for which see G. Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the East Midlands*

name well into the thirteenth century because of its currency among the Normans.⁵⁸ On onomastic grounds there can be little doubt that *þóraldr* (or rather its Old Northern French form, *Torald*) is the usual source of ME *Tol(le)*.

The modern surnames *Paw* and *Pawson* are derived by Reaney and Wilson from Old English *pāwa* 'peacock' (Latin *pāvo*), a nickname which they believe to have been used as a baptismal name in instances like *Tedricus Paue filius* (c.1095), *Pavo Cocus* (1203) and the West Yorkshire bynames 'son of *Pawe*' (1277) and *Paweson* (1379).⁵⁹ They discard Bardsley's earlier suggestion that the Yorkshire examples of *Pawe* are short forms of *Paul*,⁶⁰ but Bardsley turns out to have been right, as George Redmonds has recently demonstrated, citing prosoponymical variants in which these and other instances of *Paw(e)* are definitely equated with *Paul* and the popular diminutive *Paulin*.⁶¹ This confirms my own inference from the Nottinghamshire subsidy rolls that *Matill' relict' Pawe*, assessed in Budby in 1332, was almost certainly the widow of *Paulino de Knyuelmerch*, assessed in the same vill in 1327.⁶²

It is poignant to discover that the very example cited in a dictionary to support a particular etymology can be shown through prosopographical research to have a quite different origin. Reaney and Wilson tentatively attribute the Wakefield forename, *Modde* (1307), to a hypothetical Old English **Modd*, in their words 'a short form of names in *Mōd-*, though these were rare'.⁶³ In fact, the Wakefield court rolls that supplied the example show that the true source is a similarly rare but contemporary Romance name, *Modeste*,⁶⁴ for Thomas son of *Modde de Lynley*, sued for debt in 1307, reappears in 1308, in the same case, as Thomas son of

(Copenhagen, 1978), p. 196.

⁵⁸ See Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Personal Names*, pp. 296–300, Insley, *Scandinavian Personal Names*, pp. 392–98 (p. 397) and J. Adigard des Gautries, *Les Noms de Personnes Scandinaves en Normandie de 911 à 1066* (Lund, 1954), pp. 172–73.

⁵⁹ *DES*, s.nn. *Paw* and *Pawson*. ⁶⁰ *DEWS*, s.n. *Pawson*.

⁶¹ *Surnames and Genealogy*, pp. 46–47.

⁶² PRO, E179/159/5, m.13 and E179/159/4, m.4 respectively.

⁶³ *DES*, s.n. *Mudd*.

⁶⁴ See *Modesta* in Morlet, *Noms de personne*, II, 80, col.a.

Modesta de Lynley.⁶⁵ Instances like this show how fallible is the method on which historical personal name dictionaries have largely been based. Haphazard extraction of isolated name forms from here, there and everywhere is about as useful as random, unstratified digging is in archaeology.

The next two sets of names require more substantial discussion. Reaney and Wilson neatly distinguish between the short forms of *Margery* and *Margaret* (also *Mergery*, *Mergeret*) in terms of their inferred pronunciations. Forms implying the palatal affricate [dʒ], as in the spellings *Madge* and *Magge*, are assigned exclusively to *Margery* (also spelled *Marjory*),⁶⁶ while the more numerous forms implying the velar stop [g]—as in *Mag(ge)*, *Mog(ge)* and *Meg(ge)*, plus the diminutives *Mag(g)ot*, *Meg(g)ot* and *Mog(g)ot*—are allocated exclusively to *Margaret*.⁶⁷ It seems to make good sense but it begs some important questions concerning the pronunciation of ME *Margery*, the relative popularity of *Margery* and *Margaret* in the medieval period and their separate status as baptismal names.

These questions were raised in my mind by some prosoponymical material from medieval Nottinghamshire which substantially contradicts the picture given by Reaney and Wilson. In the case of *Magota* alias *Margar' Darby*, who appears in the Nottingham Borough court roll for 1375–76, there is no way of telling whether *Margar'* stands for *Margareta* or *Margaria*,⁶⁸ but normally in the Nottingham rolls *Magot* equates with *Margeria*, as when *Magota*, wife of William of Denby, 1386–87,⁶⁹ is called *Marg[er]ia* in a charter enrolled in 1389.⁷⁰ There are half a dozen other examples in the rolls, where, although absolute proof of identity is lacking, it is extremely likely that *Magot* and *Margeria* refer to the same woman. I suspect, too, that *Rad' Maggeson*

⁶⁵ *Court Rolls*, 2, pp. 69 and 139 respectively.

⁶⁶ *DES*, s.n. *Madge*.

⁶⁷ *DES*, snn. *Maggs*, *Maggot*, *Meggat*, *Megginson*, *Meggs*, *Megson*, and *Mogg*. The ME spellings -gg- and -ge- can represent either the affricate or the stop.

⁶⁸ Foulds, 'Calendar', CA 1279/202 (m.12). For *Margaria* as an alternative spelling to *Margeria* see below, n. 89.

⁶⁹ 'Calendar', CA 1287/39 (m.15).

⁷⁰ 'Calendar', CA 1288/93 (m.13d).

(1314) or *Magson* (1322)⁷¹ is identical with *Rad' fil' Marg[er]ie* (1315).⁷² In the court rolls of Edwinstowe (1389–99) circumstantial evidence suggests that *Joh' fil' Magot'* is the same man as *Joh' Marg[er]jison'*.⁷³ Then there is the byname *Moge*—a variant spelling of *Mog(ge)*, which Wilson and Reaney assign to *Margaret*,⁷⁴ but all my prosoponymical data points to *Margery*. In East Stoke, *Hug' Moge*, witness to a deed in 1344⁷⁵ and juror in an inquisition dated 1346–47,⁷⁶ is probably to be identified with *Hug' fil' Marg[er]ie*, assessed for tax there in 1327⁷⁷ and a juror in 1333,⁷⁸ while Robert *Moge*, who has granted property in Stoke according to the same inquisition of 1346–47,⁷⁹ is probably Robert son of Margery of Stoke, juror in the 1333 inquisition.⁸⁰ In Mansfield (Woodhouse) *Ric' Moge*, mentioned in a court roll of 1315–16⁸¹ and assessed for tax in Mansfield Woodhouse in 1327,⁸² is very likely the *Ric'o fil' Margerie* who appears in the Mansfield rental of 1297.⁸³

There are onomastic reasons for feeling fairly confident about these

⁷¹ Nottingham, Nottinghamshire Archives, CA 1255, m.3d and 1257, mm.8, 9 and 15d.

⁷² CA 1255, m.12.

⁷³ PRO, Special Collections, SC2/196/2, mm.1d, 2, 2d, 3, 5 and 8. The salient references are to *Joh' fil' Magot'*, pledged by *Will' Bellamy* (27.6.1389); *Joh'es Marg[er]jison'*, essoined, pledged by *Will' Belamy* (20.11.1389); after which his widow appears, *Emma nup' ux' Joh'is fil' Magot'*, essoined, pledged by *Will' Beelamy* (5.4.1390); *Emma nup' ux' Joh'is Marg[er]jison'*, sells land in Thoresby (8.11.1390).

⁷⁴ *DES*, s.n. *Mogg*.

⁷⁵ University of Nottingham Library, Department of Manuscripts, Smith Bromley of East Stoke MSS, 1305–1869, Sm 60.

⁷⁶ *Inquisitiones Post Mortem, 1321–1350*, p. 143.

⁷⁷ E179/159/4, m.14.

⁷⁸ *Inquisitiones Post Mortem, 1321–1350*, p. 207.

⁷⁹ *Inquisitiones Post Mortem, 1321–1350*, p. 144.

⁸⁰ See above, n. 78.

⁸¹ Mansfield Court Roll, 1315–16, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire Archives, DD P/17/1, m.12.

⁸² E179/159/4, m.4.

⁸³ SC2/196/10, m.1.

circumstantial identifications even though they are open to the objection that absence of evidence for alternative candidates called *Margareta* or *filius Margarete* is no proof that they did not exist. It is not just that I have searched in vain for the alternative candidates but that I have only one example of *filius Margarete* (dated 1382) in my entire collection of Nottinghamshire bynames,⁸⁴ and that this is consistent with a remarkable scarcity in the Nottinghamshire records of women named *Margareta* in the period up to 1350. This is quite unexpected, since other estimates of name frequency have suggested that *Margaret* was one of the most common names from the late twelfth century onwards and was rather more so than *Margery*.⁸⁵ In contrast I have twenty-one persons named *filius Margerie* (occasionally *filius Mariorie*) occurring in eighteen Nottinghamshire places between 1287 and 1333. In the same period *Margeria* occurs particularly commonly as a forename. For example, among the first hundred women listed by byname in the Index to Foulds' calendar of the Nottingham Borough court rolls for 1303–36, there are eighteen named *Margery* (the most frequent name in fact) and none named *Margaret*. After 1350 the Nottingham rolls record decreasing instances of *Margery* and increasing instances of *Margaret*, eventually producing a ratio of more than two Margarets to every one Margery, more in line with received opinion on the relative frequency of the two names.⁸⁶ But the earlier Nottinghamshire patterns are by no means

⁸⁴ *Inquisitiones Post Mortem, 1350–1436*, edited by K. S. S. Train and V. W. Walker, Thoroton Society Record Series, 12 (Nottingham, 1949 and 1952), p. 87.

⁸⁵ See Reaney, *Origin of English Surnames*, p. 132, Postles, 'The distinction of gender?', p. 84; Morgan, 'Naming Welsh women', pp. 128–30, and Redmonds, 'Christian names', p. 15. Peter Wilkinson tells me that in the West Riding wapentakes of Strafforth and Staincross, in the printed edition of the 1379 poll tax returns, 326 out of 5720 named women are called *Margareta* (or *Mergareta*) and only 17 *Margeria* (*Mergeria* or *Marior*'). Almost as remarkable is the fact that another 215 are called *Magot(a)*. It would be interesting to know if figures for *Margaret* derived from printed editions and calendars have been unwittingly inflated by editors assuming that MS *Marg*' and *Margar*' necessarily stand for *Margareta* rather than *Margeria* or *Margaria*.

⁸⁶ In Foulds, 'Calendar.... Index to People and Places, 1422–1455', there are

eccentric. In the Dyffryn Clwyd court rolls of 1340–51, persons named *Margery* (34) substantially outnumber those named *Margaret* (13), while *Magot* correlates with *Margery* on four occasions, with *Margaret* not at all.⁸⁷ In the early-fourteenth-century court rolls of Wakefield, though I have not attempted a full name count, I get the impression that *Margery* is three or four times as common as *Margaret* and that it frequently corresponds to *Magot*.⁸⁸

These findings force us to think again about the relationship that these names bear to each other. One possibility is that the *-g(g)-* in *Mag(g)ot*, *Mog(g)e* and so forth, when used as pet forms of *Margery*, represents the palatal affricate [dʒ]. If that were the usual case it is surprising that the modern surname *Madgett* is so rare, and that *Medge* and *Modge* do not seem to have survived at all. More likely there existed an alternative, velar pronunciation of *Margery*, whose short forms would then have been indistinguishable in speech from those of *Margaret*. This velar pronunciation is implied, perhaps, in spellings like Medieval Latin

57 Margarets and 23 Margerys.

⁸⁷ The following all appeared in the courts of Ruthin. Because the cases are different, identities cannot be absolutely proven but they are highly likely. *Margery le Lewede*, brewer in Ruthin, 1342 (SC2/2/137), is probably identical with *Magot le Leuwede*, brewer in Ruthin, 1346 (SC2/6/2112). *Magot* wife of Richard *de Marchal(e)*, 1341 and 1348 (SC2/2/103 and 8/332), is presumably identical with *Margery* wife of Richard *de Marchale*, 1345 (SC2/5/657). *Margery de Helpston*', 1340 (SC2/1/2), is very likely *Magota de Helpuston*', 1347 (SC2/7/255). *Magota Couplond*, 1347 (SC2/7/1959) is probably *Margery Couplond*, 1347 (SC2/7/2025).

⁸⁸ *Marjory* daughter of Adam son of Jordan (of *Holne*, 1317) is probably identical with *Margery Juddoghter* (1324) and *Magota Jeddoxter* (*sic*, of *Holne*, 1326), *doghter/doxter* signifying 'granddaughter'. *Margery Carter*, fined for brewing in 1324, is probably identical with *Magot le Carter* (same offence in the same year in a list which includes some of the same offenders). See *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield*, 4 (1315–1317) Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series, 78, edited by J. Lister (Wakefield, 1930), p. 182; 5 (1322–1331), Y.A.S., Record Series, 109, edited by J. W. Walker (Wakefield, 1945), pp. 41, 53, 51 and 95.

Margaria and ME *margary*, 'pearl',⁸⁹ as well as in the modern English surnames *Margary* and *Margrie*,⁹⁰ with which we may compare *Marguerie* and *Margri* in modern Normandy, Picardy and Belgium.⁹¹

The potential for onomastic confusion here lies deeper than accidental similarities of pronunciation, for *Margery* was in origin an Old French colloquial form of *Marguerite* (i.e. *Margaret*, from Latin *Margarita*),⁹² an etymology that remained explicit in the Old French and Middle English doublets *margarite* and *margerie*, 'pearl'. The derivation led Bardsley to treat *Margery* and *Madge* as merely familiar forms of *Margaret* throughout the medieval period.⁹³ Withycombe, however, categorically opposed this view, asserting (on what evidence she doesn't say) that '*Margery* was regarded as a separate name as early as the thirteenth century, and all connection with *Margaret* was soon lost'.⁹⁴ Reaney's explanations of the surnames *Madge*, *Maggot* and so forth show that he preferred Withycombe's version of events to Bardsley's.

The truth perhaps lies somewhere between these two extremes. Instances where the same woman is apparently called by both names are on record,⁹⁵ though there is always the possibility that they result from

⁸⁹ As in *Margaria le Mercer* and *Margaria relictæ Jacobi Motun*, 1270, *Records of the Borough of Leicester*, I, 135, *Margaria* or *Mergaria* (MS *M'garie*, genitive case) wife of Thomas Sherman, Nottingham, 1423-24, 'Calendar', CA 1320/32 (m.2d), and *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *margeri* (var. *margari*), citations dated c.1390 and c.1400.

⁹⁰ Recorded with these spellings in *DES* and *DEWS* respectively but without comment on the pronunciation.

⁹¹ See Morlet, *Dictionnaire*, s.n. *Marguerite*, A. Dauzat, *Dictionnaire étymologique des noms de famille et prénoms de France* (Paris, 1951), s.n. *Marguerite*, and Debrabandere, *Woordenboek*, s.n. *Marguerit(e)*. For medieval examples of *Margrie*, see M. Gysseling and P. Bougard, *L'onomastique calaisienne à la fin du 13^e siècle*, *Anthroponymica*, 13 (Louvain and Brussels, 1963), pp. 22, 24 and *passim*.

⁹² See Morlet, *Dictionnaire*, s.n. *Marguerite*, and *DES*, s.n. *Margary*.

⁹³ *DEWS*, s.nn. *Margerison* and *Margery*.

⁹⁴ *Dictionary*, s.n. *Margery*.

⁹⁵ In the *Wakefield Court Rolls*, 4, pp. 168 and 174, the same man is twice named in a court case of 1317 as John son of Margaret (of *Thornes*) and twice

errors in copying or transcription or in the expansion of ambiguous Latin abbreviations such as *Marg'* and *Margar'*. Even as late as the early 1600s, Camden remarks that *Margery* was thought by some to be identical with *Margaret*,⁹⁶ maybe in part because the better educated would have associated the names with their etymons, the synonymous *margarite* and *margery*. On the other hand, in one of the Dyffryn Clwyd court cases, the clerk first wrote *Margeria* and then corrected it to *Margareta*, implying that the distinction did matter.⁹⁷ Either way, if ME *Mag(ot)*, *Meg(ot)* and *Mog(ot)* could derive from either name, a clerk might be unsure whether to formalise these names as *Margeria* or as *Margareta*, which perhaps explains the frequency with which *Magot* was latinised as *Magota*. I suggest that we, too, should settle for one source rather than the other only when local onomastic and prosopographical evidence justifies it.

It has long been assumed that ME *Daw(e)*, *Daud(e)* and *Day(e)* were pet forms of *David* or *Davy*.⁹⁸ However, the only confirmed equivalence of *Daw* and *David* that I have found is probably Flemish, naming an Englishman living in Calais, so it is difficult to be sure what

again as John son of Margery (of *Thornes*). In the Dyffryn Clwyd court rolls Margaret *de Postif*, 1340 (SC2/1/1071 and 1117), is identical with Margery *de Postyf*, 1341, (SC2/1/1161, 1223 and 1277, same court case); Margery daughter of Adam *le Verdon'*, 1341 (SC2/2/1222), is identical with Margaret *de Verdo(u)n*, 1342 (SC2/2/1301 and 1324, same case); Margaret *Tregomyde*, 1341 (SC2/2/1138), is definitely Margery *Tregomid(e)*, 1341 (SC2/2/1180 and 1232, same case); and Margery wife of Peter Faber, 1343 (SC2/3/521, Ruthin court), is almost certainly Margaret wife of Peter Faber, 1344 (SC2/5/114, same court, different case).

⁹⁶ *Remains*, p. 105.

⁹⁷ Margaret, altered from Margery, wife of William son of Elias *de Leuer*, 1342 (SC/3/157); all subsequent references call her Margaret.

⁹⁸ See Camden, *Remains*, p. 141; *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*, 2 vols, edited by W. W. Skeat (London, 1886), II, 91 (1.369); *DEWS*, s.nn. *Daw*, *Dawkins*, *Dawson*, *Day* and *Daycock*; Weekley, *Jack and Jill*, p. 152; Withycombe, *Dictionary*, s.n. *David*; *DES*, s.nn. *Daw*, *Dawkins*, *Dawson*, *Day* and *Dayson*.

it proves about English usage.⁹⁹ Moreover, there are onomastic and prosopographical reasons for doubting that *David* was the only or even the usual source of *Daw*, at any rate in the northern half of England. George Redmonds has closely studied the 1379 poll tax returns for the West Riding and has come to the following conclusion:

Dawson,...always said to be from David, is the most common patronymic in the 1379 list, occurring scores of times. It must though have a different origin, for David was not really a Yorkshire Christian name at all in this period. Of the very few counted two who were called David Walshman were probably from Wales and in the only case where David can be seen to produce a surname it was Davison.¹⁰⁰

Redmonds' evidence contradicts Reaney's assertion that *David* was a common baptismal name throughout medieval England.¹⁰¹ *David* was not common in medieval Nottinghamshire either. I have made a large collection of personal names from the county's records, amounting to some 60,000 references dating from the late twelfth century to the end of the fifteenth century, and I have noted fewer than a dozen individuals with the forename *David* and only another dozen with the bynames *filius Davidi*, *Davy* or *Davyson*.

So how are we going to explain the frequency of surnames like *Dawes*, *Dawkins* and *Dawson* in the north midlands and the north of England? We could suppose that *David* is, nonetheless, the usual source and that it is an extreme case of a little used forename being maximally selected as a byname for its distinctiveness. That is hardly credible, and

more probably *Daw* has a different or another origin. Prosoponymical variants from Nottinghamshire and elsewhere establish that one source is certainly *Ralph* (Latin *Radulphus*). There are two principal lay subsidy rolls surviving for Nottinghamshire, one for 1327 and the other for 1332. For the vill of Toton the tax payers appear in exactly the same order in both rolls, but the position occupied in the 1332 roll by *Ric[ardo] Daukyn* is occupied in the 1327 roll by *Ric[ard]o fil' Rad[ulph]i*.¹⁰² This identification of *Daw* with *Ralph* comes as no surprise, for substitution of initial [r] by [d] is a regular feature of masculine hypocorisms in Middle English. *Richard* (or *Rickard*), shortened to *Rick*, is mutated to *Dick*, *Robert* to *Dob* and *Roger* to *Dodge*. On the same pattern *Ralph* (ME *Rauf*) and its allonyms *Rawl* and *Rawlin* were shortened to *Raw* and would have been mutated to *Daw*. *Daukyn* is thus a rhyming form of *Rawkin*, and the fourteenth-century Nottinghamshire byname *Daulyn* looks like a rhyming form of *Rawlin*.¹⁰³ I have suggested elsewhere that *Dauwe Ballard*, who was admitted to the Guild Merchant of Dublin in 1264–65, may be identical with *Radulphus filius Roberti Ballard*, who was given the freedom of the city of Dublin in 1248–49.¹⁰⁴ At least one of the Ballards of Dublin came from Chester,¹⁰⁵ and this fits well with evidence from north-east Wales which confirms the identity of *Dawkin* and *Ralph*. In his researches into the mid-fourteenth-century court rolls of Dyffryn Clwyd, Oliver Padel has discovered one certain and three probable instances in which a man with the forename *Dawkin* is alternatively named as *Ralph*.¹⁰⁶

The evidence for ME *Daud(e)* follows much the same pattern as that for *Daw(kin)*. Bardsley argues that *Daud*, like *Daw*, was a shortened

⁹⁹ *Dauid Anglicus* (1294) = *Dauwe lEngleis* (1298); see Gysseling and Bougard, *L'onomastique calaisienne*, pp. 35 and 91. All the personal names in late 13th-cent. Calais are either Flemish or (Picardy) French. *Dauwe* occurs again in the forename of *Dauwe de Berman* (p. 16) and, according to Gysseling and Bougard, in derivative forms in the bynames *Dauward* and *Dauwin* (p. 33), but compare Continental Germanic *Dawaredus* and *Dauwinus* in Morlet, *Noms de personne*, I, 65, col. b, and see Debrabandere, *Woordenboek*, s.n. *Dauw*.

¹⁰⁰ G. Redmonds, 'Christian Names in the West Riding, 1379—Part I', *Old West Riding*, n.s. 14 (1994), 16.

¹⁰¹ *DES*, s.nn. *Davey* and *David*.

¹⁰² E179/159/5, m.4 and E179/159/4, m.2 respectively.

¹⁰³ *Thom'* and *Will'o Daulyn*, Warsop, 1327 and 1332, E179/159/4, m.4 and E179/159/5, m.13; *Will'i Dawlyn de Crumbewell*, 1355, PRO, Just 2/120, m.5d; William *Dawlyn*, 1382, *Inquisitiones Post Mortem, 1350–1436*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁴ P. McClure, 'The names of merchants in medieval Dublin', *Nomina*, 19 (1996), 61–78 (p. 63).

¹⁰⁵ *Ricardus Ballard de Cestria*, admitted in 1232–33, *The Dublin Guild Merchant Roll, c.1190–1265*, edited by P. Connolly and G. Martin (Dublin, 1992), p. 64. Compare also *Dawe de Cestria*, admitted 1225–26 (edition, p. 53).

¹⁰⁶ See Padel, 'Names in -kin'.

form of *David*, and backs his conjecture with some circumstantial evidence in the West Riding poll tax returns that *Daw* and *Daud* were used interchangeably.¹⁰⁷ Reaney and Wilson follow suit, treating the ME (Derbyshire) byname *Daudeson* as a variant of *Dawson*, and explaining it as 'David's son'.¹⁰⁸ The prosoponymical data, however, indicates *Ralph* as the source. In the estate accounts for Lenton Priory (Notts.), *Radulpho de Siluerwod*' in 1297 occupies the same tenancy as *Daude de Siluerwode* in 1298.¹⁰⁹ The morphology of *Daud* is not entirely transparent. The only parallel I can think of is *Hud* (for *Huw*, i.e. *Hugh*), itself of uncertain formation. (Is it a voiced form of *Hut*, possibly a contracted form of *Huwet*?)

I would expect *Ralph* to be the usual origin of *Daw* and *Daud* in Yorkshire, too, and the only prosoponymical variants I have found, unfortunately no better than circumstantial, seem to bear me out. In the early-fourteenth-century Wakefield court rolls, *Dawson*, *Daude* and *Dande* [correctly *Daude*?], occur only in Sandal Magna, as the bynames of three men called Thomas, William and John,¹¹⁰ while Thomas, William and John 'son of *Ralph*' also appear in connection with Sandal.¹¹¹ Since *Ralph* occurs infrequently as a forename in these rolls, and even more rarely in bynames, it is probably safe to treat at least 'son of *Ralph*' and *Dawson* as prosoponymical variants. But West Yorkshire as a whole presents a more puzzling onomastic picture. Redmonds points out that in the West Riding poll tax returns of 1379 *Ralph*, which names only 108 (half a per cent) of over 20,000 male taxpayers, seems too scarce a forename to explain why *Dawson* is the most common

¹⁰⁷ DEWS, s.n. *Dawson*.

¹⁰⁸ DES, s.n. *Dawson*.

¹⁰⁹ *Lenton Priory Estate Accounts, 1296 to 1298*, edited by F. B. Stitt, Thoroton Society Record Series, 19 (Nottingham, 1959), pp. 9 and 21.

¹¹⁰ Thomas *Daweson* or *Dawson*, 1326 and 1327, *Court Rolls*, 5, pp. 95 and 122. William *Dawson*, 1331, *Court Rolls*, 5, p. 187. John *Dande* [sic], 1309, 1315, 1316 and 1329, *Court Rolls*, 2, p. 201; 3, pp. 68, 69, 82, 83, and 104; 5, p. 146; John *Daude*, 1331, *Court Rolls*, 5, p. 194.

¹¹¹ John son of *Ralph* and William son of *Ralph*, 1316, *Court Rolls*, 4, p. 100. Thomas son of *Ralph*, 1313, *Court Rolls*, 3 (1313–1316), edited by J. Lister, Y.A.S., Record Series, 57 (Leeds, 1917), p. 17.

patronymic in the returns, commoner even than *Johnson*.¹¹² We are back with the same problem, though not to the same degree, that we had with *David*, so Redmonds argues that there must be yet another origin for *Daw* and *Daud*, supposing it might be *John*, since it is much the commonest forename in the returns. But a plausible linguistic case for *John* is hardly feasible on the basis of present knowledge, and prosoponymical evidence is tantalisingly elusive. Nor do we require a close correspondence between the numerousness of families called *Dawson* and the frequency with which any putative eponym occurs as a forename. In Nottinghamshire between 1250 and 1350, *Ralph* is the forename of just over three per cent of a sample of 1000 patronymically named men and *William* is nearly six times that, at almost eighteen per cent. Yet *filius Radulphi*, naming 107 persons, is almost as numerous as *filius Willelmi*, naming 151 persons—roughly two 'sons of *Ralph*' to every three 'sons of *William*'. The trouble is that *Ralph* is so much scarcer in the West Riding than in Nottinghamshire that it is still unclear how it could be responsible for the exceptional frequency of *Dawson* there. If another baptismal name is not involved, some other factor will have to be found to explain the anomaly.

All the dictionaries state that ME *Day* is a pet name for *David*. It has several diminutive forms, including *Daykin* (or *Dakin*), *Daycock* and *Daycus*, and is the origin, they say, of the patronymics *Dason*, *Dayson* and *Deason*. Indeed, as proof that *Dawkin* is a hypocorism of *David*, Reaney and Wilson cite 'Magister Doctor *Dawkyns* 1534, identical with John *Dakyn* LL.D., vicar-general of York', the assumption being that *Dakyn* could only be for *David*.¹¹³ But in this case and in many others I am sure that *Dakin* is only a common pronunciation variant of *Dawkin*. In Victor Watts' words, '*aw/ay* variation is a very well attested phenomenon in English', resulting from the twin developments of ME *au* to [ɔ:], spelled *aw*, and to [a:], spelled *a*, *ay* and later *ea*, the [a:] subsequently being raised and diphthongised to [ei].¹¹⁴ The same

¹¹² Redmonds, 'Christian names—Part I', p. 16, and *Surnames and Genealogy*, pp. 42–45.

¹¹³ DES, s.n. *Dawkins*.

¹¹⁴ V. Watts, 'Shaw/Shay revisited', *Nomina*, 13 (1989–90), 109–114. Compare

variation can be observed in the surname of Thomas *Dakyn* or *Dawkins* of Attenborough in Chilwell, Notts., with whom I would associate Thomas, Maria, George and John *Dakyn* of Chilwell and perhaps William *Deakyn* or *Dakyn* of Edwinstowe, Notts., all of them recusants in the 1630s.¹¹⁵ It is conceivable that the Attenborough/Chilwell family was descended from the previously mentioned Richard *filius Radulfi* or *Daukyn* of the adjacent village of Toton in 1327 and 1332.¹¹⁶

In Wales and Scotland, on the other hand, surnames of a similar appearance may have originated in Welsh *Dai* and Gaelic *Daidh* (David),¹¹⁷ and it is possible that ME *Day* also signified 'David' in some parts of England. In such circumstances, variation between *Daw*- and *Day*- need not point to *Ralph*, as is evident in Black's citation of a sixteenth-century Scottish monk called David *Dason* (1541), *Dauisone* (1568) or *Dauson* (1571).¹¹⁸ Unless the spelling *Dauisone* is an error for *Dausone* or *Dawsone*, the name clearly signifies 'David's son' and tells us something about Scots usage, if not English.

It is important to give due allowance to variation in onomastic usage, through time and from one region or country to another. Though Middle Scots hypocorisms have many forms in common with Middle English, a shared usage should not be taken for granted. Bardsley explains thirteenth- and fourteenth-century English examples of *Dand(e)* and *Dandy* as pet forms of *Andrew* because of a Scottish reference in 1541 to 'Andro Elwand, callit Dand of Baghed', which Bardsley found in

Rauf/Rafe, Waukelin/Wakelin and *Wauter/Water* (Walter) in *DES*, s.n. *Ralf, Wakelin* and *Water*.

¹¹⁵ *Nottinghamshire County Records*, compiled by H. H. Copnall (Nottingham, 1915), pp. 149, 150 and 151. Compare the modern surnames *Ma(y)kin*, *Meakin*, *Paley*, *Pa(y)lin(g)* and *Ra(y)son*, probably in some instances variants of *Mawkin* (*Malkin*), *Pauley*, *Paulin* and *Rawson*, though not considered as such in *DES*.

¹¹⁶ See above, n. 102.

¹¹⁷ See Morgan and Morgan, *Welsh Surnames*, s.n. *Dafydd*, p. 82, especially the example, 'Gruffudd ap Dafydd...ap Dai; ap Dakin, ap Deicws, ap Deio' (early fifteenth century); and G. F. Black, *The Surnames of Scotland* (New York, 1946), s.n. *Day* and *Deasson* (which Black explains as an anglicisation of Gaelic *Macdhai*).

¹¹⁸ *Surnames of Scotland*, s.n. *Dawson*.

Armstrong's *History of Liddesdale and the Debateable Land*.¹¹⁹ Reaney and Wilson base their identical explanation on two prosoponymical citations that Reaney had taken from Black's *Surnames of Scotland: Dand* or Andrew Kerr (1499) and Andrew alias *Dandie* Cranston (1514).¹²⁰ Reaney remarks that this usage is generally regarded as Scottish, 'but the English examples' (he says) 'are much earlier than Black's earliest'. They are, but they do not necessarily represent the same hypocorism. In the Sherwood Forest Eyre roll of 1287, Henry, John and William *Dand* or *filius Dand* of Basford are also named as *filius Ranulphi*, that is 'son of Randal'.¹²¹ In the manorial court rolls of Mansfield, where the forest courts were held, there appears the same or another *Henr' fil' Ranulphi* (1291-92), as well as *Rad' fil' Henr' fil' Ran[ulph]i* (1315-16), who may be identical with *Rad' fil' Henr' fil' Dande* (also 1315-16).¹²² There is not a hint in my Nottinghamshire material of any correlation between *Dand(e)* and *Andrew*, although I have many other examples of *Dand(e)* as a forename and in bynames. Because of the ambiguity of *n* and *u* in handwriting of the period, some instances of *Dand(e)* may really represent *Daud(e)*—or the other way round, though if *Daude de Siluerwode* was really *Dande de Siluerwode*, then *Radulpho de Siluerwod* would have to be an error for *Randulpho*. On formal grounds it is possible that in Middle English, as well as Scots, *Dand* was sometimes a rhyming form of *And[rew]*, but on the prosoponymical evidence I have it was certainly used for *Randal*.

Such an interpretation also has the advantage that *Dand* for *Rand*, short for *Randal*, fills a gap in a well known set of rhyming pet forms, which as we have seen includes *Daw* for *Ralph* as well as *Dick* for *Rick*, *Dob* for *Rob* and *Dodge* for *Roger*. Another apparently unattested

¹¹⁹ *DEWS*, s.n. *Dandy*.

¹²⁰ *DES*, s.n. *Dand*.

¹²¹ E32/127, m.10d. They are each accused of taking branches from Bestwood Hay, adjacent to Basford, and act as sureties for each other. Compare also *Rob'to fil' Ranulphi*, pledged by *Henr' fil' Ranulphi* (m.7, pleas of vert in the court at Mansfield), with *Rob's fil' Dande de Baseford* (m.18, essoins).

¹²² Rental and Court Roll for Mansfield (1291-92), PRO, Special Collections, SC2/196/8, m.1, and Mansfield Court Roll (1315-16), DD P/17/1, m.1 (two different cases).

rhyiming form in the set is *Deyn(e)* or *Den(e)*, which you might expect to find for *Reyn(e)* or *Ren(e)*, short for *Reynald* or *Renald* (Latinised as *Reginaldus*). I think that the evidence for it is probably there in Reaney's and Wilson's dictionary, in the byname *filius Dene* (1301, Yorks.), but they explain it as 'son of the dean', as they also do *Densone* (1362, York).¹²³ In the *Lenton Priory Estate Accounts*, however, a tenant in Newthorpe is called *Deyne in Angulo* in 1297 and *Reginald in Angulo* in 1298.¹²⁴ This is therefore very likely the origin of the byname of *Ric'us fil' Deyne*, who is listed as a mainpernor in the Forest Eyre roll of 1287,¹²⁵ and it may be the source of some instances of the modern surname *Dean*.

Hypocorisms conform to patterns, and these patterns, once identified, enable us to propose explanations where direct proof is unavailable. It is well known, for example, that some male baptismal names with initial *R*- have rhyiming forms in *H*- as well as *D*-, as in *Hick* for *Richard*, *Hob* for *Robert* and *Hodge* for *Roger*. There is no obvious reason why the pattern should not have extended to other names in the group, so I would give serious consideration to explaining the patronymics *Hawson*, *Hawkes*, *Hawkins*, *Hayson*, *Haycock* and *Heacock* as rhyiming forms of *Ralph*; *Hand*, *Handekin*, *Hendy* and *Hendekin* as rhyiming forms of *Randal* or *Rendal*; and *Hean(es)* and *Heyn(es)* as rhyiming forms of *Reynald*. This line of approach is preferable on onomastic grounds to that pursued by Reaney and Wilson, whose explanations of the same surnames mostly show a preference for derivations from baptismal names whose existence is conjectural or which were obsolete or rare well before the time that these surnames were generally becoming hereditary. On the other hand, I haven't found any prosoponymical variants to convert my own speculations about these names into hard facts, and that brings me back to the starting point of this paper. Linguistic and onomastic guesswork, however plausible, should not masquerade as proof or be taken for indisputable fact, for the sake either of a general etymology or the interpretation of a particular instance. For this reason, the

¹²³ *DES*, s.nn. *Dean* and *Denson*.

¹²⁴ *Lenton Priory Estate Accounts*, pp. 9 and 21.

¹²⁵ E32/127, m.16.

hypocoristic forms of many ordinary medieval baptismal names have still to be reliably established, notwithstanding the confidence with which dictionaries of personal names assert particular etymologies.

The core problem is ambiguity—of linguistic form and of onomastic usage, at different times and in different places—and it is severely exacerbated by the non-defining contexts in which most names occur. For this group of personal names in particular, the defining contexts we require are prosopographical, which is why prosoponymical variants have been crucial to this reconsideration of some of the standard etymologies. Methodologically the way forward is unquestionably through comparative studies of records dealing with the same community or communities. Linguistically, such studies can familiarise us with the orthographical practices (whether of local or centralised documents), whose correct interpretation is vital to a sound etymology. Onomastically, they show us which names were current in the locality and with what frequency. Prosopographically, they enable us to identify recurrences of the same individuals (or their relatives) and, with luck, the prosoponymical variants that can establish the origin of a specific instance of a pet-name beyond doubt. By studying hypocoristic names in this way we not only acknowledge that the primary functions of personal names are social ones, we also greatly increase our capacity to resolve the etymological and onomastic ambiguities that otherwise perplex or mislead us.