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'Oneself as Another' and Middle English Nickname Bynames¹

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Although it is quite clear that bynames were descriptions, that is not all that they conveyed, at least not neutrally. If the totality of forms of byname is considered, a superficial impression is given of descriptors. Even in the case of nickname bynames—particularly those which refer to physical characteristics—the element of neutral description appears to be paramount. Nevertheless, this approach should be problematised. To some extent at least, bynames were a representation of the self by others. Self-fashioning through names was constricted, perhaps really limited to hypocorisms of the *nomen*, in which the self might comply or be actively involved.² If bynames implicitly reflected representation of the self by others, then that representation was likely sometimes to be rhetorical, not neutral. In this sense, bynames not only retained a lexical content for some considerable time, but were also further encoded and symbolic, acting as social and cultural markers. Such an assertion, however, looks on the surface speculative.³

¹ P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* translated by K. Blamey (Chicago, 1992), but not here as phenomenology. The elucidation of the meaning of nickname bynames owes, of course, a great deal to Peter McClure (references are given below).

² In general, S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning. From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980); *Reconstructing Individualism. Autonomy, Individuality and the Self in Western Thought*, edited by T. C. Heller, M. Sosna, D. E. Wellberg et al. (Stanford, 1986); for one approach to hypocorisms, P. McClure, 'The interpretation of hypocoristic forms of Middle English baptismal names', *Nomina*, 21 (1998), 101–32.

³ For anthroponymical approaches to nicknames, P. McClure, 'Nicknames and petnames: linguistic forms and social contexts', and C. Clark, 'Nickname creation: some sources of evidence, "naive" memoirs especially', both in *Nomina*, 5 (1981), 63–76 and 83–93.

Nevertheless, the possibility of such an interpretation has already been established, if perhaps not quite in this contentious manner. It is quite well comprehended that some forms of byname imputed status and honour and that others were associated with unfree or lower social groups in the middle ages, confirmation of which has been one of the most important contributions of the English Surnames Survey. Perhaps this relationship might be refined so that the attribution of the bynames in fact further defined, labelled and represented the status of the bearer—was not merely passive, but active. The description of women—most often through phrasal forms or compounds—related them to a significant male, father or (late) husband, dependent on the context. The implication might be here that it was contentious whether and when women might be considered to remain ‘out of hand’, not under male authority.⁴ In these senses, it becomes more apparent that some bynames were not merely descriptive, but rhetorical and discursive practices, intended to represent the self in certain ways.⁵

When nickname bynames of certain formations are considered, the discursive nature of some forms of naming becomes clearer. Some of the nicknames imputing moral characteristics were concerned not merely to describe, but to censure, to be normative and prescriptive, to condemn and to outlaw. These names as applied to some individuals were an attempt to impose some groups’ moral values, although it cannot be imputed that these values were ‘communitarian’, those of the ‘community’. It might well be that in some cases the values being imposed were those of the majority of the ‘community’, but there must also be some sensitivity to competing and contested values amongst social groups. Some nickname bynames might thus have been imposed on the self when values were transgressed, to define, discipline and correct the self. Examples of such instances might sometimes be the regulation of sexual morality within the ‘community’, when nicknames were imposed on transgressors of the values of some social groups to discipline an individual and to regulate sexual morality—as was later, it

⁴ P. Griffiths, ‘Masterless young people in Norwich, 1560–1645’, in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, edited by P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (London, 1996), pp. 168–71.

⁵ M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London, 1972).

has been suggested, performed by gossip.⁶ It is possible that the same discursive practice was applied in the case of individuals who transgressed some local notions of charity and hospitality, to discipline them and to regulate social morality. The attribution of nicknames thus had a normative force and intention.

Such assertions are rather grand and so perhaps it is important actually to provide some empirical examples to substantiate the pretensions, but later in the paper some further questions will be raised about the importance of linguistic variation and sociological changes which might have affected the formation and application of such nickname bynames.

First, perhaps consideration of sexual morality is extremely relevant, not least because it has been revealed to be an implicit value which has almost been concealed by narrowly linguistic analysis of nickname bynames. Even so, it must be remembered that the correct attribution of nickname bynames is problematic; as even von Feilitzen conceded: ‘Although, as is well known, the precise meaning of a nickname can hardly ever be ascertained...’⁷ If it is not too offensive, it might be instructive to start with the most salacious of nickname bynames revealed to date. In the late eleventh century, one of the inhabitants of Winchester was Godwin Clawecunte, a byname presumed to consist of (prototheme) OE *clawian* (to scratch) and (deuterotheme) OE *cunte* (female vulva).⁸ Simultaneously, in the same urban context, the nickname bynames *Balloc*

⁶ L. Gowing, ‘Language, power, and the law: women’s slander litigation in early modern England’, in *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*, edited by J. Kermode and G. Walker (London, 1994), pp. 26–47; *eadem*, *Domestic Dangers. Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1996); M. Tebbutt, *Women’s Talk? A Social History of ‘Gossip’ in Working-class Neighbourhoods, 1880–1960* (Aldershot, 1995); S. Hindle, ‘The shaming of Margaret Knowsley: gossip, gender and the experience of authority in early modern England’, *Continuity and Change*, 9 (1994), 391–419.

⁷ O. von Feilitzen, ‘The personal names and bynames of the Winton Domesday’, in *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages. An Edition and Discussion of the Winton Domesday*, edited by M. Biddle, Winchester Studies, 1 (Oxford, 1976), p. 220.

⁸ Von Feilitzen, ‘The personal names and bynames’, p. 210; *Middle English Dictionary*, edited by H. Kurath *et al.*, 12 vols (Michigan 1959–), II (C-D), 785 (*cunte*).

and *Taddeballoc* occurred.⁹ In 1167 in King's Lynn, a fine was imposed on Simon *Sittebid'cunte*.¹⁰ A century and a half later, one of the taxpayers in the lay subsidy for Surrey, assessed at 1s. in Wandsworth, was Peter *Fukebagge*, but this name is less likely sexual before 1503.¹¹

At this point, it might be appropriate to elicit from these few examples some of the points which will be refined further by additional evidence below. First, some of these nicknames are concerned with the regulation of sexual morality and are discursively constructed. Second, their appearance as compounded nickname bynames has occurred in Middle English at an early time, before any potential influence of Anglo-Norman; it will be contended below that these sexually explicit compounded nickname bynames were productively Middle English and not influenced by Anglo-Norman. Following from that, as in the example of *Clawecunte* which extends back to 1066, these phrasal or verbal compounded nickname bynames did not derive from Anglo-Norman influence. It will be suggested rather that Anglo-Norman compounds, even verbal or phrasal forms, were largely, although not exclusively, devoid of sexual innuendo or connotation. Linguistic variation might thus be important as Anglo-Norman might be conceived as part of a language of more self-restraint than early Middle English.

Thirdly, these forms above appeared in an urban context at an early time, in Winchester in the twelfth and thirteenth century, but it will be suggested that they disappeared from the urban context, resulting in a residual rural and particularly Northern context. If to some extent correct, such a transformation might have resulted from either the development of self-restraint in a more civil urban context or from the control of bodily representation, particularly the lower body.

There is, of course, no *a priori* reason why Anglo-Norman nicknames should not include the more robust sexual innuendo, for such vocabulary

⁹ Von Feilitzen, 'The personal names and bynames', pp. 207 and 216.

¹⁰ *The Making of King's Lynn*, edited by D. M. Owen, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, n.s. 9 (1984), 71.

¹¹ *Surrey Taxation Returns*, Surrey Record Society 33 (1932), p. 84; E. Partridge, *Dictionary of Historical Slang* (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 349 (an impotent man), but *Middle English Dictionary*, III (E-F), suggests only red dye for *fuke*.

was certainly insistent in the French *fabliaux* at a later time, whatever their precise context.¹² The *fabliaux* consistently deal in marked language or with *double entendre* with the same emphasis on the lower body.¹³ The northern French *fabliaux* thus display an analogous interest in 'low' culture, in heteroglossia, in marked language, and in low humour, as replicated in some Middle English nickname bynames.¹⁴ Both genres contain then the subversive laughter of the middle ages identified by Bakhtin.¹⁵ The reception of French lexis and, in the case of these compounded nickname bynames, some syntax, is problematic, because of issues of second language acquisition and the motives for individual clerk's code-switching, but these are issues which cannot be discussed here.¹⁶ Moreover, recovering the language of speech communities from written records is acknowledged to be an inherently

¹² J. Hines, *The Fabliau in English* (London, 1993), pp. 16–23 (*foutre, cons, coilles, cul* and *vit*).

¹³ See also R. H. Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 59–101 (ch. 2 'The body and its parts'). For marked language, R. Jakobson, *On Language*, edited by L. R. Waugh and M. Manville-Burston (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), pp. 134–40, but in a rather structuralist vein. For the body as a contested site of interpretation, B. S. Turner, *The Body and Society* (repr. London, 1996).

¹⁴ For the low humour, Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux*, pp. 101–28 (ch. 3 'The Fabliaux, Fetishism and the Joke').

¹⁵ M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968); an excellent exposition of the development of Bakhtin's thought is A. Swingewood, *Cultural Theory and the Problem of Modernity* (London, 1998), pp. 108–35; P. Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 77–78, 86–87 and 211–12; R. J. C. Young, *Torn Halves. Political Conflict in Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 49–53.

¹⁶ V. Cook, *Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition* (London, 1993); L. Voigt, 'What's the word? Bilingualism in late-medieval England', *Speculum*, 71 (1996), 813–26. For the context, I. Short, 'On bilingualism in Anglo-Norman England', *Romance Philology*, 33 (1980), 467–79; R. Lodge, 'Language attitudes and linguistic norms in France and England in the thirteenth century', in *Thirteenth Century England. Proceedings of the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference 1991*, edited by P. R. Coss and S. Lloyd (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 73–83.

risky business.¹⁷ Although significant French lexis was incorporated into Middle English, there is little evidence for sexually implicit French constructions in nickname bynames.¹⁸ Two potential examples are *peverel* and *l[i]evela[u]nce*, the former suggested by Cecily Clark, but for *levelaunce* and its Middle English cognates (Shakespeare, Waggstaff *et al.*), see below for a different interpretation.¹⁹ *Peverel* is particularly interesting because it was not confined to the Anglo-Norman nobility, but expanded throughout all social groups throughout the whole of England.²⁰ In Ellington a tenant of two acres at a rent of 2d. in 1166 × 1171 was identified by the byname *Peverel*.²¹ At the end of the fourteenth century, *Peverels* were taxed in Essex in several villis, including Great Waltham.²² In 1208–09, John *Lanceleuée* essoined in a plea before the King's justices.²³ The byname recurred in the person of Simon *Levelance*, taxed at 2s. in Worcestershire in c.1280.²⁴ There

¹⁷ P. Burke, 'Introduction', in *The Social History of Language*, edited by P. Burke and R. Porter, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 9–11.

¹⁸ For the incorporation of French loan-words, J. Coleman, 'The chronology of French and Latin loan words in English', *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 93 (1995), 95–124; for theoretical statements, F. Katamba, *English Words* (London, 1994), pp. 193–94, where it is suggested that nouns are the most common loanwords, but that verbs are also included in the 'open lexical classes'.

¹⁹ C. Clark, 'Socio-economic status and individual identity: essential factors in the analysis of Middle English personal-naming', in *Words, Names and History. Selected Papers of Cecily Clark*, edited by P. Jackson (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 110–12.

²⁰ For its proliferation amongst the peasantry of Devon, A. M. Erskine, *The Devonshire Lay Subsidy of 1332*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, n.s. 14 (1969), pp. 7, 8, 31, 33, 54, 93, 96 and 123.

²¹ *Cartularium Monasterii de Rameseia*, edited by W. H. Hart and P. A. Lyons, 3 vols, Rolls Series, 79 (London, 1884–93), III, 206.

²² *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381 Part 1 Bedfordshire–Leicestershire*, edited by C. C. Fenwick (Oxford, 1998), pp. 227–29.

²³ *Pleas before the King or his Justices, 1198–1212*, edited by D. M. Stenton, vol. IV, Selden Society, 84 (London, 1967), p. 118 (no. 3510).

²⁴ *Lay Subsidy Rolls for the County of Worcester*, edited by J. W. Willis Bund and J. Amphlett, Worcestershire Historical Society (1893), p. 74.

is another potential nickname of sexual innuendo in the Lincolnshire assize roll in 1202, for a clerk, Robert *Grantamur*, was appealed for rape by Letice de Gretford. The nickname here seems to impute the sexual avarice of a clerk in holy orders, and it may, in the circumstances of the difficulty of rape cases, be of little consequence that Letice defaulted so that the plea was a non-suit.²⁵ Beyond such possible examples, however, French constructions with low, sexual content seem to be inconsiderable. In the urban context, a comparable French nickname byname, from the freemen's admissions in Leicester, is *Daubedame*, with a rather subdued sexually-informed designation, literally 'deceive woman', almost certainly euphemistic.²⁶

It should be noted that the issue being addressed here is not whether verbal or phrasal compounded nicknames, referring to compounds of verb and noun, had a French or Middle English origin, but whether such compounds with sexual lexical content are likely to have been influenced by Anglo-Norman. Even so, the existence of *Clawecunte* in Winchester in c.1066 is perhaps an argument for an independent Middle English development.²⁷ Indeed, phrasal nickname bynames without sexual implications were abundant amongst the East Anglian peasantry in the late eleventh century, another argument for an autonomous Middle English production.²⁸

²⁵ *The Earliest Lincolnshire Assize Roll A.D. 1202–1209*, edited by D. M. Stenton, Lincoln Record Society, 22 (Lincoln, 1926), p. 119 (no. 670).

²⁶ *Records of the Borough of Leicester*, vol. I, 1103–1327, edited by M. Bateson (London, 1899), p. 10; *Anglo-Norman Dictionary Fascicle 2: D–E*, edited by L. W. Stone, W. Rothwell and T. B. W. Reid (London, 1981), p. 140 allows v.a. *dauber* 'to deceive, pretend' or adj. 'insincere, deceitful'; cf. also von Feilitzen, 'The personal names and bynames', p. 140.

²⁷ For discussion about the linguistic origin of verb+noun compounds, once designated imperative or 'Shakespeare' compounds, see: C. Clark, 'Thoughts on the French connection of Middle English nicknames', *Nomina*, 2 (1978), 38–44; B. Seltén, *Early East Anglian Nicknames: 'Shakespeare' Names* (Lund, 1969); G. Fellows-Jensen, 'On the study of Middle English by-names', *Namn och Bygd*, 68 (1980), pp. 107–09; J. Jönsjö, *Studies on Middle English Nicknames. I. Compounds* (Lund, 1979), pp. 38–40 and 43.

²⁸ *Feudal Documents from the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds*, edited by D. C.

By comparison, a rich vocabulary of Middle English compounds of a sexually implicit or explicit nature is already acknowledged: *Brountayl*; *Clevecunt*; *Coltepyntel*; *Cruskunt*; *Fillecunte* (code-mixing, but the salacious lexical item in Middle English); *Pytayl*; *Shaketaille*; *Scrattayl*; *Shakelaedy*; *Strekelevedy*; *Strektail*; *Tupballok*; *Twyhecunt*; and *Wytepyntell*. All these examples are derived from lay subsidies for the northern counties in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.²⁹ In the Warter cartulary, there is a reference to Sarah *Wagstaf*, a thirteenth-century widow; what we should elicit here is that her byname was probably inherited for its etymological base was the male member, as must also be relevant in the contemporary reference to Alice *filia Helene Waggstaff*.³⁰ *Shakespere*, of course, proliferated, so that it was the identification of a taxpayer in Staffordshire in 1327 who contributed 1s. 0½d., but in that same tax record are enumerated a *Cadeballe* (2s. 1¼d.) and a *Prikeproud* (3s. 5d.).³¹ It is possible, nevertheless, that *Waggstaff* and *Shakespeare* had different imputations, for which see below. At Hardwick (Warws.) in 1279–80, William *Grungetyl* was enumerated as a tenant of half a virgate.³²

At Berwick in Wiltshire, Alice *Plukkerose*, taxed at 1s. 8d. in 1332, possibly comported an inherited byname which had been applied to some

Douglas (London, 1932), pp. 25 (*Hopeheune*), 26 (*Crepunder*), 32 (*Scaldehyde*), for example (dated 1065 × 1098).

²⁹ Jönsjö, *Studies on Middle English Nicknames*, pp. 66, 71–72, 74, 77, 89–90, 148, 156–58, 171, 180, 182 and 197. Their sexual significance was confirmed by P. McClure, 'The interpretation of Middle English nicknames', *Nomina*, 5 (1981), 95–104, esp. pp. 98–99, and J. Insley, 'Recent trends in research into English bynames and surnames: some critical remarks', *Studia Neophilologica*, 65 (1993), 57–71; *Middle English Dictionary*, II (C-D), 322 (*cleven*: to stick, be sticky, adhesive).

³⁰ Bodleian Library, Fairfax MS 9, fos 12r and 14v.

³¹ G. Wrottesley, 'The Exchequer lay subsidy roll of A.D. 1327,' *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, 7 (1886), 199, 233 and 247.

³² *The Warwickshire Hundred Rolls of 1279–80. Stoneleigh and Kineton Hundreds*, edited by T. John, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, n.s. 19 (Oxford, 1992), p. 204.

male predecessor who wanted his way with women.³³ The same imputation exists in the byname of William *Schakerose*, taxed at 1s. 4d. in Wing (Bucks.).³⁴ In the taxation of Suffolk in 1327, Robert *Shakelaunce* was assessed at 1s. 6d. at Somersham, here the code-mixing comprising a French lexical item with sexual imputations, but the problem here is that the nickname might just as easily imply someone of hasty and violent temper, which might also resonate with the several other taxpayers in the county identified by the byname *Draweswerd*.³⁵ In the taxation of south Lincolnshire in 1332 occurred *Ledelady*, *Tatenwagge* and *Swetebonis*, but the latter is contentiously sexual, as well as the code-mixed *Cacelady*.³⁶ In the Lancashire lay subsidy about that time were enumerated William *Shakeshaft* at Aughton, Roger *le Lewed*' at Great Harwood, and in the earlier (1296) taxation in Northumberland John *Scharpyntil* at Wylam, William *Silvirpintil* at Wooperton and Henry *Barnefadir* (perhaps reflecting illegitimacy) at Corbridge.³⁷ *Pryketayl/-tail* was represented by Alice and John, both assessed in the Worcestershire lay subsidy of c.1280, at respectively 1s. and 5d., and it

³³ *The Wiltshire Tax List of 1332*, edited by D. A. Crowley, Wiltshire Record Society, 45 (1989), p. 87. For some implications of *-rose* representing woman, S. Kay, 'Women's body of knowledge: epistemology and misogyny in the *Romance of the Rose*', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, edited by S. Kay and M. Rubin (Manchester, 1994), pp. 211–35, and for the poet's misogynist expression of taking the rose to prove manhood, since that is woman's proclivity, p. 218.

³⁴ *Early Taxation Returns*, edited by A. C. Chibnall, Buckinghamshire Record Society (1966), p. 64.

³⁵ *Suffolk in 1327. Being a Lay Subsidy Return*, edited by S. H. A. H., Suffolk Green Books No. IX, vol. 11 (Woodbridge, 1906), 15; *The Medieval Essex Community. The Lay Subsidy of 1327*, edited by J. C. Ward (Chelmsford, 1983), p. 15.

³⁶ P.R.O. E179/135/14 (Holland/Kesteven), mm. 3, 6, 11, 18.

³⁷ J. P. Rylands, 'The Exchequer lay subsidy roll...', in *Miscellanies Relating to Lancashire and Cheshire* vol. 2, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 31 (1896), pp. 7 and 81; *The Northumberland Lay Subsidy Roll of 1296*, edited by C. M. Fraser, Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, Record Series 1 (1968), pp. 48, 106 and 177; *Middle English Dictionary*, VII (O-P), 955 (*pintel*: penis or male genitalia).

recurred in the same county in 1327.³⁸ In that county too, Philip *Waggestaf* repeatedly essoined in actions in the manorial court of Hales in 1271 and 1282.³⁹ This byname occurred also in the lay subsidy in Shropshire in 1327.⁴⁰ In the court rolls of the composite manor of Wakefield in 1297, Adam *Luvelady* appeared, presumably a man with a roving eye, although he was married.⁴¹ The byname *Ledelevedy* appeared in the lay subsidy of the West Riding in 1297.⁴²

In the far south of the country, lay subsidies included *Shakesper* in Surrey, taxed at 1s 8d., *Strokehose* (1s.), *Prykkeloue* (3s.), John *Pullerose* (1s.) in Sussex in 1296, *Sautrebedde* (code-mixed, 1s. 4d.) and *Prikeloue* (6½d.) in Sussex in 1327, and Robert *Pluckerose*, taxed at 4s. 2d. in Sussex in 1296, but of unfree status (*villanus comitis Warenn*).⁴³

In the West Riding Poll Tax of 1379, there are recurrent instances of what, by this time, are likely to have become hereditary surnames with sexual content: *Schakesper*; *Brekeballe*; *Smalehorne*; *Pyntylwagge* (*bis*, at Ilkley); *Serueledy* (but potentially occupational in another form of service); *Shakeshaft*; *Shakelady*; and *Ledelady*.⁴⁴ Illicit sexuality might

³⁸ *Lay Subsidy Rolls for the County of Worcester, circa 1280*, edited by J. W. Willis Bund and J. Amphlett, Worcestershire Historical Society (1893); *Lay Subsidy Roll for the County of Worcester, 1 Edward III*, edited by F. J. Eld, Worcestershire Historical Society (1895), p. 3.

³⁹ *Court Rolls of the Manor of Hales 1272-1307*, edited by J. Amphlett, S. G. Hamilton and R. A. Wilson, Worcester Historical Society (1910-33), pp. 34, 192, 196 and 208.

⁴⁰ W. G. D. Fletcher, 'The Shropshire lay subsidy of 1 Edward I', *Shropshire Archaeological Society*, 3rd series, vol. 5 (1905), 242.

⁴¹ *Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield, 1274-97*, edited by W. P. Baildon, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series 29 (1901), p. 271.

⁴² *Yorkshire Lay Subsidy being a Ninth Collected in 25 Edward I*, edited by W. Brown, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series 16 (1894), p. 135.

⁴³ *Surrey Taxation Returns*, p. 84; *The Three Earliest Subsidies for the County of Sussex in the Years 1296, 1327, 1332*, edited by W. Hudson, Sussex Record Society, 10 (1910), pp. 42, 50, 79, 95, 126 and 159.

⁴⁴ 'Rolls of the Collectors in the West Riding of the Lay Subsidy (Poll Tax) 2 Richard II', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 6 (1880), 3, 317, 324, 338, 459, 470 and 471.

also be disclosed by the incidence of *Barnefadir* at Morley, Ardsley and Headingley.⁴⁵ Similar bynames occurred in the contemporary Lancashire Poll Tax: John *Shakeshaft* at Aughton, Richard *Ledelady* at Windle, and Richard *Shakelady* at Lathom, for example.⁴⁶ In contrast, however, such surnames occurred less frequently in the Poll Taxes for other counties: perhaps only Richard *Wagstaff* in the High Peak of Derbyshire and William *Shakespere* at Cropston in Leicestershire with some possibility; but this statement is provisional, articulated on an examination of the extant Poll Tax returns for Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Carlisle, Derby, Derbyshire, Dartmouth, Dorset, Colchester, Essex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Herefordshire, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire and the West Riding.⁴⁷ Less certainly Cecily *Swetabedde* was captured by the Poll Tax at Talleshunt D'Arcy in Essex; perhaps in her widowhood, her defined status, she was uninhibited.⁴⁸

Perhaps some fairly provisional suggestions can be elicited from this evidence. First, by the late thirteenth century, it appears that the geographical incidence of these sexually-informed bynames was rural.⁴⁹ In 1252 and 1268, two burgesses admitted to the freedom of Shrewsbury both bore the byname *Buckeballoc*, whilst a townsman of Portsmouth in c.1248 was known as *Strokehose*.⁵⁰ In the circle of the burgesses—or

⁴⁵ 'Rolls of the Collectors in the West Riding', 305 and 316.

⁴⁶ Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes*, pp. 459 and 470-71.

⁴⁷ Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes*, passim and pp. 106 and 540.

⁴⁸ Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes*, p. 246; for the sexual connotations of Middle English *bedde*, J. Coleman, 'The treatment of sexual vocabulary in Middle English dictionaries', in *Middle English Miscellany: From Vocabulary to Linguistic Variation*, edited by J. Fisiak (Poznai, 1996), pp. 183-206; I am grateful to Julie Coleman for a copy of this paper.

⁴⁹ For the urban context, I have examined gild merchant rolls for Leicester and Shrewsbury.

⁵⁰ C. H. Drinkwater, 'The merchant gild of Shrewsbury. Seven rolls of the 13th century', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 2nd series 12 (1900), 251 and 259; *The Cartulary of Southwick Priory*, edited by A. Hanna, 2 vols, Hampshire Record Society, 9-10 (Winchester, 1988), 9, p. 151.

at least in their official records—such names, however, were significantly not more evident. By the late fourteenth century, the incidence was predominantly northern and rural, reflected in distribution in the Poll Taxes, but also illustrated by Richard *Shakelaedy* who contributed 4d. in the subscription for the stipend of the priest of Ormskirk in 1366.⁵¹ Next, the language is almost exclusively Middle English, which might tend to confirm perhaps that Middle English was a lower, vernacular register, whilst French, although still a vernacular, was a higher register, which engendered more polite as well as prestige forms of language use, a more ‘civil’ *parole* than a ‘coarser’ Middle English.⁵² Perhaps the influence of French in the urban context of the twelfth century introduced a culture of self-restraint which eliminated nickname bynames such as *Clawecunte*.⁵³ One final point might be that, by and large, the attribution of sexually-marked or -charged nickname bynames was

⁵¹ *Miscellanea Volume 2*, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 31 (1896), p. 110.

⁵² As well as the English record sources, I have examined in detail: M-Th. Morlet, ‘Les noms de personne à Eu du xiii^e au xve siècle’, *Revue Internationale d’Onomastique*, 12 (1960), 62–70, 137–78 and 205–19; *eadem*, *Dictionnaire Etymologique des Noms de Famille* (Paris 1991); and *eadem*, *Étude d’Anthroponymie Picarde. Les Noms de Personne en Haute Picardie aux XIII^e, XIV^e, Xv^e Siècles* (Amiens, 1967).

⁵³ At this point, mention is briefly made of N. Elias, *The Civilising Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*, translated by E. Jephcott, 2 vols (Oxford, 1994), which conceived of a much later formation of self-control, but see now R. Harré, *Social Constructions of Emotion* (Oxford, 1986). In the medieval context of Elias’s argument, for several revisions and, moreover, refutation, *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, edited by B. H. Rosenwein (Chicago, 1998), to which this paper will return later. For language in the urban context, C. Clark, ‘People and languages in post-Conquest Canterbury’, in *Words, Names and History. Selected Writings of Cecily Clark*, edited by P. Jackson (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 179–206. For perhaps an analogous discourse, J. Gillingham, ‘1066 and the introduction of chivalry into England’, in *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy. Essays in Honour of Sir James Holt*, edited by G. Garnett and J. Hudson (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 31–55.

directed towards males, who were presumably perceived to be sexually voracious and the transgressors of sexual norms or, it may be, females were generally either accorded more prestige forms of description or were constantly identified in relation to some male authority.⁵⁴

Sexual indiscretion was not, however, the only transgression of social norms, imposed by whatever section of the ‘community’, and so it seems that some other forms of nickname bynames were perpetrated to enforce those norms and prescriptions as a form of rhetorical strategy, producing a discursive practice of naming. As implied above, bynames such as *Shakespeare*, *Waggstaff*, *Shakelaunce*, and cognates might have an alternative, non-sexual imputation.

One of the principal transgressions was against some groups’ notions of charity (assumed here in the broad sense of *caritas* and hospitality).⁵⁵ Perhaps one of the most frequent representations of uncharitable nature through the attribution of a byname is *Penifader*, presumably a miser or penny-pincher. Interestingly, this byname was associated with one of the medieval peasant families of which we know quite an amount, the *Penifaders* of Brigstock, Northamptonshire, perhaps having attained a position in the peasant elite through self-interest.⁵⁶ The Essex Poll Tax

⁵⁴ I am grateful to Norman Hinton for some discussion about this point, but it is perhaps a reductionist perception (but not without some application), for the situation is undoubtedly more complex: J. Coates, *Women, Men and Language* (London, 1986); J. Holmes, *Women, Men and Politeness* (London, 1995); and J. Wolff, *Feminine Sentences. Essays on Women and Culture* (Cambridge, 1990). For the (perhaps limited) sexual vocabulary about women: L. Gowing, ‘Language, power and the law’; *eadem*, *Domestic Dangers*; R. Karras, *Common Women. Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 11–12 and 92 (the ambiguous meaning of *taille*); P. J. P. Goldberg, ‘Pigs and prostitutes: streetwalking in comparative perspective’, in *Young Medieval Women*, edited by K. J. Lewis, N. J. Menuge and K. M. Phillips (Gloucester, 1999), pp. 175 and 177.

⁵⁵ J. M. Bennett, ‘Conviviality and charity in medieval and early modern England’, *Past and Present*, 134 (1992), 19–41 is perhaps the best articulation.

⁵⁶ J. M. Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside. Gender and Household in Brigstock before the Plague* (Oxford, 1987), *passim*; *eadem*, *A Medieval Life. Cecilia Penifader of Brigstock, c.1295–1344* (Boston, Mass., 1999).

listed *Penifaders* at Willingale, Pleshey and Beauchamp Roding, as well as John *Turnepeny*.⁵⁷ Three contributors to the Poll Tax for Hampshire were known as *Penyfader*, at Wroxall and Arreton.⁵⁸ In the lay subsidy for Lancashire at the earlier part of the century, in 1332, William *Gederpeny* was taxed at Hutton.⁵⁹ In the Lincolnshire lay subsidy of 1332 two taxpayers had the byname *Hardepeny* or *Hardpene* whilst another was known as *Peniman*.⁶⁰ John *Wynnepeny*, assessed in 1377, 1381 and the re-assessment of 1381, in Canterbury in Kent, was a draper.⁶¹ In these nickname bynames resides the imputation of an excessive acquisitiveness which transgressed locally expected conventions of charity.⁶²

Concern for deviance from the norms imposed by some social group is also apparent in some other nickname bynames, illustrated quite graphically by Richard *Antecriste*, taxed at Wreay in Cumberland in the early fourteenth century.⁶³ Nor was he isolated for he had a predecessor who was involved in litigation before the royal courts relating to a Bedfordshire plea in 1205, William *Hatecrist*.⁶⁴ There seems no reason to invoke irony and interpret these nickname bynames as inversions, that

⁵⁷ Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes*, pp. 218, 232, 234 and 244; *Middle English Dictionary*, XI (T), 1163 (*turnen*: to spin, and thus a gambler?).

⁵⁸ Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes*, pp. 332 and 338.

⁵⁹ J. P. Rylands, 'The Exchequer lay subsidy roll', p. 45; *Middle English Dictionary*, IV (G-H), 5 (*gaderen*: to seek wealth, be covetous; but an alternative is as a cognate of *cachepol*, tax-collector).

⁶⁰ P.R.O. E179/135/14, mm. 1, 19 and 22.

⁶¹ Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes*, pp. 414, 419 and 433.

⁶² I. Hjerstedt, *Middle English Nicknames in the Lay Subsidy Rolls for Warwickshire*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia, 63 (1987), 193 (*Tornepeny*); *The Taxation of 1297*, edited by A. T. Gaydon, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 39 (1959 for 1958), 20 (*Hakepenne*, a coinclipper?) and 56 (*Turnepeny*).

⁶³ *Cumberland Lay Subsidy. Being the Account of a Fifteenth and Tenth Collected 6th Edward III*, edited by J. P. Steel (Kendal, 1912), p. 62.

⁶⁴ *Pleas Before the King or His Justices, 1198-1212*, edited by D. M. Stenton, III, Selden Society 83 (London, 1966), p. 222 (no. 1491); *Middle English Dictionary*, IV (G-H), 518 (*haten*).

is to impute excessive religiosity. That would be too cute. What is intended here is surely the marking out of extreme scepticism.⁶⁵ Although subversive irony did indeed have a role in nickname bynames, it should not be sought to distraction, and some of these bynames should be accepted at their face value.

Living in charity and neighbourliness might thus have been a convention or topos which was infringed, infractions represented particularly by the French nickname byname *mauveisin*.⁶⁶ Discord was perhaps also frequently perpetrated by some whose nickname bynames suggested hotheadedness and an easy resort to violence. Such intemperance is possibly reflected in the French phrasal nickname byname *Bruselance* (*Briselaunce*), which is certainly evident by c.1201, in a case of breach of faith, for which a witness was Geoffrey *Bruselance* of Buckinghamshire.⁶⁷ The Middle English synonym was undoubtedly *Brekespere* as encountered in the lay subsidy for Essex in 1327 and Buckinghamshire (Mentmore).⁶⁸ Intemperate disruption of local harmony is also implicit perhaps in the fairly ubiquitous Middle English *Drauspere* and *Draweswerd*, or *Waggesperere*, a byname in 1278.⁶⁹ Of course, anger is

⁶⁵ The limits of what could be imagined have been expanded by S. Reynolds, 'Social mentalities and the case of medieval scepticism', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 1 (1991), 21-42.

⁶⁶ For its occurrence in N. France, M-Th. Morlet, *Picardie*, p. 193. For England, Stenton, *Pleas*, III, pp. 96 (no. 783) (a knight), 220 (no. 1471, Shropshire), IV, p. 316 (no. 4773, an attorney); *Suffolk in 1327*, pp. 26, 136, 207 and 208; Wrottesley, 'Exchequer lay subsidy', p. 228.

⁶⁷ *Select Cases from the Ecclesiastical Courts of the Province of Canterbury, c.1200-1301*, edited by N. Adams and C. Donahue, Selden Society 95 (London, 1978-79), p. 16. For later occurrences, PRO E179/135 /15, m.1 (Stamford, Lincs., 1332); *Wiltshire Tax List*, p. 9.

⁶⁸ *Medieval Essex Community*, p. 9; Chibnall, *Earliest Taxation Returns*, p. 61.

⁶⁹ *Early Huntingdonshire Lay Subsidy Rolls*, edited by J. A. Raftis and P. Hogan (Toronto, 1976), pp. 185-86, 251 and 255-56 (*Drauspere*); *Medieval Essex Community*, 1327, p. 15 (*Draweswerd*); *Suffolk in 1327*, pp. 27, 45, 205 and 207 (*Draweswerd*). For an earlier French cognate in an urban context, Winchester in the early twelfth century, von Feilitzen, 'The personal names and bynames', p. 210 (*Cuillebrant*). For the *Drauspere* kinship at Hallaton (Leics.):

an emotion at least in part socially constructed and contingent, expected in some circumstances depending on status, deplored in others again related to status.⁷⁰ What is represented and criticised through these bynames is presumably a too-hasty resort to inappropriate violence or display of violence which disrupts local harmony.

Although quantitatively few, nickname bynames of this tenor confirm in an explicit manner that bynames were not always merely neutral descriptions of people only with the intention of identification. Nor was irony the sole characteristic of these specific nickname bynames, not even just subversive irony. The attribution of this small number of nickname bynames involved a regulatory discourse, a purpose of imposing norms accepted by some social groups, whether relating to sexual honesty or neighbourliness, which had been transgressed. We are then left with the question of how the recipients of these names complied in their use, for these names occurred in semi-formal, and certainly official, records, the names given, for example, to the local collectors of central taxation. Nevertheless, nicknames from other records and different contexts, might relate a different cultural environment for the genesis of nicknames.⁷¹

Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes*, p. 532; P. R. O. DL30/80/1102, mm. 5–6 (Hallaton manorial court rolls, 1378–82: presentments for baking and brewing); *Middle English Dictionary*, X (SM–SZ), 434.

⁷⁰ S. D. White, 'The politics of anger', in *Anger's Past*, pp. 127–52.

⁷¹ A pertinent point here is records of 'criminal' proceedings, such as Crown Pleas, pointed out to me some years ago by Paul Brand, and Paul Griffiths has recently indicated to me the potentially different context for nicknames as informal names in a later environment.

Postscript: After completing this paper, Norman Hinton kindly brought to my attention *Obscenity. Social Control and Artistic Creation in the European Middle Ages*, edited by J. Ziolkowski, Medieval and Early Modern Series (Leiden, 1998), but I have unfortunately not been able to incorporate it into my paper. My differentiation by gender above has now been complicated by Gunoka Cunteles who unsuccessfully appealed Elias Alkestair' for rape at the York Crown Pleas in 1218–19: *Rolls of the Justices in Eyre being the Rolls of Pleas and Assizes for Yorkshire in 3 Henry III (1218–19)*, edited by D. M. Stenton, Selden Society 56 (1937), p. 256 (no. 689).

Simeon of Durham's Annal for 756 and Govan, Scotland

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The annal for 756 preserved in the *Historia Regum* attributed to Simeon of Durham (flourished 1104–08) has been translated as follows:

King Eadberht, in the eighteenth year of his reign, and Angus, king of the Picts, led an army against the city of Dunbarton. Hence the Britons accepted terms there, on the first day of the month of August. But on the tenth day of the same month there perished almost the whole army which he led from *Ovania* to Newburgh, that is New City.¹

This record has been variously regarded. Jackson described Eadberht (737–58) as overwhelming the men of Strathclyde, so that English power in southern Scotland reached its high-water mark, when it seemed the English would absorb all Scotland south of Forth and Clyde. However, the day was saved by the 'crushing defeat inflicted on Eadbert by the Britons as he was retiring from Dumbarton', and the power-struggles in Northumbria that followed Eadberht's death in 758.² Wainwright comments on Northumbria's power in defeating the Britons at Dumbarton, but not on the subsequent fate of Eadberht's army.³ Kirby describes Eadberht as joining forces with the formidable Angus son of Fergus to attack Dumbarton, 'but immediately after—how we are not told—Eadberht's army was unexpectedly destroyed.'⁴ Stenton notes merely that Eadberht's wars temporarily arrested the decline of Northumbria, citing his conquest in about 752 of Kyle and other regions

¹ *English Historical Documents c. 500–1042*, edited by D. Whitelock, 2nd edn (London, 1979), p. 266.

² K. H. Jackson, 'The Britons in Southern Scotland', *Antiquity*, 29 (1955), 77–88 (p. 85).

³ *The Problem of the Picts*, edited by F. T. Wainwright (Edinburgh, 1955), p. 8.

⁴ D. P. Kirby, *The Making of Early England* (London, 1967), p. 60.