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

which hypocorisms belong to which baptismal names.

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How, for instance, should we explain the byname of Ricardji Malyn de Gedelyng who appears in a Nottinghamshire coroner’s roll of 1356? 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. 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). 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.3

3 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.
6 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 Maret (i.e. Margaret, see below, n. 29) as apparently it was in Dyffryn Clwyd (ex inf. Oliver Padel). Compare Iolo for

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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 Parvolorum, 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). This name was adopted from Old French Mahald, Mahold, ultimately Continental Germanic Mahildis, whence Medieval Latin Matilidis, 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 Heustasus bercarius,9 while in two separate cases Maud Moton is probably the same woman as Malkin Moton’.10 Among some

Lorwerth, Welsh Surnames, p. 140. Modern Welsh Mali for Mary could have been formed in the same way or adopted from English usage.
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’ruit ux’ Herui (1316) and Matild’ Heruy (post 1316).\(^1\) In the early-fourteenth-century Wakefield court rolls there are several women named Maud who are almost certainly alternatively known as Mulkin or Malin.\(^1\) 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.\(^1\) 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.\(^1\) As we know from Shal

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\(^{11}\) 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).

\(^{13}\) *Compare Maude de Dekeby (of Rastrick with Malina de Dekeby (of Rastrick), p. 7, Maude de Soursby (of Wakefield), p. 216, with Malina de Soursby (of Wakefield), pp. 119 and 163; Maud Godesaule (of Wakefield), p. 215, with Malkine or Malindy Godesowel (of Wakefield), pp. 119 and 149.*


\(^{15}\) 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.v. Hawkin). For alternative explanations see DES, s.n. 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 II, 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 Abbreviatures of English Christian Names’ in A. Littledon, *Linguae Latinae Dictionarius Quadripartitus* (London, 1678) [unpaginated]. See also E. J. Dobson, *English Pronunciation*.

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

\(^{15}\) See DES, s.n. Pelt, and G. Redmonds, *Surnames and Genealogy: A New Approach* (Boston, Mass., 1997), p. 46. Alternatively Pelle(te) might be a syncopated form of an *-el diminutive of Per such as Perel or Peronel, and Get(te) might be a syncopated form of Gerald, which was used interchangeably with Gerard (see DES, s.n. Gerald). DES, s.n. Gel, however, derives the name from Jelen, a variant of Julian/Gilian.


\(^{17}\) The figures are based on the forenames of the first hundred women listed by byname in T. Foulds, ‘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. 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. 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), 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 only once. 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. Such evidence disproves Withycombe's (unsubstantiated) view that 'Mary suffered an eclipse after the Reformation and was seldom used during Elizabeth's reign'. 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. 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, 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, onomastical 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.

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, 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_ (diminitivisation 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 _Niccol_27 and _Naud_ for _Reynaud_), medial (syncope, as in _Maret_ for _Margaret_28 and _Phip_ for _Philip_), final

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-xxxxvi, and _Origin of English Surnames_, pp. 149-56.
28 In the Nottingham Borough court rolls _Newde 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 1527/217 (m.9).
29 As in Seynt Maretis alias Seynt Margarets (Edingley, Notts.) 1497, _Calendar of Nottinghamshire Coroners' Inquests, 1485-1558_, edited by R. F. Hinnissett, Thoroton Society Record Series, 25 (Nottingham, 1969), p. 3. This may be the origin of some, even all, instances of the surname _Merrett_, 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(atrix), Gef for Geoffrey, Tab for Tabald 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 _-elot, -eloin, -onel, -inet and -inot_, and _k_ suffixes such as _-k, -kin, -kok, -cot and -cus_.30 These diminutivising suffixes are sometimes added to a full name (e.g. _Philpot_) 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, Bog for Mog and Nund for Mund_ (probably an apthetic form of a name like _Edmund_).31 Rhyming forms of names beginning in a vowel are achieved by means of a prothetic 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 prothesis 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 playul phonological substitutions

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_, smn. _Addy, Baty_, etc.
31 John and Roger _Nund_ of Sutton in Ashfield (manor of Mansfield, Notts.), 1294-95, Rental, PRO, Special Collections, SC1/537, m.1, are identical with John and Roger _Mund_ 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 Bartelnew,32 Gib for Gilbert and Larkin for Lawrence33—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 Aikin for Aidkin) and unrounding of o to a (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 Ellis37 and could as well be of Ellen, too, or else an aphaetic form of Pernel. Gel, as we have seen (above, notes 15 and 32), could be the result of apocope (Gelion),

32 Similarly Rab (Barbara), Bet (Bertilnew, Bertram), (Heb (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(en)el, 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.m. Palcock, Paley and Pall, less convincingly derives ME Pall(e) and Pally from either a postulated Old English *Palla or Old Danish Palli. ME al was commonly vocalised to ou, so forms like Maddy, Raf and Wat can be derived from Maid or Maud, Ralf or Rauf, Walter or Walter.
34 See DES, s.m. 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.m. Neal.
37 See Redmonds, Surnames and Genealogy, p. 45.

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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 hypocorist forms 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 onomatic 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 hypocrismons 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


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


While names, especially Old French Gilles, ME Gill(ie), 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 *fillius Bille* (1301, Wakefield, W. Yorks.) to one of two (by then) long obsolete names, Old English *Bil* or Old Norse *Bildr*. But in terms of the local onomastic currency of the late thirteenth century, *Bill(e)* 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 Matilda Hercy and so forth, the same person is known by variant name forms. I am going to call these forms prosoponymic variants.


\(^{42}\) 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 Cecil 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

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 Parva lorum (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 Abbe(he) 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, Abb a ux’ Hen’ Lotefyn.46 and this proves to be a short form of Al brei 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

43 DEWS and DES, s.n. Hudd.
44 DES, s.n. Hudd, adduces prosoponymical variants from Yorkshire to substantiate this more plausible derivation.
45 PRO, Justices of the Forest, E32/127, m.12.
46 Continental Germanic Alberada, Old French Albrei, Aubree, for which see DES, s.n. Aubray, Forssnet, 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 dymologique des noms de famille (Paris, 1991), s.n. Aubrée.
47 PRO, Special Collections, SC11/534, mm.2 and 3.
48 PRO, Special Collections, SC11/534, mm.2 and 3.
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. Formally Abbe belongs therefore to a hypocoristic set that includes Wacke (ke) for Walkelin or Waukelin51 and Wat(t)e for Walter or Wauer.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 Toll le grangier, 1218 (Lincs.)53 and Toll de Reyford, 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 borleifr and borleikr,55 but in Gringley, at least, the actual origin is another Old Norse name, bóraldr, for Rog’s fil’ Tollie, 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. Borleikr is occasionally recorded in independent use in twelfth-century England56 and *Toll and borleifr only in place-names,57 whereas bóraldr was common as a baptismal

50 PRO, Exchequer, King’s Remembrancer, Subsidy Rolls, E179/159/4, m.4.
51 Wacke de Monsorell, 1269, is identical with Walkelino de Monsorell, 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.
55 DES, s.n. Toll.
56 See Insley, Scandinavian Personal Names, p. 420.
57 As in Tollesbury 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 bóraldr (or rather its Old Northern French form, Torald) is the usual source of ME Toll(e).

The modern surnames Paw and Pawson are derived by Reaney and Wilson from Old English pawa ‘peacock’ (Latin pavo), a nickname which they believe to have been used as a baptismal name in instances like Tetricus Pawa filius (c.1095), Pavo Cocus (1203) and the West Yorkshire bynames ‘son of Pawa’ (1277) and Pawaesone (1379).59 They discard Bardsley’s earlier suggestion that the Yorkshire examples of Pawa 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 vil 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 Mod-, 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 Lymel, sued for debt in 1307, reappears in 1308, in the same case, as Thomas son of

55 DES, s.nn. Paw and Pawson. 60 DEWS, s.n. Pawson.
56 Surnames and Genealogy, pp. 46–47.
57 PRO, E179/159/5, m.13 and E179/159/4, m.4 respectively.
58 DES, s.n. Muld.
59 See Modeste in Morlet, Noms de personne, II, 80, col.a.
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 Merger, Mergeret) in terms of their inferred pronunciations. Forms implying the palatal affricate [dʒ], as in the spellings Magde and Magge, are assigned exclusively to Margery (also spelled Marjory),66 while the more numerous forms implying the velar stop [ɡ]—as in Magge, Mogge and Megge, plus the diminutives Mag(g)or, 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 Margarla,68 but normally in the Nottingham rolls Magot equates with Margeria, as when Magota, wife of William of Denby, 1386–87,69 is called Margerfia 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

Modesta de Lynley.65 (1314) or Magsone (1322) is identical with Rad’ fil’ Margerfie (1315).71 In the court rolls of Edwinstowe (1389–99) circumstantial evidence suggests that Joh’ fil’ Magot’ is the same man as Joh’ Margerfison’.73 Then there is the byname Moge—a variant spelling of Mogge, 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’ Margerfie, 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’ Margerrie who appears in the Mansfield rental of 1297.83

There are onomastic reasons for feeling fairly confident about these

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65 Court Rolls, 2, pp. 69 and 139 respectively.
66 DES, s.n. Madge.
67 DES, s.n. Maggs, Maggot, Megge, Megges, 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 Margeria as an alternative spelling to Margerlie see below, n. 89.
69 ‘Calendar’, CA 1287/39 (m.15).
70 ‘Calendar’, CA 1288/93 (m.13d).
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 Margerfisone, esoined, pledged by Will’ Belamy (20.11.1389); after which his widow appears, Emma nup’ ux’ Joh’es fil’ Magot’, esoined, pledged by Will’ Beelamy (5.4.1390); Emma nup’ ux’ Joh’es Margerfisone’, 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 Inquisitions Post Mortem, 1321–1350, p. 143.
77 E179/159/4, m.14.
78 Inquisitions Post Mortem, 1321–1350, p. 207.
79 Inquisitions Post Mortem, 1321–1350, p. 144.
80 See above, n. 78.
81 Mansfield Court Roll, 1315–16, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire Archives, DD P1/71/1, 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, 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 Margareta was one of the most common names from the late twelfth century onwards and was rather more so than Margery. In contrast I have twenty-one persons named filius Margerie (occasionally filius Mariort) occurring in eighteen Nottinghamshire places between 1287 and 1333. In the same period Margerita 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. But the earlier Nottinghamshire patterns are by no means

55 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 Margerita) and only 17 Margerita (Margerita 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 Margerita or Margaria.
56 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. 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.
These findings force us to think again about the relationship that these names bear to each other. One possibility is that the -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 Midge 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.
58 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 Marchaile(e), 1341 and 1348 (SC2/2/103 and 8/332), is presumably identical with Margery wife of Richard de Marchale, 1345 (SC2/5/667). Margery de Helpston’, 1340 (SC2/1/2), is very likely Magota de Helpston’, 1347 (SC2/7/255). Magota Couplond, 1347 (SC2/7/1959) is probably Margaret Couplond, 1347 (SC2/7/2025).
59 Marjory daughter of Adam son of Jordan (of Holne, 1317) is probably identical with Margery Juddogther (1324) and Magota Jeddixer (sic, of Holne, 1326), dochier/dixter 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', as well as in the modern English
surnames Margary and Margry, with which we may compare
Marguerie and Margry in modern Normandy, Picardy and Belgium.
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),
an etymology that remained explicit in the Old French and Middle
English doublets margerite and margerie, 'pearl'. The derivation led
Bardsley to treat Margery and Madge as merely familiar forms of
Margaret throughout the medieval period. Withcombe, 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’
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, though there is always the possibility that they result from

9 As in Margaria le Mercer and Margaria relicta Jacobi Motun, 1270, Records
of the Borough of Leicester, 1, 135, Margaria or Margor (MS M'gari,
genitive case) wife of Thomas Sherman, Nottingham, 1423–24, ‘Calendar’, CA
1320/32 (m.2d), and Middle English Dictionary, s.v. margeri (var. margary),
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. Marguerie, A. Dauzat, Dictionnaire
étymologique des noms de famille et prénoms de France (Paris, 1951), s.n.
Marguerite, and Debrabandere, Woordenboek, s.n. Margarite(ie). For medieval
eamples of Margry, see M. Gysseling and P. Bougard, L'onomastique
calaisienne à la fin du 13e 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.n. 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 Thorne) 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, maybe in part because the better educated
would have associated the names with their eynoms, 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. 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 Magor 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. 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 Thorne). In the Dyffryn Clwyd court rolls
Margaret de Postif, 1340 (SC2/1/1071 and 1117), is identical with Margery de
Postif, 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
Verdon(u)n, 1342 (SC2/2/1301 and 1324, same case); Margaret Tregomitde, 1341
(SC2/2/1138), is definitely Margery Tregomit(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
(SC3/157); 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.n. Dau, Dawkins, Dawson, Day and Daceock; Weekley, Jack and
Jill, p. 152, Withycombe, Dictionay, s.n. David; DES, s.n. Dav, Dawkins,
Dawson, Day and Dayson.
it proves about English usage. 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.  

Redmonds’ evidence contradicts Reaney’s assertion that David was a common baptismal name throughout medieval England. 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 surnames filius Davidi, Davy or Davysen.

So how are we going to explain the frequency of surnames like Dawer, 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 surname 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[ard][o] Daukn is occupied in the 1327 roll by Ric[ard][o] fil’ Radulph[us]. 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. Daukn is thus a rhyming form of Rawkin, and the fourteenth-century Nottinghamshire byname Daulyn looks like a rhyming form of Rawlin. I have suggested elsewhere that Dawe Ballard, who was admitted to the Guild of 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. At least one of the Ballards of Dublin came from Chester, 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. The evidence for ME Dau(e) follows much the same pattern as that for Daw(kin). Bardsley argues that Daud, like Daw, was a shortened

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99 David Anglicus (1294) = Dawe IEngleis (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. Dawe occurs again in the forename of Dawe de Berman (p. 16) and, according to Gysseling and Bougard, in derivative forms in the surnames Daward and Dawuin (p. 33), but compare Continental Germanic Dowaerdus and Dauwinus in Morlet, Noms de personne, i, 65, col. b, and see Debrabandere, Woordenboek, s.n. Dauw.
101 DES, s.nn. Davey and David.
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 Siluervod in 1297 occupies the same tenancy as Dauode de Siluerode 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 Hu, 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 Dauode?], 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 put 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.
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 Dauode, 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 Radalphi, naming 107 persons, is almost as numerous as filius Willelm, 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 Daie is a pet name for David. It has several diminutive forms, including Daykin (or Dakin), Daycock and Daycs, and is the origin, they say, of the patronymics Dason, Dayson and Deason. Indeed, as proof that Dakin is a hypcorism of David, Reaney and Wilson cite ‘Magister Doctor Dawkyns 1534, identical with John Dakyn L.L.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 Dawkyn. In Victor Watts’ words, ‘aw/au variation is a very well attested phenomenon in English’, resulting from the twin developments of ME au to [a: ], spelled aw, and to [a:], spelled a, ay and later ea, the [a:] subsequently being raised and diphthongised to [ei]. 114 The same

113 DES, s.n. Dawkins.
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. It is conceivable that the Attenborough/Chilwell family was descended from the previously mentioned Richard filius Raduli or Daukyn of the adjacent village of Toton in 1327 and 1332.

In Wales and Scotland, on the other hand, surnames of a similar appearance may have originated in Welsh Daf and Gaelic Daídh (David), and it is possible that ME Day also signified ‘David’ in some parts of England. In such circumstances, variation between Day 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 Dawson (1571). Unless the spelling Dauisone is an error for Dauisone or Dawson, 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 Dande or Dandy as pet forms of Andrew because of a Scottish reference in 1541 to ‘Andro Elwand, callit Dand of Baghed’, which Bardsley found in

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T. Armstrong’s History of Liddesdale and the Debateable Land. 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). 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’.

In the manorial court rolls of Mansfield, where the forest courts were held, there appears the same or another Hen fil’ Ranulphi (1291-92), as well as Rad fil’ Hen fil’ Ranulpfi (1315–16), who may be identical with Rad fil’ Hen fil’ Dande (also 1315–16). There is not a hint in my Nottinghamshire material of any correlation between Dande or Andrew, although I have many other examples of Dand(e) as a forename and in bynames. Because of the ambiguity of and under the handwriting of the period, some instances of Dande(e) may really represent Dau(e) — or the other way round, though if Dande de Siluerwode was really Dande de Siluerwode, then Ranulph de Siluerwod would have to be an error for Ranulphi. On formal grounds it is possible that in Middle English, as well as Scots, Dand was sometimes a rhyming form of Andowel, 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

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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’t fil’ Ranulphi, pledged by Hen fil’ Ranulphi (m.7, pleas of vert in the court at Mansfield), with Rob’s fil’ Dande de Basford (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).
rhyming 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 Ronald (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). In the Lenton Priory Estate Accounts, however, a tenant in Newthorpe is called Deyne in Angulo in 1297 and Reginald in Angulo in 1298. This is therefore very likely the origin of Ric'us fil' Deyne, who is listed as a mainpennor in the Forest Eyre roll of 1287, 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 rhyming 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 patronyms Hawson, Hawkes, Hawkins, Hayson, Haycock and Heacock as rhyming forms of Ralph, Hand, Handekin, Hendy and Hendekin as rhyming forms of Randal or Rendal, and Hean(es) and Heyn(es) as rhyming 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 prospomymical 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 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 prospomymical 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 prospomymical 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.

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123 DES, s.nn. Dean and Denson.
124 Lenton Priory Estate Accounts, pp. 9 and 21.
125 E32/127, m.16.