Naming the People of England, c.1100-1350
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ABBREVIATIONS

1 General

Bodl. Bodleian Library, Oxford
B. L. British Library, London
C-G Continental-Germanic: names of West Germanic/Frankish origin introduced into England predominantly after 1066, although they had intruded in small numbers in the early eleventh century.
EEA English Episcopal Acta
n.s. new series
ME Middle English
OE Old English
T. N. A. The National Archives (formerly Public Record Office), London
YASRS Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series

2 Lay subsidies (tax records)

Cumberland J. P. Steel., ed. Cumberland Lay Subsidy ... 6th Edward III. Kendal: Wilson, 1912.
Archaeological and Natural History Society 30 (1908): 23-96.

Devon
Audrey M. Erskine, ed. The Devonshire Lay Subsidy of 1332. Torquay: Devon and Cornwall Record Society n.s. 14, 1969.

Dorset1327

Dorset1332

Essex

Gloucestershire

Huntingdonshire

“Kent”

“Lancashire”

“Leicestershire”

Northumberland
Constance M. Fraser, ed. The Northumberland Lay Subsidy Roll of 1296. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-
Abbreviations

“Shropshire”  

Somerset  
F. H. Dickinson, ed. *Kirkby’s Quest for Somerset.* London: Harrison for the Somerset Record Society 3, 1889 [including the 1327 lay subsidy].

“Staffordshire”  

Suffolk  

Surrey  
*Surrey Taxation Returns.* London: Roworth for the Surrey Record Society 33, 1932.

Sussex  

Warwickshire  

Wiltshire  

Worcester  

Yorkshire  

Yorkshire  
EXPLANATION OF SOME TERMS

In this volume, preference has been accorded to *nomen* to indicate the “name” as “forename”. “Forename” is ambiguous when, for instance, only one name—for example, Geoffrey—is employed and there is no apparent *cognomen* or byname. The decision to employ *nomen* is consistent with the terminology used in recent European anthroponymic studies.¹ In referring to second, qualifying names, byname signifies an unstable, flexible and (presumed) non-hereditary second name. Concomitantly, either: this name may change from one generation to the next (and thus be distinctive to the individual, not necessarily the kinship); or the bearer might be designated by two or more different bynames depending on circumstances. *Cognomen* approximates to byname. Where the second name has definitely become hereditary and a family name, then the term adopted is surname. In this differentiation as *cognomen*, byname and surname, the practice here is less complex than in recent European anthroponymic studies, but it accords with previous English onomastic categories. Since both *nomen* and *cognomen* had significance to contemporaries, but are difficult to translate with the proper nuances, the most appropriate practice would probably be to attempt to define those terms in a discursive manner as an introductory explanation and then to employ the Latin terms in the subsequent text. Whilst this approach might seem pedantic, it is a solution which promotes accuracy. Nevertheless, since byname and surname have some clarity, those terms too are dispersed through the text.

The linguistic composition or structure of English names in the twelfth century was probably more complex than elsewhere in Europe, due to several different phases of influence.² Insular personal names evolved in two phases, but from a single ultimate origin: West Germanic or Old English (OE) personal names were ushered in directly, but a second phase of names of West Germanic origin was introduced by the Scandinavian invasions (Anglo-Scandinavian). Although differing to some extent from OE in lexical elements and to a greater degree phonemically, Anglo-Scandinavian names had the same ultimate origin, but the migration of these

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¹Bourin, *Genèse Médiévale de l’Anthroponymie Moderne*.
names was more convoluted.\textsuperscript{3} Insular names, particularly OE ones, consisted basically of three forms: compounded or dithematic forms, which combined two elements, prototheme and deuterotheme; uncompounded or “simplex” names; and hypocoristic forms which were elisions of dithematic names. This distinction is made here because the construction of names before the Conquest has been attributed social significance and, further, the structure of these names after the Conquest has some importance.\textsuperscript{4}

After the Conquest, name forms which had hitherto only infiltrated in isolated manner into England proliferated, principally the so-called Continental-Germanic (C-G) personal names such as William, Henry and Robert, but comprising a corpus of about five hundred male names.\textsuperscript{5} Two other forms of \textit{nomen} were imported: Brittonic or Middle Breton forms, perhaps epitomized by Alan, Brian and Joel (Middle Breton \textit{Judhael}), and forms of Scandinavian names that arrived in England by a yet more convoluted pathway, from their origins in West Germany, through Scandinavia, and then through Normandy before reaching England.\textsuperscript{6} These last forms are a cause of particular confusion and ambiguity because of the difficulty of differentiating between Anglo- and Norman-Scandinavian forms introduced respectively in the ninth and eleventh centuries.\textsuperscript{7}

The final phase of accessions of new name forms in England consisted of Christian names \textit{stricto sensu}—that is, saints’ and Biblical names—during the twelfth century. The rate at which Christian and biblical name forms were absorbed into the wider active corpus is important, since so much significance has been attached to their impact in “France” in particular.

\textsuperscript{3} For the corpus and distribution of Scandinavian names see Fellows Jensen, \textit{Scandinavian Personal Names}; Insley, “Some Scandinavian personal names from south-west England” and “Regional variation in Scandinavian personal nomenclature.”

\textsuperscript{4} Clark, “English personal names ca. 650-1300”; Redin, \textit{Studies on Uncompounded Personal Names}; Seltén, \textit{Anglo-Saxon Heritage in Middle English Personal Names} (for the term \textit{simplex}).

\textsuperscript{5} Forssner, \textit{Continental-Germanic Personal Names}.

\textsuperscript{6} Although Brian may be Goidelic/Old Irish in origin, its post-Conquest dissemination must have owed more to Breton influence.

\textsuperscript{7} Apart from analysis by their phonemic content, possibly the only unequivocal methods of separating out Norman- Scandinavian name forms are by reference to des Gautries, \textit{Les Noms de Personnes Scandinaves en Normandie} and by the forms of syncopation: Insley, \textit{Scandinavian Personal Names in Norfolk}, xxxviii.
INTRODUCTION

REFORMULATING NAMING CULTURES,
c.1100-1350

The transformation of naming patterns in the period 1075-1225 highlights a central fact about names: they can be chosen. Each generation makes new choices and in these choices they are influenced by ever-changing fashions and interests.\(^1\)

Anthroponymy—interpretation of the social and cultural significance of personal names—has thus been introduced into the *New Oxford History of England*, a series intended to become a standard work of reference, by an historian acutely aware of the cultural field.\(^2\) The resurgence of interest in naming as an element of cultural transformation in the High Middle Ages undoubtedly owes much to the so-called “cultural turn”.\(^3\) If cultures can be defined largely in terms of “webs of significance” that humans in societies have themselves created, then names are fundamental to cultural processes.\(^4\) Bartlett advances a number of broad points: that there was a transformation in naming processes in England between 1075 and 1225; implicitly that names are an integral part of cultural formations; and that as cultural items names are perhaps the most flexible and mutable which can—at least theoretically—be changed with each generation. This quotation, indeed, encapsulates one of the major issues (re-)considered in this present volume: how changes in naming contributed to the transformation of the cultural field in England in that “long twelfth century”, but more particularly what exactly was the nature of those changes *in all their complexities*. It will be contended in this volume that the character of those transformations was indeed more complicated than linear narratives have hitherto suggested. The volume has more expansive agenda, however, in exploring other issues of the relationship of naming processes to wider cultural practices. It is that theme which provides coherence to the volume: the theme of naming as cultural process. In this introduction, the various strands of that theme will be explored, some suggestions hazarded about the general nature of cultural worlds and some specific comments made on how the cultural contexts of the “long twelfth century” might be perceived. It is equally important,
however, to establish how other recent research on personal naming has advanced us to our present position of knowledge of these processes.

Without doubt, recognition of the importance of personal names in medieval England has been realized principally through the continuous and remarkable research and interpretation of the late Cecily Clark. Pronouncements about the role of personal naming in cultural transitions in post-Conquest (and, indeed, pre-Conquest) England, would have remained inchoate without the accumulation of her studies which together have combined to form a wide-ranging interpretation of personal naming in the English eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In its integration into general analytical studies of eleventh- to thirteenth-century England, however, her complex understanding has sometimes been reduced to an unproblematic narrative of socio-cultural diffusion. The operative processes were not, however, so straightforward. In seeking to restore the ambiguities and ambivalence, this volume will frustrate some readers, but may have the redeeming feature of avoiding the problems of a reductive narrative. In attempting to reintroduce the complexities, an interpretation different from Clark’s is being promoted, but it could not have been advanced without her substantial and brilliant research. How the interpretation here deviates from Clark’s is explained below.

A second stimulus to reinserting naming processes and patterns into the mainstream of historical research emanates from the now extensive publications of the consortium of scholars—mostly from an historical background—coordinated by Monique Bourin. Although the processes of naming differed somewhat in continental Europe, the comparative dimension permitted by the pioneering collective research by the *Genèse Médiévale* group has expanded English horizons immensely. Other recent explorations of continental personal naming have substantiated the reinvigoration of the contribution of personal naming to social and cultural transitions.

Behind this present formulation of personal naming in the English high middle ages reside two theoretical assumptions. The first is about language use. English anthroponymists have become rather critical of Scandinavian linguistic analysis of personal naming, concentrating, as it tends to do, purely on lexis. Clark herself extended an important plea for examining personal names within the socio-economic milieu of their bearers. With the revival of prosopography, the demand for understanding the extra-linguistic context has become irrefutable. Accordingly, the discussion of personal names in the following chapters refers strongly—perhaps repetitively—to the social and economic background of the bearers, as individuals and within their social groups. The lesson has been accepted and fully taken into account.
Yet language is important, although not just from the purely linguistic and lexical approach. Cultures are constituted through many fields, the principal of which is perhaps language. Cultures include beliefs, thought processes, and repetitive actions (habitus or structuration), but their expression is mediated through language—as metaphor and metonym. Language is, however, more than the communication of cultures. It is itself action—it does things or acts upon things. In consequence, language produces not only a social mirror—representation, metaphor, symbolism—but also acts as a social agent. Language can then be considered as speech acts within the speech community which had effects and consequences. What those consequences were can be debated, but for some of the time the consequences—and intended effects—can be any of identity, inclusion or ostracism, regulating, disciplining, shaming and humiliating, excluding, and defining. Within these parameters naming was language in action and could contribute to all of those outcomes.

Secondly, cultures are rarely homologous or homogeneous. Much effort has been expended on illustrating the linear transformation of personal naming after the Conquest—an uncomplicated wholesale replacement of one culture of naming by another. Cultures are more frequently hybrid, processual, dynamic and shifting, rather than abrupt and uninterrupted changes. The diachronic is as important as the synchronic; dominant cultures rarely eliminate residual elements. Nor is there an unreserved conflation towards the dominant: dominant cultures are powerful, but power is also dispersed. Domination meets resistance and subversion, whether overt or, more usually, covert, hidden and concealed.

In this volume, therefore, emphatic themes are: what the giving and receiving of names do; and how cultures through names are negotiated and come into conflict. The notions of “negotiation” and “conflict” might appear to be exceptional to the context of names. The tendency in analyzing naming patterns and processes has been predominantly to concentrate on one mechanism of distribution—diffusion (as noted above). It might seem absurd to consider naming and the giving of names as a form of “resistance”, but in certain historical contexts that must have happened. One of those historical contexts during which tactics of resistance might have obtained is the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.

In considering naming in this timescale, the emphasis has hitherto been directed at the transformation of naming between the Conquest and the early thirteenth century. To some extent, like some Reformation studies, knowing the outcome has influenced perceptions of the earlier processes. In these present studies, however, the less visible aspects of the processes and the timescale receive attention. In contrast with former studies, specific questions advanced here are: why was the timescale so extensive given the flexibility of naming processes; why are there areas where there is a
persisting legacy of earlier forms of naming; and why did unstable bynames precede hereditary surnames if the Norman baronage had already developed hereditary surnames in the late eleventh century and we are confronted purely by downwards cultural conflation?

Correspondingly, although there existed some limited coherence of social and cultural worldviews and cosmologies, even mentalités, heterologies must also be appreciated. Even medieval cultures were not conclusively homologous. For this reason, there is no sustainable rationale for an overwhelming commitment or adherence to mentalités, not even at the level of Chartier’s “critical fidelity” to the concept. For the practice of naming, it’s ultimately better to recognize its heterology: in that critical transformation of naming during the long twelfth century, some acceded to the new traditions of the Normans, Bretons and Flemish, others resisted those introductions to preserve the legacy of the old, and yet others embraced a “hybrid” solution, naming one child in the insular tradition and the other in the “new” fashion.

One aspect which has not been appropriately addressed is what we might term “hybridity”. In post-colonial explorations “hybridity” is an important concept which helps to explain the colonial encounter—the engagement between governors and governed. We might construe in this way the contention of Ann Williams that Norman authority depended into the 1130s on insular local and petty administrators. Perhaps misappropriating this notion of hybridity, in anthroponymical terms we might consider those kinships which allocated both insular and new continental names. The questions which must be confronted therefore are: what were the motives for this attribution of divergent name forms within kinships; and how frequent were such situations?

The probable response to that latter question is uncertainty, for so little prosopographical or genealogical material can be recovered for twelfth-century, insular peasant and urban families. That problem might not matter, however, for perhaps the numbers were less important than the symbolism. The answer will depend, of course, on where the emphasis resided—on the sibling with the new nomen or on the one with the traditional nomen. Now, assuming that there was a cultural impetus to adopt the nomina of the new overlords, then a particular significance must have attached to the decision to retain an insular nomenclature. Through its retention, cultural identity was fragmented. On the one hand was an attempt to accord with a cultural transition, but on the other an effort to remember a traditional culture. Contained within this naming process is thus de-centered cultural identity and uncertainty, signified by a reluctance to abandon a traditional cultural affinity.

Now, one further complication is what possessed some fathers who had been attributed new forms of nomen to confer on their offspring insular
personal names? Although not multitudinous—as far as we can perceive—some cultural significance might well have attached to such decisions.

A couple of examples from the north might illustrate this point. At the higher level of OE kinships which survived, Meldred filius Dolfini and his brothers, Robert and Patrick, attested charters of Hugh, Bishop of Durham, in 1154x1166. Yet another of Bishop Hugh’s charters was witnessed by Thomas prepositus of Howden and his brother, Wlf. At a lower level, Tocc filius Tocc’ sold land to the nuns of Newcastle before 1154x1174, his brother, we are informed, named Alan. Although there was—in the long run—acculturation by subordinate groups to the dominant ideology of naming, the process was protracted, but more importantly it was not unitary or homologous. It proceeded at different paces in different areas because of legacies and practices of resistance.

Politically, socially and culturally one of those subordinate groups was women. Although only two chapters are devoted to female naming, the importance of female naming is recognized, since there are obvious debates about whether the names of women were ciphers for cultural practices: what did the names of females express in cultural terms and at different times? How did women’s names communicate female status and gender roles? Did certain forms of female nomina articulate not only symbolic meaning but also involve lexical context? Chapters 5 and 8 include examinations of these issues of female naming and gender significance. Although female names do not appear very frequently in the remaining chapters—and thus female naming is artificially separated off—the reason for their omission elsewhere is technical rather than epistemological. It is quite simply extremely difficult to accumulate sufficient data for the issues of female naming. Occasionally, the problems are glimpsed, as in the enumeration of Margery dicta le (sic) Prest who held a bovate by gift of her husband, John Prest, in the borough of Burton in 1319. Here, as explored in chapter 8, Margery is described by reference to a male from whom the property derived. Nevertheless, uncertainty about the status of her byname induced the interposition of dicta, as explained in chapter 8. For women’s naming, however, accumulating sufficient data to make meaningful statements remains difficult.

Names particularly, but not exclusively, in the medieval period thus belonged partly to the symbolic field (the cultural world) and partly to the social order (through their meanings for kinship and spiritual kinship). As integral parts of language and speech acts, moreover, they operated in the social world as markers, as definers, as excluding, and as labels. Through nickname bynames, the power was available to stigmatize, shame and humiliate. Like the hermeneutics of reading and texts, however, the symbols could be appropriated and their intention subverted.
To invoke the “micro-politics” of power might also seem inappropriate. On the other hand, although much is understood about the “giving” of *nomina*, much is still concealed about the naming process for *cognomina* and bynames. Whilst the influence of spiritual kinship, patrilineage, clerical intervention in the naming ritual, and differences of gender, are all considered to have had an impact on the conferral of *nomina*, the actual mechanisms behind the attribution and reception of bynames remain hidden, except by analogy. At least in the case of some nickname bynames, their bestowal and reception disclose the “politics” or “micro-politics” of the local inhabitants. From the treatment of marginal people much can be understood about the values and culture of the dominant groups. Wherever possible, therefore, disclosure of the negotiations behind the assignment of nickname bynames or, indeed, of other forms of description, is immensely important. Although the occasions may be few, vital information is revealed. How people are addressed within their local society divulges not only their own social position but also the values behind naming and the social uses of naming vis-à-vis local customary practices, customs which vary from one society to another.

Contained within names are the dignity and indignity of social position and aspirations thereto, whether realized or not. Apart from Clark’s exploration of the naming of burgesses and peasantry, onomastic research into personal names has hitherto tended to converge on the higher and lower nobility where patterns and processes are more visible. In contrast, the studies in the present volume focus, wherever feasible, on the lower social orders, differentiating then burgesses, free peasantry and unfree peasantry in an attempt to elucidate the relationship between dignified and base social and cultural positions. Where relevant, these studies also adopt an approach which is sensitive to regional differences rather than regarding “England” or “the English” as geographical and cultural unities. Space is allowed first for regional variations in change and stronger legacies of residual or oppositional cultures and second for hybridization and complexity. Further examination is directed to registers of language in relation to cultural and social valency. The whole tenor of this volume is consequently to explore the differences, to move away from a unifying narrative, and to restore to the elucidation of change the complexity which is perceptible.

The subsequent chapters thus attempt to establish a revised narrative about the naming of the people of England between c.1100 and c.1350. The *terminus a quo* is established by the end of the first generation after the events of 1066. If, as has been predicated, names could theoretically change rapidly each generation, then one might expect some considerable extent of transition by this time. Even given the longevity of some people alive in 1066, an element of altered consciousness about naming might be
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expected by c.1100. Such a rapid transformation did not occur: Clark's own work has established that.

The terminus ad quem is much more an artificial divide. The rationale is the adoption of Fransson's "rule-of-thumb" (for it is no more than that) that by about 1350 bynames were being generally transformed into hereditary surnames (family names rather than individual's second, qualifying names, bynames or cognomina).\(^2\) It is quite evident that the general stabilization of flexible bynames into hereditary surnames was a much more complex process, varying by social group and by geography. Indeed, core families within social groups acquired stable surnames before the remainder of the social group. Even amongst burgesses and the free peasantry, the process commenced in the early and mid thirteenth century. In some locations, such as some northern areas, instability persisted into the late fourteenth century – and perhaps even later in some forms. We can, nonetheless, accept c.1350 as a notional terminus ad quem with some justification.

In chapters 1 and 2, a substantial revision is projected for the development of the cultural contexts of the giving of nomina in the “long twelfth century”. The pace of change is revisited. Geographical differences in the substitution of name forms are analyzed, whereas such differences have previously been glossed over. Responses to cultural impositions are re-examined. Having established that different understanding of what happened in the formative period up to c.1220, the third and fourth chapters consider the later processes involved in name-giving in non-noble social groups: burgesses and peasantry. A more extended examination than previously is made for these social groups, exploring what were the potential influences on the decisions behind name-giving. By this stage, we can almost unequivocally refer to “forenames” and we have sufficient material to assess in some detail differences by gender in patterns and processes of attributing “forenames”. In chapter 6, attention is turned towards the acquisition and reception of bynames, processes which have been much conflated in previous research. Again, emphasis is placed on the unevenness, ambiguity and complications of change by comparison with linear and uncomplicated narratives previously advanced.

1 Bartlett, England under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 540.
2 Ibid., 538-46.
3 Earlier disquisition on medieval culture, however, perhaps owed more to Bakhtin: Gurevich, Categories of Medieval Culture and Medieval Popular Culture.
4 Geertz, “Thick description,” 5: “…that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs…”, from which Geertz assumes the route that anthropology is a hermeneutic process concerned with meaning/understanding not causation/explanation. The critique adopted in
this present volume is that we might want to reinsert the social (action) into what are real processes—like ritual (or naming—which, indeed, might be conferred through ritual actions). So the concern about ritual should perhaps be not only what it means, but what it does.

5 Clark, *Words, Names and History*, brings together some of her contributions.


7 To cite some recent examples, Dunbabin, “What’s in a name? Philip, King of France” for the highest levels of society, importantly citing earlier research by C. B. Bouchard; LeJan, “Entre maîtres et dépendants” and Michaud-Frejaville, “Hommes et femmes dépendants de Déols.”

8 “Socio-economic status and individual identity.”

9 For the success of the prosopographical approach, see the journal *Medieval Prosopography. History and Collective Biography*.

10 For an incisive introduction to the structuration theories of P. Bourdieu and A. Giddens, Parker, *Structuration*.


12 As explained, for example, by Hunt, “Introduction: history, culture, and text” in *The New Cultural History* edited by Hunt, 1-22.


14 Such an assumption seems to inform most recent work on medieval anthroponymy. In this context, the criticisms of the “general idiom” (Geertz) of culture within a society is relevant. The criticisms are summarized by Hunt, “Introduction: history, culture, and text,” 12-14. The problem of the “general idiom” is not merely its presumption, but the reference “inside-outside” which induces the ambiguity of squaring the “hermeneutic circle”.


16 In the sense of the micro-politics of power, after Foucault; for a succinct explanation, Danaher, Schirato, and Webb, *Understanding Foucault*, 46-62.

17 For analogous contexts, see, for example, Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*; for wider perspectives, Miller, Rowlands and Tilley, *Domination and Resistance*; but most particularly de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 29-42 (Chapter III: “Making do': uses and tactics”–the confinement of the powerless to “tactics” rather than “strategies” (the preserve of the dominant and powerful) is important.


20 For the post-colonial conceptualization of “hybridity”, expounded most completely by Homi Bhabha, see the succinct explanation by Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 163-4. The possibilities are explored further below.

21 Williams, *English and the Norman Conquest*.


24 At other times, names could be employed for the same purposes: Wilson, *Means of Naming*; Smith-Bannister, *Names and Naming Patterns*. The two (cultural field and social order) cannot, of course, be disassociated and were inter-related, but exactly how remains uncertain.

25 Chartier, *Cultural History*, passim, explores the possibilities of appropriation; see also, Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*; Iser, *Range of Interpretation*. Whilst it is thus possible, if one wishes, to read culture as a “text” as Geertz has, the tendency to assume a “general idiom” should be avoided.

26 McClure, “Nicknames and pet names” and Clark, “Nickname creation.”

27 Howell, *Society and Cosmos*, 154-5: naming recognizes individualization; people must have a distinctive and non-repeated name during their lifetimes; naming for the dead is not countenanced for it dishonours the dead; later in life, people assume nicknames from humorous incidents in their lives; the “real” name, however, continues to be used for official purposes and the nickname for social interaction; “They regard their nickname with some embarrassment, which would seem to indicate that these are ritually more important…” (155). See also Harrison, *Stealing People’s Names*, 59-62, for sub-clan ownership of names, “bereavement” names, “coeval” names, and the ancestral power resident in names.

28 Clark was sensitive to the intimations of registers of language in naming and that theme pervades the papers in Clark, *Words, Names and History*.

29 Fransson, *Middle English Surnames of Occupation*. 
CHAPTER 1

CULTURAL ENCOUNTER IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

It has been predicated that during the twelfth century a general transformation in English naming processes and patterns occurred. It has, moreover, been suggested that this transformation was more precocious for the *nomen* of males, whereas female names tended towards a higher corpus of traditional names, since both female names remained a repository of traditional culture and female role models were persistently of insular origin. Amongst males, insular personal names (mainly, but not completely OE and Anglo-Scandinavian items) were rapidly supplanted by newly introduced forms of personal name, mainly, but again not exclusively, C-G and Christian names (the latter principally saints' names). More women, however, continued to be given insular personal names, because first the new aristocracy was predominantly male, so that intermarriage with indigenous females was inevitable (but was equally an important strategy for legitimization of the acquisition of estates by “conquest”) and thus female exemplars for naming bore traditional names. Secondly, as a result, women remained the repository of a traditional culture.

The transformation of naming processes has, moreover, recently been more widely invoked to define cultural changes during a significant period of European development after *l’an mille*. In the widest and most general discussion, Robert Bartlett has suggested that: “Transformation and convergence—these are the two terms which describe the naming patterns of Europe in the medieval period”, the definition of his interest being the years 950-1350 in the title of his book. The significance of names, he indicates, is that “[they] are, of course, among the most malleable elements of linguistic culture, offering, as they do, the repeated chance of choice….” The “homogenisation” of naming patterns thus reflected a wider cultural change throughout Europe as it was being dynamically forged from the tenth century. For England in particular, he contended that this process developed because “English peasants of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries adopted the names of their lords….” His contention thus embraced both
the geographically general and particular. Michael Mitterauer perceived the same universal tendency towards homonymy from the eleventh century. Concerning “France” as a whole, Monique Bourin has proclaimed that “L’étude de l’anthroponymie suggère donc au XIIe siècle, couvrant les particularismes, la naissance d’une société commune”, in which, in this instance, Christian nomina exerted a major influence. Detailed research into naming processes in more particular areas of the Continent have tended to perceive the same changes. George Beech, considering Poitou, referred to “la progression des noms chrétiens après l’an mille”. The transformation there resulted from the expansion of Christian nomina, in particular Petrus (Pierre), marked by “un progrès extraordinaire”, followed less expansively by Johannes (Jean) and Stephanus (Estevene). The convergence of naming here also evolved particularly through the popularization of Christian nomina.

In addressing medieval cultural transitions, therefore, personal names have been widely adduced as a primary indicator. Recourse to these data as a surrogate for other cultural indicators is necessitated by the paucity of other cultural items which allow penetration to the quotidian, to everyday experience and usage. Culture and experience were inter-related and it is at the level of ordinary experience that cultural transitions must be sought. Whilst a significant part of that experience is somatic–experienced through the body–both the experience and the cultural ramifications are expressed through and informed by language. Now, despite some contention that names are not linguistic, that is, that they have no immediate lexicographical content, names do contain some linguistic qualities, having an indexical quality of register, lexis (with emotive meanings) and cultural association. It is for these reasons that personal names permit a window onto cultural allegiances in the twelfth century.

Since that seminal article by the late Cecily Clark–now thirty years ago–anthroponymy, the anthropology of personal naming, has been adduced to illustrate the cultural transformation which occurred in England between the late eleventh century and c.1220. Some inconsistency remains, nevertheless, for whilst emphasis is directed to the transmutation over that century and three quarters, attention has also been drawn to the mutability of personal names which are capable of change over one generation. Theoretically, the question which might be posited is why this wholesale metamorphosis of naming did not happen more rapidly, given the perceived flexibility of practices of naming. Now, of course, Clark’s principal theme was the comparative rate of change of male and female names, in which female naming retained a higher element of insular naming whilst male naming more quickly adopted the newly-introduced continental forms of naming. That situation occurred, according to Clark, because few Norman, Breton or Flemish females accompanied the new overlords. For that reason
and to legitimize their lands of acquisition by some associational element of inheritance, new lords married insular females. Insular female personal names correspondingly persisted because the female role models were women, but also importantly and relatedly because females remained the repository of a traditional culture—although to symbolize what, is not clear (and I shall return to that issue later).

One impulsion towards change in the twelfth century is illustrated in the account of the genealogy of the cadet branch of the Malet family:

Fuit quidam vir in Wenhaueston’ dominus eiusdem ville et de Walpol nomine Aylwy quem propter honorem Gaufridum nominaverunt qui duxit uxorem nomine Godam de qua genuit duos filios, scilicet Gaufridum primum quem de Brumfeld cognominaverunt eo quod fuit senescallus de Bromfeld et Robertum Malet secundum ... 46

This single illustration encapsulates the principal changes in naming processes in the twelfth century. The two sons were attributed cognomina, whilst their father was known simply by a nomen. Both sons were given new forms of nomina, specifically C-G, but their father initially held an OE nomen. Under social pressure, he assumed a nomen conceived to be more consistent with his status, Geoffrey, a name transmitted patrilineally to his eldest son. The insular personal nomen, Aylwy, was considered undignified. In similar vein, Clark recounted that the future Saint Bartholomew of Farne, a Northumbrian boy, was originally given the Scandinavian nomen Tostí but, constrained by peer group pressure, he adopted the more fashionable name of William; also she noted how Ordric Vitalis, given the insular name in compliment to the priest who baptized him, later assumed as his cognomen a C-G personal name.47

At the highest level, forms of male personal name in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries thus had a significance which was informed by social honour and status. Whether or not those same values were shared at that time by lower social groups requires further consideration. The evidence of naming patterns of the peasantry enumerated in some manorial surveys suggests that cultural and social assimilation was later rather than sooner and reflected continuing cultural diversity rather than conflation. In the interests of clarity, the surveys will be considered chronologically, evincing points of contrast, followed by some general conclusions about patterns of nomina amongst males.

We are therefore confronted by several problems which require further clarification. Although we understand the overall process of change over a secular term, there remain issues about the precise chronology. Those questions of chronology cannot be separated from the advance of transitions regionally: in particular, how did transformations in the south compare with change in the northern zones? Within those broad categories of analysis
must be considered too the praxis of change and here is encountered the
category of “hybridization” and recovery of traditions. By these two
processes are meant: the attribution to siblings of *nomina* from different
contexts, insular traditional and continental new; and one male generation
with a continental new *nomen* associating the next generation with an
insular traditional *nomen*—for example, but only as hypothetical illustration,
Grimbald son of Robert. Finally, Clark suggested an association between
women and traditional name forms by comparison with a quicker male
adoption of new name forms. Is there a possibility, however, that a special
category of males, clerics with a pastoral responsibility, continued for some
time as vectors of traditional *nomina*? Such are the questions addressed
below, but first it is necessary to re-examine the chronology of changes in
peasant naming in the manorial surveys.

Commenting on the survey of the lands of the abbey of Bury St.
Edmunds in 1065x1098, Clark indicated that whilst the *nomina* were
predominantly insular forms, yet concentration and homonymy had already
begun to appear. Amongst about 600 male peasant tenants, only 160 to
165 male name forms occurred, if one makes allowances for ambiguous
forms which might have been insular or C-G. Some name forms,
consequently, were held by a multiplicity of males: Godwin by more than
forty tenants; Godric by over thirty; Ælfric, Ælfwine and Wulfric each by
between twenty-five and thirty. On a further examination, only some
twenty of the 160-165 male name forms of peasants may be considered to
be unambiguously C-G, but no peasant tenants held Christian forms. With
the exception of *Rotbertus*, the C-G forms were each held by one peasant;
whilst *Rotbertus* recurred seven times, it is not clear that it refers in each
case to different individuals. By contrast with the concentration amongst the
insular forms, the C-G names included a wide range of what would become
later less usual forms, such as Fulcard and Fulcher, Tedric (Theodoric),
Russel (*Roscelinus*), Durand, Ermand, and Titebud (Theobald).

Despite the very wide range of insular forms and despite Clark’s correct
identification that they were predominantly dithematic, many nevertheless
displayed a marked conventionality. Thus the deuterothemes derived from
a small corpus: -ric, -lef, -wi(n), -get, -ger/gar, -man, -mer, -hard, -stan,
-chetel, -si, -grim, -ulf and the associative -ing. Contrary to some
perceptions about kinship markers and familial repetition creating this
concentration, it seems more likely that (amongst this peasantry) the
frequency simply reflected popularity of specific forms. Amongst these
insular name forms, creativity and lexicographical content in the process of
variation of themes had been lost. Finally, the movement from insular to
new forms of name is not notable, either in patronymic forms of *cognomen*
or other descriptions of kinship; the only occurrences are *Willelmus cum
fratre suo Ælfiuno, Ricardus Ulfui filius*, and *Durand[us] Æilmari filius*. 
In some ways, the Burton Abbey survey B, the earlier of the two surveys (which can be assigned to 1114x1115), continues the pattern in the Bury survey. Here too insular forms are in the ascendant, encompassing some 80 to 85 percent of the peasant tenantry. By comparison with 98 insular name forms, only 28 new forms occurred, almost exclusively C-G. The same homonymy had developed amongst male insular names; as on the Bury lands, Godric, held by 20 peasant tenants, and Godwin (14), were prominent but exceeded by Aluric, the most popular name (30 peasant tenants) and with Edric (20) and Ailwin (19) in close attendance, whilst Leueric (Leofric) and Soen (Swein) accounted each for ten peasant tenants. While we accept the point that the generational composition of the peasantry in surveys is ambivalent, it is important to note that 50 years, or about two generations, after the Conquest no significant transformation had been instigated in the naming patterns of the peasantry.

By 1166x1171 a greater transformation had transpired on the estates of Ramsey Abbey in Huntingdonshire, where less than 30 percent of the male peasant tenants bore insular nomina. Considering that a century or about four generations had elapsed, however, the persistence of insular names at this level seems as important as their eclipse. Whilst concentration had occurred amongst both forms of name, the corpus of insular forms remained much larger than the new stock: the former comprised 93 different names, the latter 64. The insular forms were also characterized by a high contribution of dithematic forms, some 33 percent of the total of 93 names.

The English estates of the abbey of Holy Trinity, Caen, were less compact than those hitherto discussed, but the surveys of c.1170 are concentrated in two groups, in Essex and Wiltshire. On these properties about 45 percent of the male peasant tenants still bore insular nomina. On the manors of the bishop of Worcester, located in the west Midlands, moreover, over 50 percent of the male peasant tenants in 1170x1182 held insular name forms. Twice as many insular name forms occurred as new ones, respectively 126 and 60. These surveys represented the peasant tenantry in the west Midlands some four generations after the Conquest. On some of these manors are encountered concentrations of homonymous insular names: for example at Alvechurch the tenants included Edwi Piteman, Edwi de lacte, Edwi carpentarius, Edwi de la Quolle, Edwi privignus, Edwi filius Aluric [sic] and Edwi Patric.

In Newark in c.1175, about 15 percent of the males enumerated in a survey still bore insular personal names. More than 30 different insular male names were still in use. The pattern here is complicated by the relatively larger number of Scandinavian forms which might, conceivably, have had a Norman origin, but an Anglo-Scandinavian etymology is more likely in this area of the Danelaw and amongst this social group.
In 1185 on the widely dispersed Templar preceptories and lands only about 20 percent of male peasant tenants retained English names. Similarly, in 1189 on the estates of Glastonbury Abbey, concentrated in southwest England in Somerset and Wiltshire with but a few outlying properties, only about 25 percent of male tenants still possessed insular names. By 1222, on the manors of St Paul’s Cathedral Priory, essentially aggregated in the northern “Home Counties”, a mere ten percent of male peasants still held insular name forms. At the same time (1222), only nine percent of the male peasant tenants of the bishop of Ely in five counties in eastern England held insular forms of name. Perhaps surprisingly, a sprinkling of the male taxpayers in part of Wiltshire in 1225 retained insular personal names: Alfric (numerous); Orich’; Erich’ (bis); Edward (several); Edolf (several); Swein (bis); Godwin (several); Ailwin (several); Wulfric (numerous); Edmund (bis); Seman; Elmer; Ketel; Sewin; Saeric (several); Snelgar; Osmund; Eilaf (bis) as well as the very many Osberts, which name, however, is perhaps an ambiguous indicator. If the taxpayers represented the wealthier peasantry, we might conclude that at least five percent of the peasant elite still retained insular names at the end of the first quarter of the thirteenth century. As interesting is the appearance of some Scandinavian personal names (Swein, Eric, Ketel, Eilaf, and Osmund) in this location, dispersed there by random migrations of Danes in the early eleventh century.

The chronology of change, however, was protracted, for even 50 years after the Conquest, insular naming patterns persisted unchanged amongst male peasant tenants. We can add to this picture. When, in c.1145, William Martel gave rents in Snape and Aldeburgh in Suffolk to Missenden Abbey, ten of the 17 male tenants had recognizably insular nomina. By the 1160s a considerable transformation had happened, but even then over a quarter of tenants still bore insular names. Perhaps only a fifth of male peasant tenants possessed insular names by the 1180s, a figure that declined to nine to ten percent by the 1220s. Had there been a precipitate rush to emulate the style of new lords, change should surely have proceeded at a much more rapid pace, since potentially the pattern might have been transformed within one or two generations.

The persistence of insular name forms at lower levels of society remained, indeed, important in some areas. It is not surprising that when in 1101x1107 were described the depredations made by Roger Bigod against the abbey of St Benet Holme, the 40 or so tenants enumerated preponderantly bore insular nomina, with the exception of one, Walter. Similarly, not unusual were the attestations by witnesses with insular nomina when in 1127x1134 Abbot William Basset rewarded his kinsman, Richard Basset, with the manor of (Potter) Heigham: Ulfkel presbiter; Ælwin presbiter, Turstin Reuellus; and Leric de Fiscele. Noteworthy is the
continuation at this time of parish priests with insular nomina which potentially had a significant influence on cultural developments in the twelfth century—a question which requires more research, although it is also pursued further below.

Reliance on peasants with insular names is reflected in 1134x1140 when Alfric Musard was directed to measure land for the abbey. Insular nomina endured much later within the neighbourhood of the abbey. Presenting some illustrative examples from St Benet’s charters, in 1168x1175 an arrangement was made for Stigand filius Edrici to continue to hold land in Felmingham. At the same time, the abbot granted to Thurkil brother of Lewin de gernemut the land in Yarmouth which had been transferred to the abbey by Hardman and there too about the same date Wilfric filius Sprotulf received from the abbey the land which Sprotulf had held. As another illuminating example, Samson, abbot of Bury St Edmunds, granted land in Forham to Ailric son of Ailward in 1186x1200. When (Potter) Heigham was leased in 1153x1168 and 1175x1186, the names of five tenants were recorded there in 1153x1168 and repeated retrospectively in 1175x1186: Hugh presbiter (the only C-G nomen); Godwin filius Offe; Godwin filius Thedware; Alfleda uxor Elwaldi; and Elfleda uxor Askilli. At that later time (1175x1186) Swein de Hecham received from the abbey a house and thirteen acres of land.

The persisting reliance on English personnel in the east of England is visible again in a confirmation of land to a tenant in Homersfield in 1121x1143, for it was attested by, inter alia, Copman, Godwin filius Osiard', Ording presbiter, Edmer prepositus, Uluric, Godwin filius Elmi, Turchil filius Ketel', Elwi filius Elmi, Edric Crele, Elwi W Hughesneve, Godric filius Ulurici Blakere, Eluric filius Godwini, and Godric filius Eluui. In the 1160s an important charter of the bishop of Norwich relating to Lynn was witnessed by Stangrim, priest of Lynn, Seman clericus, Wulmer Horn, Elvard and his brother Archetil, Bond Rond, Sunnolf and Swein, and Eilmer decanus. We might perhaps interpret the witnessing of these instruments in two ways: the local inhabitants—as opposed to dignitaries attesting—had insular names; and it was important for the beneficiaries to establish an insular memory back into the eleventh century.

Considering another location, Staffordshire, when in 1150x1152 Walter, bishop of Lichfield, rewarded his steward, the lands disposed included that held by Burchmer with his sons, Edwin, Aki and Gamel, the assarts which Siward Sutor and Ailric Berley had made, and the assarts now held by Leofric and Ravekel. In 1199, Siward de Bemreslega and his son, William, fled because of the homicide of Uviet Scat, the outlawry revealing that Siward was a chief pledge and his chattels valued at 3s. Four men who were appealed in the same year for—but acquitted of—burning granges comprised Lewin de Cumbel, his son, Peter, Orm, Edric and Hugh, three
defined by insular *nomina*. In pleas of 1203, the chief pledges involved were Ulf de Bircho and Eadric de Senestan. In the same year and locality, Roger and Haldan were examined about the death of Roger molendinarius. At the same time, Swein de Horlaveston and William de Gaia were appealed for theft on the word of an approver. Godric de Orgrave offered himself as a pledge in that year. A dispute about free land in Sutton in the same county, Staffordshire, involved *inter alia* Edric faber, Edric *filius* Radulfi, and Oviet *filius* Tani. Other contemporary litigation—concerning seven acres and two messuages of free land—was initiated by Uchtred and Alured against John *filius* Edruc. Two years later, another Edric—de Pokele—was obliged as a pledge before the royal justices, as was Edwin de Frankelee in 1208. Although these free tenants with insular names were submerged before the royal justices by the profusion of parties with new names, they illustrate that it was still tenable for free tenants to bear insular names in the early thirteenth century, having been accorded these names at birth in the third quarter of the twelfth century or later.

The persistence of these insular names in Staffordshire is represented in the pleas of mort d'ancestor, in which the name of the father is rehearsed or contained in patronymic forms: Brun; Edwin; Uviet; Ailwin; Ailmer; Swein; Godwin; Edda; Orm; Wulfric; Bruning; Oswait; Ailward; Siward; Aluric; Gladwin; Guthmund; Ailrich; Alfwin; Holdwin; and the frequent Osbert.

A second point tends to support the continued vitality of insular name-giving, if not the nature of the insular names. As Clark indicated, homonymy had already occurred by the late eleventh century. To some degree persisting insular names continued to exhibit some concentration. The direction of new forms of name was the same – towards concentration. Whereas, however, new forms became extremely narrow in active use, through the twelfth century insular forms exhibited a remarkably wide range for names that were supposedly being supplanted. It has been indicated above that there were a third more insular name forms on the Ramsey lands in 1166x1171 than new forms; instances of insular forms were double those of new forms on the bishop of Worcester's estate. Even in 1222, there were 50 different insular names as against 72 new ones amongst the peasant tenants of St Paul's.

With some caution the data from the *kalendar* of Abbot Samson of Bury St. Edmunds (1186x1191) may be introduced as corroborative evidence. The principal problem is the difficulty of identifying how many peasants recur throughout the document. Equally perplexing, however, is how representative these tenants were of wider peasant society, since the purpose of the *kalendar* concerns hundredal responsibilities. Consequently, the analysis here is restricted to numbers of different name forms. Even by the 1180s, some 80 different insular names appeared on these Suffolk manors, a
favourable comparison with the 140 or so which had occurred a century earlier on these same manors and with the equal number (80) of new forms of name there in the 1180s. Apparently a change had also happened to the concentration of insular forms, for in the 1180s Wuluric (Wulfric) was the most frequent name. That the active stock of insular names remained almost as wide as the range of new forms suggests a constant familiarity with older naming patterns.

The Worcester material furthermore reflects the regional nature of persistence and change. Whilst an appreciable movement to new forms of name had occurred on the Ramsey, Templar and Glastonbury manors, there was more resistance to change on the Worcester manors. Variation is further reflected in the regional breakdown of the Templar preceptories. For example, higher survivals were manifest in Yorkshire, Warwickshire with Shropshire, Essex, and Oxfordshire, where respectively 20, 25, 27, and 27 percent of male tenants bore insular name forms—but with the caveat that many of the properties were small and disparate, so the sample may not be representative.

We should, nonetheless, subject the Glastonbury evidence to greater scrutiny. A number of reasons suggest that changes there were recent. First, there is a concentration of tenants with insular names on particular manors. Second, on these manors, the tenants with insular names were important members of manorial juries responsible for the surveys. Finally, patronymic descriptions of males—that is, in the form x filius y—imply that change was still in process. On the manors of Pilton, Othery, and Lympsham, there was a much higher persistence of insular names. Nine of the 17 tenants of a full ferling at Pilton bore insular nomina. It is therefore not surprising that eight of the 14 jurors at Pilton had insular names; so too at Lympsham, three of the six; at Wrinton and Ashbury seven of the 13; and at Winterbourne Monkton five of the eight. It is possible, therefore, that these tenants with insular names were longevious, explaining their inclusion on the juries. We can counterbalance this implication by the number of other tenants on those particular manors with insular name forms. We can further contextualize the nature of change by analyzing patronymic descriptions. There are just over 250 tenants listed by this formula. In about 40 percent the tenant had a new form of name and his father also had a new form of name. In 48 percent, however, tenants had a new form of name, but their father had held an insular name. In another 11 percent, moreover, the tenant bore an insular name and his father had too. Another interesting feature is that a very small number of tenants had insular names whereas their father was identified by a new name form: Edward filius Walkelini; Edwi filius Walteri; Wlmar filius Hugonis; Edward filius Willelmi; Ailward filius Herberti; Elfrid filius Roberti; and, perhaps less conclusively, Osmund filius Hugonis and Osmund filius Odonis. In total, the current tenants of