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Naming and renaming:
Names and the life course in early medieval England

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Introduction

The first episode of the television series, *The Last Kingdom*, shows Uhtred, the lord of Bebbanburg, talking to his second son, Osbert, following the death of his eldest son, Uhtred, at the hands of Danish raiders in 876. He tells him: "You are now called Uhtred. Uhtred son of Uhtred." To which Osbert responds "Yes father". Uhtred then tells the priest, Father Beocca, to show Osbert (now Uhtred) his history, to "make him understand who he is". Father Beocca interjects, requesting permission to baptize the newly renamed boy, because "if he arrives at heaven's gate as Uhtred, they might wonder what's happened to Osbert." The request seems of little consequence to the Lord Uhtred, who feels it more important to continue the history lesson for the boy who was hitherto named Osbert: "Do what you must, but do as I ask. We were kings here once boy, kings of all the lands between the rivers Tweed and Tyne… now you are the new heir of Bebbanburg. And you will die for it if needed." The boy responds willingly, clearly distressed by the death of his older brother, and filled with a sense of duty to his father: "Yes father, and I will give you the head of the man who killed Uhtred". The response does nothing but anger Lord Uhtred, who angrily shouts: "No, you are Uhtred!".[1]

The scene presents an evocative picture of early English naming practices. The name *Uhtred* is depicted as being inextricably linked to the rulership of the fictional lords of Bebbanburg. It demonstrates the legitimacy of its bearers and a link to the history of the family as well as the lands they rule over, to such an extent that anyone not called *Uhtred* cannot be fit to rule. It implies a naming system in which names were passed down through a family with the aim of demonstrating lineage, patrilineal inheritance and, in the case of the aristocracy, the right to rule. However, while it is useful as an exposition device, there is little evidence to suggest that names were used in this way in ninth-century England. Names were not passed down from father to son in patrilineal displays of descent.

Yet the scene raises a number of relevant questions about how names were chosen and used. What motives lay behind the choice of names that parents gave to their children? How, when and why did names change during the course of a person's life? What happened to names when people died? This chapter will attempt to answer these questions to paint a more accurate depiction of how names were used in England between the sixth and eleventh centuries. It will explore how the choice of names was used as a means of constructing individual and group identities, as well as how names were transformed, added to or even replaced completely over the course of an individual's life. In doing so, it will help illuminate

[1] *The Last Kingdom*, "Episode 1," directed by Nick Murphy, written by Stephen Butchard and Bernard Cornwell (BBC, October 15 2015).

how the passing from one stage of life to another transformed the social identities of individual people.

Medieval English personal names have been studied by scholars in a number of fields. The philological and linguistic works of Olof von Feilitzen, Mats Redin, Eilert Ekwall, John Insley and Fran Colman have provided in-depth etymological and grammatical studies of Old English personal names.[2] The socio-onomastic and historical works of Cecily Clark and David Postles have explored how names and naming decisions developed both before and after the Norman Conquest, including the development of bynames.[3] The recent *Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland* by Peter McClure, Richard Coates and Patrick Hanks provides historical and etymological entries on tens of thousands of surnames which have their origin in the medieval period.[4] All of these works, in some way, touch on the relationship between names and the people who bore them. In doing so, they help us understand more about medieval lives and the life course, and many of these works will be drawn on here. However, there has been no study dedicated solely to the relationship between personal names and the life course in early medieval England. Leonard Neidorf's recent chapter, "Naming Children in Anglo-Saxon England: Ethnic Identity and Cultural Change", has made a start in this regard, but the focus on names given at birth leaves a great deal of the life course that has been largely unexplored. Anthropological works, including Richard Alford's cross-cultural study of naming practices, have demonstrated the importance of acts of naming as identity-forming rituals, as well as how acts of re-nomination can reflect emergent identities and identity transformations.[5] This chapter will take a similar approach to onomastic evidence from across the early medieval period, looking past naming as a one-off event, and examining it as an ongoing process that reflects the evolution of personal identity throughout an individual's life.

There are myriad reasons why a person may adopt a new name throughout the course of their life. Name changes were not uncommon for early English ecclesiastical figures. Saint Boniface was named Winfred until he was renamed Boniface by Pope Gregory II, and Bede explains how Berhtgils, Bishop of the East Angles, was also known by this name.[6] Name changes could also be brought about through conversion, as in the case of Guthrum, who became Æthelstan to show his Christian credentials to Alfred.[7] In other cases, fashion and

2 Fran Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England: The Linguistics and Culture of the Old English Onomasticon* (Oxford, 2014); Eilert Ekwall, *Early London Personal Names* (Lund, 1947); John Insley, "Pre-Conquest Personal Names," in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 23 (2001): 367–96; Mats Redin, *Studies on Uncompounded Personal Names in Old English* (Uppsala, 1919); Olof von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday* (Uppsala, 1937).

3 Cecily Clark and Peter Jackson, eds., *Words, Names, and History: Selected Writings of Cecily Clark* (Cambridge, 1995); David Postles, *Naming the People of England, c.1100–1350* (Newcastle, 2006);

4 Patrick Hanks, Richard Coates and Peter McClure, *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*, (Oxford, 2016).

5 Richard Alford, *Naming and Identity: A Cross-Cultural Study of Personal Naming Practices* (New Haven, 1988), 81.

6 Ian Wood, "Boniface [St Boniface] (672x5?–754)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2008), https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-2843 (accessed 30 June 2020); *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), III.20; Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 130.

7 Anders Winroth, *The Age of the Vikings* (Princeton, 2014), 52.

fitting in was more important. Emma of Normandy was renamed Ælfgifu, at least officially, when she married her English husband Æthelred, while Orderic only took on the name Vitalis to please his fellow monks at his new monastery in Normandy, who could not pronounce his English name. [8] While all these cases are interesting and illuminating in their own right, it is not possible to explore every instance or type of name change in one chapter. As such, the examples chosen here are ones that seem to be particularly useful for examining the relationship between names and the stages of the life course.

In an ideal world, the stages of life would be looked at in order. Unfortunately, the world is not ideal. Naming decisions are often more concerned with the past, or the future, than they are with the present — birth and death are very often linked together in one act of naming. As such, the first part of this chapter will look at both birth and death together, examining the choice of name given at birth and how considerations about what to name a child changed over the early English period. The second part will then explore how names were changed, transformed and added to over the course of an individual's life by examining names created in family settings during infancy and early childhood, as well as the system of community-generated bynames that developed in the late Old English period. In doing so, this chapter aims to show how names in early medieval England reflected both individual and group identities, as well as how these identities changed over time.

A good name is better than riches: choosing a name for a child

The choice of a child's name is an important, once-in-a-lifetime decision that all parents make for their children. It is rarely, if ever done, haphazardly or without thought. One function of personal names is to provide a "direct and pragmatic means of distinguishing one individual from another".[9] But names do much more than this. The act of naming a child is a symbolic act signaling the child's membership of a society, identifying the child as a legitimate member of the group, as well as symbolizing their identity. As Alford describes: "First, [names] provide messages to the members of the society at large about who an individual is. Second, they provide messages to the named individual about who he or she is expected to be".[10] This means that most societies follow a set of rules or norms about when and how naming should take place, and the form that those names should take.

Old English names were no exception. In the early Old English period they followed what Henry Woolf described as "traditional Germanic principles of name-giving".[11] The features of this system involved creating compound (or dithematic) names combining two

[8] Harriet O'Brien, *Queen Emma and the Vikings: The Woman Who Shaped the Events of 1066* (London, 2005), 43; Marjorie Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis: Norman Monks and Norman Knights* (Woodbridge, 1984), 221.
[9] Alford, *Naming and Identity,* 30.
[10] Alford, *Naming and Identity,* 51.
[11] Henry Woolf, *The Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving* (Baltimore, 1939), 2–3. See also Leonard Neidorf, "Naming Children in Anglo-Saxon England: Ethnic Identity and Cultural Change," in *Childhood and Adolescence in Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture*, ed. Susan Irvine and Winfried Rudolf (Toronto, 2018), 32–47, at 35, at 34–6.

elements (or themes) into one name.[12] The themes were, in origin at least, lexical items taken from the lexicon of Old English. So, for example, the name *Ælfgifu* was formed of the themes *Ælf-* [elf], and *-gifu* [gift]. Similarly, *Wulfstan* was formed of the themes *Wulf-* [wolf], and *-stan* [stone]. Whether the meaning of the lexical items present played a role in the selection of names for children is a contested point. Frank Stenton, for example, argued that "at an early time the sense which a compound name bore was a matter of little importance personal or family reasons determined the choice of a name".[13] Cecily Clark agreed, suggesting that "the combining of themes into compounds was ruled by onomastic not semantic choice".[14] However, there are numerous examples of early English writers who recognized the meaning in their names, or those of others. For example, Wulfstan, Archbishop of York, commonly referred himself as *Lupus* [wolf] in Latin, while Heahstan, Bishop of London translated his own name to *Alta Petra* [high stone].[15]

In some cases, it was specifically made clear that the choice of name was intended to represent the virtues of the child in their future life. The monk Felix, in *Life of Saint Guthlac*, explained how the saint's name translated into Latin as *belli munus* [gift of war]:

> Anglorum lingua hoc nomen ex duobus integris constare videtur, hoc est 'Guth' et 'lac', quod Romani sermonis 'belli munus', quia ille cum vitiis bellando munera aeternae beatitudinis…
>
> [the name in the tongue of the English is shown to consist of two individual words, namely 'Guth' and 'lac', which in the elegant tongue of Latin is 'belli munus' (reward of war), because by warring against vices he was to receive the reward of eternal bliss…][16]

Similarly, in the early tenth century, a poem written to commemorate an act of investiture from Alfred the Great to the future King Æthelstan used the meaning of his name as a predictor for his future greatness. The poem is an acrostic, with the first letters of each line spelling out Æthelstan's name, and the last letters of each line spelling out the name of the poet, *Iohannes*:

> 'Archalis' clamare, triumuir, nomine 'saxI'
> Diue tuo fors prognossim feliciter aeuO:
> 'Augusta' samu- cernetis 'rupis' eris -elH,
> Laruales forti beliales robure contrA.
> Saepe seges messem fecunda prenotat altam; iN
> Tutis solandum petrinum solibus agmeN.

[12] For more see: James Chetwood, "Re-evaluating English Personal Naming on the Eve of the Conquest," in *Early Medieval Europe* 26 (2018): 518–47; Cecily Clark, "Onomastics," in *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume I: The Beginnings to 1066*, ed. Richard Hogg (Cambridge, 1992), 452–87; Colman, *Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 103–50.
[13] Frank Stenton, "Personal Names in Place-Names," in *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Doris Stenton (Oxford, 1970), 84–105, at 168.
[14] Clark, "Onomastics I," 458.
[15] Wulfstan, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* in *Beowulf,* ed. and trans. Roy Liuzza (Toronto, 2000), 185–89; Colman, *Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 121.
[16] *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1956), 76–9, with Colgrave's translation.

Amplius amplificare sacra sophismatis arcE.
Nomina orto- petas donet, precor, inclita -doxuS.[17]

[Little prince, you are called by the name 'sovereign stone',
Look happily on this prophecy for your life.
You shall be the 'noble rock' of Samuel the seer,
Standing with mighty strength against the devilish monsters.
Often an abundant cornfield foretells a fine harvest.
In times of peace your stoniness will soften, for
You are more abundantly endowed with the holy eminence of learning.
I pray that you may seek, and that God may grant, the promise of your noble names.]

The poem emphasizes how Athelstan's name, "sovereign stone", is a prophecy for his life. It foresees him being a "noble rock", standing with mighty strength against devilish monsters. So, while there is probably an element of retrospective exploitation of name meanings in these examples, there does seem to be some evidence that the names people chose for their children contained meaning, and that the choice of the name at birth could communicate hopes for a child's characteristics, not just in childhood, but throughout their life.

Indeed, at the point of their creation, names in most languages and cultures are derived from lexical items containing meaning.[18] It seems uncontentious that, at some point in the period, the meaning within Old English names was transparent and meaningful both semantically and culturally to the people who used them. It is notable how there are specific types of vocabulary that were deemed suitable for onomastic content. Insley lists these as: religion, cult and supernatural beings; war, battle and weapons; names of peoples; designations of places; collective consciousness; animal names; and adjectives denoting personal attributes.[19] However, over time, the themes used in personal names change, and new themes came into use, suggesting there was still an element of onomastic innovation, perhaps reflecting a change in what people saw as important to embody in the name of the children.[20] For example, *God-* [god, good] appears to have been little used before the tenth century, but became increasingly frequent in the tenth and eleventh.[21] It seems likely, therefore, that while perhaps not the primary motivating factor, the meaning of name elements may have played a part in the part of the decision behind some names, even if this was only as a secondary consideration.

17 MS. Rawl. C. 697, fol. 78v. Cited here edited and translated from Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature: 900–1066* (London, 1993), 60–1, originally published in Michael Lapidge, "Some Latin poems as evidence for the reign of Athelstan," in *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1980), 61–98. For a facsimile and additional commentary on the poem, see Sarah Foot, *Athelstan, The First King of England* (New Haven, 2011), 30–33; 110–12 and Plate 4).

18 Alford, *Naming and Identity* 59–60. For examples of meaningful names in Hopi culture, see Peter Whitely, "Hopitutungwni: 'Hopi names' as Literature" in *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*, ed. Brian Swann (London, 1992), 208–27.

19 Insley, 'Pre-Conquest Personal Names," 377.

20 Neidorf, "Naming Children in Anglo-Saxon England," 44–7.

21 According to Feilitzen, the *God-* element represented either Old English *god* 'god' or *gōd* 'good'. See Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal*, 262. *God-* was not used in any of the names of the Original Core of the Durham *Liber Vitae*, compared with thirteen percent of the names in the list of burgesses of Colchester and twenty percent of the names in Survey 1 of the Winton Domesday.

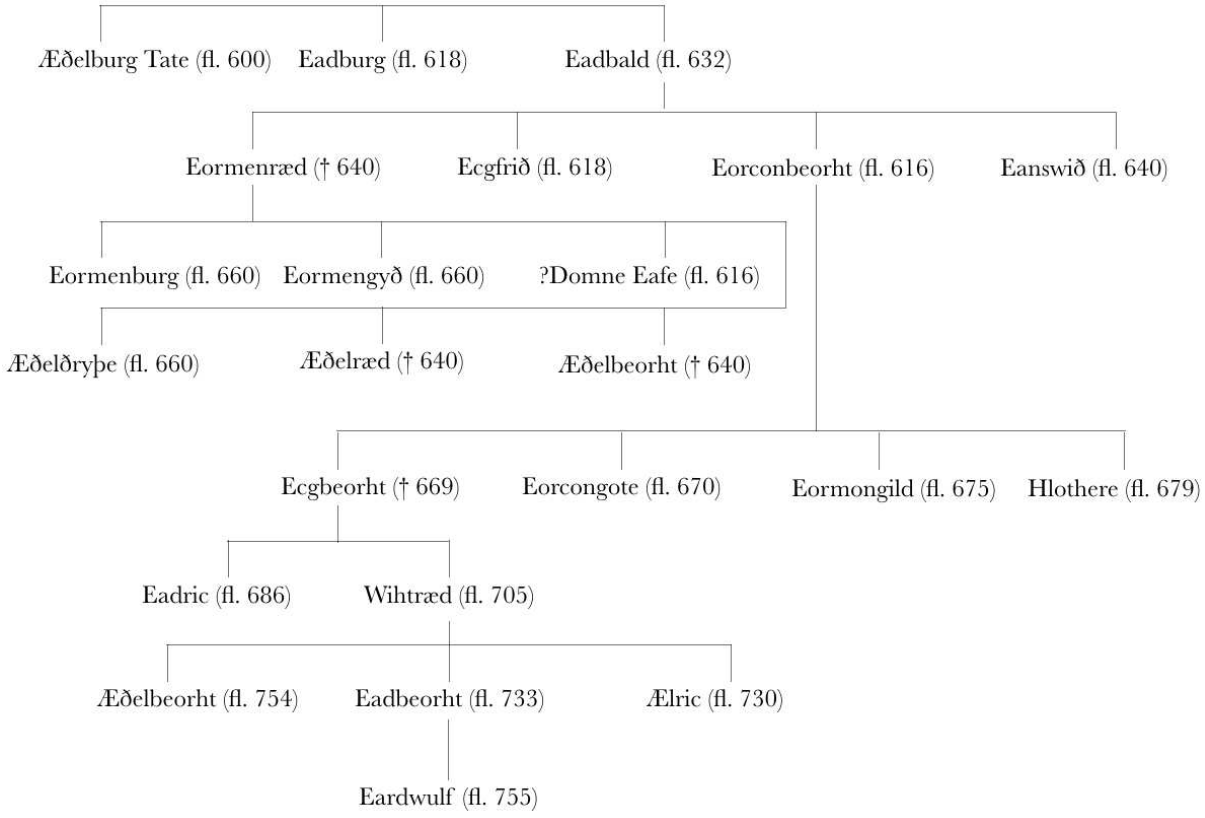
Names are also capable of carrying meaning in other ways. The passing down of names of family members, both alive and dead, as well as those of other important people is used in many cultures and societies to create links across generations, as well as act as a memorial for deceased ancestors.[22] They can be used as markers of lineage, rightful inheritance and identify legitimate heirs or successors. However, this does not appear to have been the case in ninth-century Northumbria. The reuse and repetition of whole names actually was rare in the early Old English period. The names of the Durham *Liber Vitae* provide evidence of this.[23] As a confraternity book, the purpose of the *Liber Vitae* was to record the names of members of a monastic community and its benefactors, in this case most probably those of Lindisfarne and Monkwearmouth and Jarrow. The book itself would have been present on the high altar, in sight of the congregation, and the names contained within its pages allowed the individuals they referred to be remembered, and prayers offered for the salvation of their souls.[24] The Original Core of the *Liber Vitae* dates from between c.690 and c.840 and contains upwards of 3,000 names, so offers an opportunity to observe the naming practices of eighth and ninth century Northumbria.[25] What they show is that there was an extensive stock of personal names, with over 700 individual name forms, and strikingly few instances of name repetition, with the most common names accounting for less than 2 percent of individuals, and the top six names combined accounting for only 9 percent.[26] The features of the compound naming system therefore allowed the people of ninth-century Northumbria to combine name themes in such a variety of ways that it was possible to avoid name repetition, and it essentially meant that each act of nomination involved the creation of a new unique name for one's child.

Names could, however, be used to demonstrate belonging to, or descent from, a wider kinship group. This was done through techniques Woolf termed "alliteration" and "variation".[27] Alliteration, simply entailed repetition of the initial sound of a name. Variation took this one step further, with individual name themes being reused to demonstrate family or group belonging. This reuse could apply to both primary and secondary themes, so did not necessarily produce alliteration — although it often did. In some cases, variation could be used to combine name elements from both mother and father, to demonstrate links to both maternal and paternal kinship groups. Woolf cites the example of Wulfstan Bishop of Worcester, the son of Wulfgifu and Æthelstan, who took one element from each of their

22 Roberta Gilchrist, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and the Life Course* (Woodbridge, 2005); Alford, *Naming and Identity*, 44–5.
23 David and Lynda Rollason, eds., *Durham Liber Vitae: London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A.VII: Edition and Digital Facsimile with Introduction, Codicological, Prosopographical and Linguistic Commentary, and Indexes*, 3 vols. (London, 2007).
24 Giles Constable, "The 'Liber Memorialis' of Remiremont," *Speculum* 47 (1972): 261–77, at 263; John Davies, *The ancient rite and monuments of the monastical and cathedral church of Durham collected out of ancient manuscripts, about the time of the suppression* (London, 1672), 28.
25 Elizabeth Briggs, "Nothing But Names: The Original Core of the Durham *Liber Vitae*" in David Rollason et al., *The Durham Liber Vitae and its Context* (Woodbridge, 2004), 63–85, at 68.
26 The sample studied here focuses on the 2,614 names of the monks and clerics of the monastic community, and discounts the names contained in of historic kings and queens, abbots and bishops, which date back before the start of the lists and feature individuals from much further afield than Northumbria. See Chetwood, "English Personal Naming on the Eve of the Conquest," 529–34 for a more detailed study of the corpus.
27 Woolf, *Germanic Principles of Name-Giving*, 2-3.

names to create his.[28] Techniques of variation and alliteration therefore allowed parents to use recognizable name elements that demonstrated belonging to a kinship group, while still preserving the uniqueness of their child's identity.

Figure 1: House of Kent c.600-c.755



The name choices of the ruling families of the early English kingdoms bear this out. The example shown in figure 1 is the Kentish royal family from between c.600 and c.750. Names beginning with an *E* were used alliteratively for over a century and a half, and the reuse of the three protothemes *Eormen-, Eorcon- and Æðel-* across both female and male family members effectively created a sense of family belonging. However, there was no repetition of names. Only one name, *Æðelbeorht*, appeared more than once in the genealogy, and that only appeared twice, some 100 years apart. This is typical of other royal genealogies from the period.[29] Demonstrating belonging to a kinship group was important, but this was not done by repeating whole names.

[28] Woolf, *Germanic Principles of Name-Giving*, 3. While not noted by Woolf, it is also plausible that Wulfstan was named after his illustrious uncle, also Bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of York.
[29] Woolf, *Germanic Principles of Name-Giving*, provides numerous examples. See also Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990).

This reluctance to repeat names was common within areas where Germanic compound naming systems were used, which was the majority of western and northern Europe. Régine Le Jan suggest that this was because in post-Roman Germanic culture, there was no cult of ancestors, rather a belief in the corporeal and spiritual integrity of a dead person.[30] Because of this, Le Jan suggests it was impossible, or at least taboo, to hand that name on to another; the name and the individual were inextricably linked. For Le Jan, the change from unique names to repeated names as being linked to the Christianization of 'barbarian' kingdoms, which removed this taboo and allowed people to use repeated names to demonstrate family belonging and lineage. This coincided with a shift from bilateral forms of kinship to smaller units based around the nuclear family governed by agnatic principles.[31]

There is some merit in this theory, but it is not completely satisfactory. As Victoria Thompson points out, many medieval Christians also believed in an indivisibility of body and soul — or at least that any division was temporary. She explains that in pre-Conquest England, death was not seen as "the end for either the soul or the body" as they would "be reunited and finally damned or saved at the end of time."[32] This suggests that any taboo should have been present in Christian naming cultures, as much as it was in pre-Christian Germanic ones. Moreover, as Le Jan herself points out, in England the direct repetition of names within a family or lineage did not begin until the late tenth century at the earliest.[33] This is a significant time after the people of England had been Christianized. Le Jan is right to note, however, that techniques of alliteration and variation did gradually give way to repetition over the course of the next few centuries — just not in quite the way that she describes.

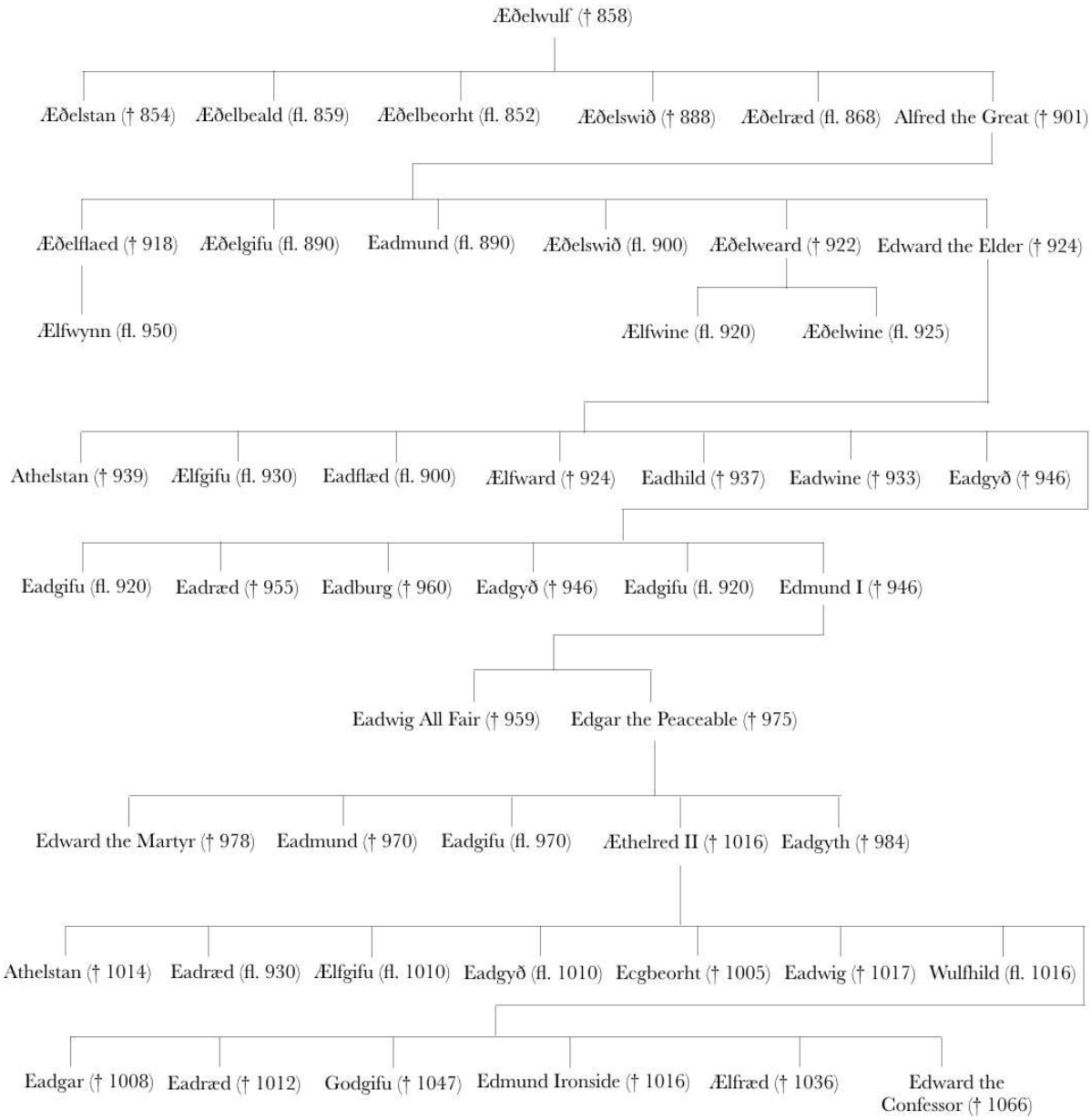
The dead walk among us: naming and commemoration

By the time of the Conquest the way people chose names for their children had transformed significantly. Rather than creating unique names for their children, names were increasingly repeated and reused, and the choice of given names began to coalesce around a small number of popular names. The shift from name uniqueness to name repetition can be seen at a macro-level in two records from the second half of the eleventh century: Survey I of the Winton Domesday (c.1057) and the list of Burgesses of Colchester from Little Domesday (1086).[34] While the top six male names in the original core of the Durham *Liber Vitae* only accounted for 9 percent of the total, the equivalent figure for these two sources were 30 percent and 29

[30] Régine Le Jan, "Personal Names and the Transformation of Kinship," in *Personal Name Studies of Medieval Europe: Social Identity and Familial Structures*, ed. George Beech, Monique Bourin and Pascal Chareille (Michigan, 2002), 31–50, at 39–40.
[31] Le Jan, "Personal Names and the Transformation of Kinship," 45.
[32] Victoria Thompson, *Dying and Death in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2012), 27.
[33] Le Jan, "Personal Names and the Transformation of Kinship," 43.
[34] Martin Biddle, ed., *Winchester Studies I: Winchester in the Early Middle Ages – An Edition and Discussion of the Winton Domesday* (Oxford, 1976); *Domesday Book: Essex,* ed. and trans. Alexander Rumble (Chichester, 1983), fols. 104r–106r.

percent of the population respectively.[35] It is also something observable in the genealogies of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Figure 2: House of Wessex c.900-c.1066

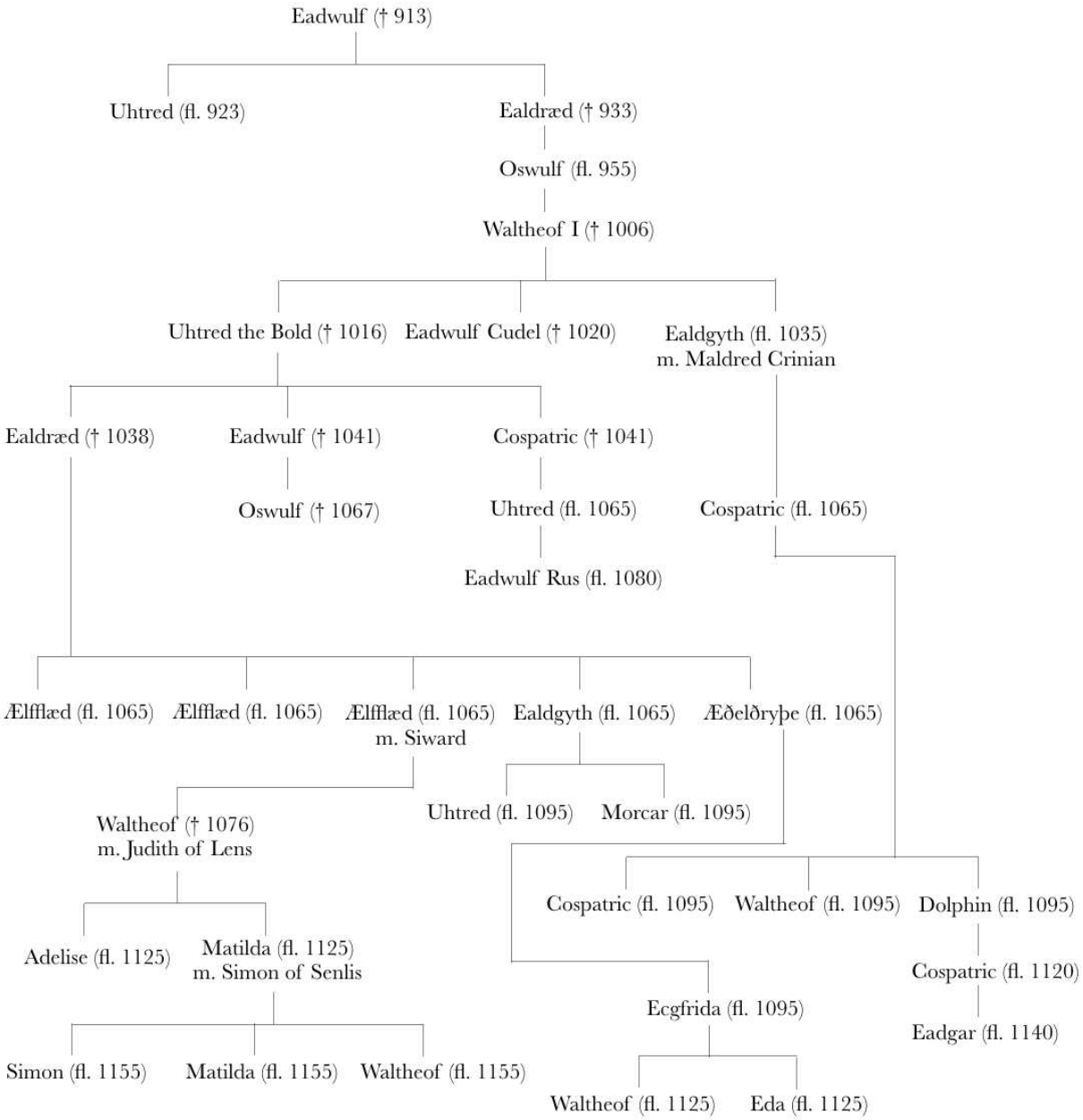


The royal family of the House of Wessex, and later, England, demonstrates this clearly. While there was still no evidence of directly passing individual names through a

[35] See Chetwood, "English personal naming on the eve of the Conquest," 537–41, for a more detailed study of the Colchester list. Cecily Clark also notes this phenomenon in the Bury Survey of c.1100, where the top five male names account for around 25 percent of the population. Cecily Clark, "Willelmus rex?," 284.

direct line of descendance, or from parents to children at all, there was a large degree of name repetition across the kinship group. For example, two names of the brothers of Alfred the Great, *Æðelstan* and *Æðelræd*, were taken up and used within the direct line of succession. Æthelred II, the Unready, managed to achieve a full house by naming all of his eight sons after previous kings of Wessex. Name repetition seems to have been used to indicate belonging by linking the child to different generations of the family, and quite possibly to remember individual family members after their death, although not specifically to pass down one name through each generation.

Figure 3: House of Bamburgh c.955-c.1125



The House of Bamburgh contrasts even more starkly with those in the early Old English period. There was no effort to create patterns through alliteration and variation, and there was great deal of repetition, with names such as *Eadwulf*, *Uhtred*, *Ealdræd*, *Cospatric*, *Siward* and *Waltheof* being repeated several times. Despite this, names passed down from parent to child are conspicuously absent, suggesting that repetition was not, at this point, primarily focused on direct transmission of names through a lineage. There is, however, one example of peculiarly persistent repetition. The name *Ælfflæd*, which appears nowhere else within the family tree, was given to three daughters of Earl Ealdred (d.1038). The evidence for this comes from Symeon of Durham, who explained that: "Comes Aldredus genuit quinque filias, quarum tres eodem nomine Ælfledæ vocabantur" [Earl Ealdred became the father of five daughters, three of whom were known by the same name, Ælfflæd].[36] The bestowing of identical names on three daughters seems excessive, and seems more likely to have been an example of a name being passed on from sibling to sibling in the event of the first dying in infancy — as in the case of the fictional Osbert-cum-Uhtred. This demonstrates clearly the shift in naming patterns, and these two later genealogies both show how parents had become more willing to name children after other people. In the House of Wessex, this seems to reflect a will to demonstrate belonging to a wider family group, while also acting as a memorial for past family members. In the House of Bamburgh the net spreads wider, incorporating a greater array of names from outside the immediate family, emphasizing inter-generational links across extended kinship groups, but also across a wider social network of connections. The peculiar repetition of *Ælfflæd* as the name of three daughters demonstrates a significant change. From a system where names were created for each person, there seems to already have been a significant shift towards a system where the individual was, in a sense, born to carry a name, either as a mark of respect for another living person, or as an act of remembrance for one recently past.

One reason for the transformation of this system may have been a shift in the social context in which the key rites of passage of a person's life took place.[37] More broadly, it is possible to look to the wider changes in the social settings in which people's public and private identities were forged as an explanation for why naming patterns changed. Beginning in the mid-ninth century there was a profound reorganisation of English settlement and, as a result, a reorganisation of English society. The pattern of dispersed, isolated settlements based around an extended family group gradually gave way in many areas to larger, nucleated villages and polyfocal settlements.[38] This transformation saw the creation of internally cohesive communities with an increasing sense of local identity. High reoccurrence names are often a feature of small, close-knit communities, where such names play a role in the construction of group identity.[39] As Richard Alford points out:

> A unique name emphasises or proclaims a person's individuality and uniqueness. But in all societies, individuality in excess may be socially destructive, divisive or dangerous...High

[36] Thomas Arnold, ed., *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, 2 vols. (London, 1975), 1, 219.
[37] Le Jan, "Personal Names and the Transformation of Kinship," 39–45.
[38] Chris Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850–1520* (Yale, 2002), 2.
[39] Ellen Bramwell, "Personal Names and Anthropology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, ed. Carole Hough (Oxford, 2018), 263–78, at 265–66; Ellen Bramwell, "Naming in society: a cross-cultural study of five communities in Scotland," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 2012), 362–82.

> reoccurrence names...do not emphasise a person's individuality or uniqueness...they do just the opposite. They call attention to similarities between namesakes.[40]

Moreover, a key element of this transformation of the landscape was the proliferation of local churches, local priests and, as a result, an improvement in access to baptismal places.[41] Improved access to this rite of passage meant that, by the tenth century, the time-limit for baptism was reduced, from thirty days to no more than nine.[42] It also meant that the baptismal ceremony was much more likely to take place within a local church. The initial act of nomination, and the baptismal ritual that went with it, therefore went from being one largely based within the framework of the family and kinship group, to one which took place under the watching eyes of the wider community.

The shift in focus of this key rite from the private to the public, the familial to the communal, seems to have had an impact on name-giving. It made it an outward looking choice, designed to demonstrate a child's belonging to the wider group through the bearing of a name chosen from a common stock. Methods such as alliteration and variation succeeded very well in producing unique names for individual children, while still marking them out as being part of an extended family group. Substituting these methods for name repetition could, in theory, have been used to demonstrate belonging to a nuclear family and lineage, marking each one out as different from neighbouring families. Instead, names became increasingly shared as communal items that demonstrated belonging to a wider community, and formed inter-generational links between new members of the community and present or past members. Whether intentional or otherwise, the cumulative effect of these individual naming decisions was to remove the distinctiveness of the names they gave to their children, emphasising the similarity of name-bearers, rather than their differences.[43]

Indeed, this change in naming practices coincides with a similar shift in other ways of remembering the dead. Zoe Devlin has suggested that, before the ninth century, the choice of burial location was largely down to the family, and family groups were the main basis for remembrance of the dead.[44] This changed when burial in churchyards became increasingly popular, and burials were no longer focused in family plots. The positioning of graves came to place less importance on the family, reflecting more on the deceased's standing within the community: "each individual grave came to have its own claim on people's commemorative

40 Alford, *Naming and Identity*, 73–4.
41 See, for example: Michel Audouy and Andy Chapman, eds., *Raunds: The Origin and Growth of a Midland Village, AD 450–1500* (Oxford, 2009), 22–39; Andrew Reynolds, *Later Anglo-Saxon England: Life and Landscape* (1999), 111–57; Della Hooke, "The Mid-Late Anglo-Saxon Period: Settlement and Land Use," in *Landscape and Settlement in Britain: AD 400–1066*, ed. Della Hooke (Exeter, 1995), 95–114; John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), 368–422 and *Building Anglo-Saxon England* (Princeton, 2018), 282–350.
42 Richard Morris, "Baptismal places: 600–800," in *People and Places in Northern Europe 500-1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, ed. Ian Wood and Niels Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), 15–24, at 15–6.
43 Alford, *Naming and Identity,* 73–4. See also Susan Suzman, "Names as Pointers: Zulu Personal Naming Practices," *Language in Society* 23 (1994): 253-72, at 268. Suzman's study of Zulu naming practices in the twentieth century demonstrated that changes of naming practices are not necessarily intentional. While name choices and patterns changed considerably, the people choosing the names were not aware of doing anything differently, stating the same reasons as previous generations for choosing names.
44 Zoe Devlin, *Remembering the Dead in Anglo-Saxon England: Memory Theory in Archaeology and History* (Oxford, 2007), 79.

activity, rather than being remembered as part of a family unit".[45] The role of objects in remembrance, such as personal belongings buried with the deceased, changed as well. They stopped being chosen by members of the family and started being selected by the individual themselves, "to be passed to family and friends to act as reminders of the deceased and of the need for their prayers".[46] As Devlin points out, the role of physical objects at a funeral can only have a transitory impact: "once buried, they cannot be revisited or manipulated".[47] In contrast, the donation of objects to individuals — both chosen by the deceased themselves — allowed for continued commemoration long after the act of burial or cremation.

While a name is not a physical object, it very much belongs to a person. What greater act of remembrance is there than for an individual's name to be given, and taken, by another human being — helping form the newly-born child's identity, while, at the same time, remembering that of the original name-bearer? Of course, that is not to say that all children who took another person's name did so after the original name-bearer's death. Indeed, in many cases, they may have been a willing party in the process, and even involved in the naming ceremony itself, sometimes as a godparent, sometimes as the priest, or even both. This was the case of Orderic Vitalis, who was given the name of the parish priest of Atcham, who baptized him and stood as his godfather. An act of nomination such as this, taking place in the heart of the community, tied the identity of its newest member to an existing one, forging links across generations. While not initially an act of remembrance, such acts would allow for commemoration to take place in due course, just as Orderic remembered his namesake while writing the epilogue to his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, some sixty-seven years after that original act of nomination took place.[48]

Rather than demonstrating uniqueness, personal name choices therefore began to focus more on demonstrating belonging to the wider social group within which the act of nomination took place. Naming for or after another person became a way of demonstrating links between a newly born child and other living people: family members, member of spiritual kin, or simply influential people in the community. The effect of this was to draw links between young and old, and the living and the dead — allowing the past to be remembered in the present.

Baby talk: names in infancy and childhood

Names given at birth form only part of an individual's onomastic identity. Examining how names were altered and transformed during the early phases of a person's life can help shed light on medieval childhood. Leonard Neidorf's recent chapter, "Naming Children in Anglo-Saxon England: Ethnic Identity and Cultural Change", goes a long way to proving that parents did care a great deal about what they named their children, in order to ensure that they were in possession of "socially acceptable names".[49] Neidorf shows that there was decline in

[45] Devlin, *Remembering the Dead*, 83; See also: Zoe Devlin, "Remembering the dead in Anglo-Saxon England: Memory theory in archaeology and history," (Ph.D thesis, University of York, 2006), 264.
[46] Devlin, *Remembering the Dead*, 83.
[47] Zoe Devlin, "Remembering the Dead," 258.
[48] Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis*, 221.
[49] Neidorf, "Naming Children in Anglo-Saxon England," 35.

the use of name elements signaling belonging to ethnic groups, as a broader 'English' identity was formed.[50] Similarly, he echoes Cecily Clark in suggesting that there was a particular prestige attached to Scandinavian names in the ninth and tenth centuries, then Norman names in the eleventh and twelfth.[51] It certainly seems clear that prestige and outward appearance were key factors in the choice of a name. However, a key tenet of Neidorf's chapter is that this helps proves a continuity in how medieval and modern people conceived childhood. Neidorf's conclusions are in line with other recent studies into the medieval family which have attempted to refute Philippe Ariès' suggestion that people in the medieval world had no awareness of childhood.[52] These studies have attempted to show that medieval parents provided care, affection and education during their formative years — much as people do today.[53] However, while Neidorf clearly shows the importance of the choice of name to the parents, this does not necessarily prove any great affection for children during their childhood. Is it not possible that parents were concerned for their child's future — naming the adult they would be become, rather than the infant in front of them? Indeed, could it not be that the prestige attached to a name was one associated with name givers, rather than name bearers, and so reflecting on the family unit, rather than the child? If so, it would, to some extent, actually support Ariès' suggestion that the medieval family was simply an "institution for the transmission of a name". [54] In truth, Neidorf is surely right to assert that parents' name choices reflected true affection for their children. However, to fully prove this, it is necessary to look past the name given at birth and investigate how names were used within childhood.

If we are to take Isidore of Seville at face value, it would seem that there was little interaction between adults and children during early childhood. He explains that the first phase of life, *infantia*, was named because of an infant's inability to communicate:

> Infans dicitur homo primae aetatis; dictus autem infans quia adhuc fari nescit, id est loqui non potest. Nondum enim bene ordinatis dentibus minus est sermonis expressio.[55]
>
> [A human being of the first age is called an infant (*infans*); it is called an infant, because it does not yet know how to speak, that is, it cannot talk. Not yet having its full complement of teeth, it has less ability to articulate words.][56]

[50] Neidorf, "Naming Children in Anglo-Saxon England," 34–6.
[51] Neidorf, "Naming Children in Anglo-Saxon England," 41–2. See also Cecily Clark, "The Early Personal Names of King's Lynn: An Essay in Socio-Cultural History," in *Words, Names, and History* eds. Clark and Jackson, 241–79, for more on Scandinavian influence, as well as "Willelmus rex? vel alius Willelmus?," in the same collection, 280–98, for the impact of Norman Conquest on names.
[52] Philippe Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1973); Jeroen Dekker and Leendert Groenendijk, "Philippe Ariès's Discovery of Childhood after Fifty Years: The Impact of a Classic Study on Educational Research," *Oxford Review of Education* 38 (2012): 133–47, at 135. See Neidorf, "Naming Children in Anglo-Saxon England," 32–33 for more background.
[53] For studies that support a continuity in the conception of childhood, see: Sally Crawford, Dawn Hadley and Gillian Shepherd, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Childhood* (Oxford, 2018); Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*; Dawn Hadley and Katie Hemer, eds., *Medieval Childhood: Archaeological Approaches* (Oxford, 2014), including Sally Crawford, "Archaeology of the Medieval Family," 26–38; Amy Livingstone, *Out of love for my kin: Aristocratic Family Life in the Lands of the Loire, 1000-1200* (Ithica, 2010).
[54] Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale*, 313.
[55] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae,* ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911), 1: XI.2.9
[56] Translation from *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* trans. Stephen A. Barney, et al., (Cambridge, 2005), 241.

According to Isidore, *infantia* ended in a child's seventh year, when the next phase *pueritia* [childhood] began.[57] It is unlikely that Isidore believed that children could not speak at all, or did not have teeth, until they reached the age of seven. His reflections may have been an acknowledgement that this first phase of life was a period of language acquisition and development.[58] They also echo Augustine of Hippo's description of his own transition from infancy to childhood, which involved learning how to speak, until he was "non enim eram infans, qui non farer, sed iam puer loquens eram" [no longer an infant incapable of speech, but already a boy, able to talk].[59] Well before this transition from *infantia* to *pueritia*, however, it is possible that some Old English names, specifically lall-names and hypocorisms, show that adults did communicate with infants from a young age in a way that suggests a degree of affection.[60]

Lall formations are an element of child language, being words formed in early infancy, and use a simple structure, usually featuring reduplication (the repetition of nearly identical syllables) and consonant gemination (the lengthening of a consonant sound).[61] Fran Colman explains how the vowels and consonants of lall-names are "typically associated with the first controlled sounds a child is physically capable of producing" and "appear to be created by the parents' interpretation of a child's utterances".[62] So they sometimes feature sounds from a name that a child is attempting to say, or they may simply be based on the earliest sounds that the child is able to produce (*A* being the most common vowel and labials being the most common consonants).[63] Because of this, lall-names are often the same, or similar, in many languages, like *Mama*, *Dada* and *Papa*.[64] As these examples demonstrate, lall-words usually refer to people or things that are of special importance to children, or particularly relevant to their lives.[65] This is why lall-names are so often used for parents and close relatives, as well as the child themselves. A few examples of Old English names that are very likely lall formations are *Abba*, *Babba* and *Lulla*. There is an *Abba* listed as a priest in the Durham *Liber Vitae*, and the name occurs sixteen times in *PASE* up to the late eleventh century.[66] It is almost certainly a lall formation, formed using early childhood sounds, and

[57] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae,* XI.2.2.
[58] Erin Abraham, "Out of the Mouths of Babes: Speech, Innocence, and Vulnerability in Early Medieval Perceptions of Childhood," *Eolas: The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies* 7 (2014): 46–64, at 49.
[59] Augustine, *Confessions*, 2 vols, ed. and trans. Carolyn Hammond (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 1:I.8.13, with Hammond's translation.
[60] Redin, *Uncompounded personal names*, xxvii–xxxix; Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 125–46. The word *lall* itself is onomatopoeic meaning "to speak childishly", originating from the Latin *lallare* "to sing lalla or lullaby". *OED Online* (Oxford, 2019), s.v. *lall*, v. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/105197?redirectedFrom=lall& (accessed 3 January 2020); Colman, *Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 126.
[61] Redin, *Uncompounded Personal Names*, p. xxxi; Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 126–27
[62] Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 126; John Lyons, *Semantics*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1977), 1, 218; John Anderson, *The Grammar of Names* (Oxford, 2007), 88–9.
[63] Colman cites *Mimi* as a Greek example of the former – a lall-name which is a reduced form of the given name *Dimitris*. See Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 126.
[64] Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 126.
[65] Redin, *Uncompounded Personal Names*, xxxi.
[66] *Durham Liber Vitae*, fol. 28r.

similar forms existed in Latin and Gothic.[67] *Babba* is also a widely used lall-name in many Germanic languages which is recorded numerous times in Old English sources.[68] *Lulla* is another typical lall-name which appears regularly, including a priest and an abbot who both witnessed the same charter at Clofesho in 803.[69]

It is difficult to identify with absolute certainty whether any of these were spontaneous lall formations created during childhood. However, another potential example of a lall-name is belonged to Æthelburh, daughter of King Æthelberht of Kent and wife of King Edwin of Northumbria.[70] Bede states that Æthelburh 'quae alio nomine Tatae vocabatur' [who was also called by the name Tate].[71] Fran Colman believes that *Tate* was a lall formation, suggesting it can "readily be imagined as a child's attempt to articulate the vowels of *Æthel*, and its complex medial dental fricative as a stop: attempts analogous to those that produce *Dod* for *George*."[72] This is by no means the only interpretation of Æthelburh's alternative name. For example, Redin suggests *Tate* may have been a lall formation, but not one phonetically related to *Æthelburh*, and he prefers the idea of an etymologically meaningful byname (although without actually deciding upon one).[73] Insley explains it as a short form of names in *Tāt-*, although surely this does not apply in the case of Æthelburh.[74] So, while not certain, it is definitely plausible that Bede's recording of Æthelburh's alternative name is an example of a childhood name that was coined through infant interaction with parents. Another potential example is the name of Nunna, seventh-century King of the South Saxons, who is also recorded as *Nothelm*.[75] The lack of similarity between the two names other than the initial sound leads Redin to suggest that *Nunna* may have been a lall formation rather than a true short form.[76] There is also a woman named *Nunnae* in the Durham *Liber Vitae*, which appears to be a lall formation.[77]

Like a nickname, a lall-name may eventually become a given name in its own right, and this is likely to be the case for some instances of lall-names in early medieval England. However, it seems reasonable to assume that at least some of these examples were formed as lall-names through childish interactions between infants and parents. These early acts of re-nomination, occurring only a year or so after birth, would have occurred through repeated interaction between the child and their parents. As Lyons explains: "the child creates the name…, but the parents by the interpretation they impose on [the] utterance make of it an

[67] Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 126;
[68] Redin, *Uncompounded Personal Names*, 83; Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 128–129. *Babba* appears in *PASE* as the name of seven individuals, including two West Saxon ministers who witnessed charters in the reigns of Æthelberht and Alfred: *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England (PASE)*, "Babba 2" and "Babba 3", http://www.pase.ac.uk/ (accessed 23 June 2020).
[69] *PASE*, "Lulla 4" and "Lulla 5", http://www.pase.ac.uk/ (accessed 23 June 2020). For more on the name, see: Redin, *Uncompounded Personal Names*, 100; and Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 128–129.
[70] Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 130.
[71] *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, II.9; Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 130.
[72] Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 130.
[73] Redin, *Uncompounded Personal Names*, 55.
[74] Insley and Rollason, "English Monothematic Names," 183.
[75] *PASE*, "Nunna", http://www.pase.ac.uk/ (accessed 23 June 2020).
[76] Redin, *Uncompounded Personal Names*, 68.
[77] *Durham Liber Vitae,* fol. 16r; Maria Boehler, *Die altenglischen Frauennamen* (Berlin, 1930), 226.

instance of performative nomination".[78] The adoption of a child's own words for things, and the frequent repetition of a child's name, are features of child directed speech — a form of simplified language that adults adopt while talking to infants and young children.[79] Adults use child directed speech to help maintain a child's attention and to accommodate the child into a conversation, with the ultimate aim of aiding the child's language acquisition. This is by no means a universal cultural practice. While it is common in some places, like North America, where parents frequently talk to infants from birth (or before), in other cultures, such amongst the Mayans of Mexico and Walpiri of Australia, children are not seen as appropriate conversation partners and are not addressed directly by adults.[80] In this context, Isidore's delineation between infants who cannot speak and children (aged seven and up) who can, could be construed as a reflection of a society in which adults did not actually speak to young children.[81] However, the *Life of Saint Guthlac* explains that, as a young boy, Guthlac tried to "fari pueriliter temptabat" [tried to speak in the way of a child] but he "non puerorum lascivias, non garrula matronam deliramenta … imitabatur" [imitated neither the foolishness of children nor the absurd chatter of matrons].[82] This suggests that adults were aware that language learning was a process, and that young children could speak, but not in the same way as adults. Indeed, it was Guthlac's unchildlike speech that made him stand out.

Similarly, Saint Augustine's description of language learning sounds very much like it was facilitated by something like child directed speech:

> cum ipsi appellabant rem aliquam et cum secundum eam vocem corpus ad aliquid movebant, videbam et tenebam hoc ab eis vocari rem illam quod sonabant cum eam vellent ostendere. hoc autem eos velle ex motu corporis aperiebatur tamquam verbis naturalibus omnium gentium, quae fiunt vultu et nutu oculorum ceterorumque membrorum actu et sonitu vocis indicante affectionem animi in petendis, habendis, reiciendis fugiendisve rebus.
>
> [When they people called something by name, and, in response to that word turned their body toward it, I observed it. I noted they were calling the thing a particular name, the sound they made when they wanted to draw attention to it. What they meant was evident from their physical movements, which constitute and instinctual language in all peoples. It was conveyed through facial expressions and eye movements and other bodily gestures; by the tone of voice, which conveys the mind's inclination to seek and possess things, or to reject and avoid them.][83]

[78] Lyons, *Semantics*, 1, 218.
[79] "Child Directed Speech (CDS)," in *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, ed. Tom McArthur et al, 2nd ed., (Oxford, 2018), 112; Melanie Soderstrom, "Beyond babytalk: Re-evaluating the nature and content of speech input to preverbal infants," *Developmental Review* 27 (2007): 501–32.
[80] Erika Hoff, "How Social Contexts Support and Shape Language Development," *Developmental Review* 26 (2006): 55–88, at 58–9. See also Edith L. Bavin, "The Acquisition of Walpiri," in *The Crosslinguistic Study of Language Acquisition: Volume 3*, ed., Dan Slobin (Abingdon, 1992), 309–66, at 321–5; Anne Fernald and Hiromi Morikawa, "Common Themes and Cultural Variations in Japanese and American Mothers' Speech to Infants," *Child Development* 64 (1993): 637–56.
[81] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae,* XI.2.2.
[82] *Life of Saint Guthlac*, 78.
[83] Augustine, *Confessiones*, I.8.13, with Hammond's translation.

This suggests, as least in Augustine's time, adults did speak to young children and noticeably altered their language, intonation and gestures in an effort to help them learn — precisely the sort of context that lall-names would have emerged. If this is the case, and lall formations such as *Abba*, *Babba*, *Lulla*, *Tate* and *Nunna* were adopted as alternative names, it seems reasonable to assume that parents in early medieval England were interacting with their children much as parents do today — by adapting their language, simplifying their sentence structure and copying the child's own words for things in an attempt to be more engaging, to communicate with them on their level, and, ultimately, to help educate them.

The second group of Old English names that could be associated with infancy and childhood are hypocorisms. While lall-names are formed through the simple reduplication of syllables contained within a name, hypocorisms are formed morphologically, through the addition of a diminutive suffix to part of a name.[84] The diminutive nature of such names has the effect of making it more familiar, playful and intimate.[85] Adolf Noreen described hypocoristic names as characterizing "their objects…from the point of view of the nursery, family life, or circle of friends."[86] In Present Day English, hypocorisms are commonly formed using a *-y* or *-ie* suffix, such *Tommy* from *Thomas* and *Becky* from *Rebecca*. In the early Old English period hypocoristic names were often formed with an *-a* suffix added to the first element of a compound name.[87] Indeed, the names recorded for several kings of early English kingdoms are hypocorisms. The name of Offa of Mercia is most likely a hypocoristic form of *Osfrith* or of a name beginning with *Wulf-*.[88] Beonna, king of East Anglia, bore a hypocoristic name formed from with the prototheme *Beorn-*.[89] The name of Sebba, king of Essex, was probably a short form of a dithematic name such as *Sæbeorht.*[90] These are by no means isolated occurrences. Just a few examples from the Durham *Liber Vitae* include *Ælla*, *Ceolla*, *Cudda*, *Eada*, *Ealda*, *Tida* and *Wynna*.[91] Hypocoristic names were a consistent feature of early medieval England, although their form did change over time. By the time of the Conquest, names with an *-a* suffix were becoming less common, and names ending in *-ing* becoming increasingly popular, such as *Leofing* and *Goding*. Insley has also suggested a number of late Old English deuterothemes that came into use by the eleventh century were in effect used as diminutive or hypocoristic forms, including names ending in *-cild* [child] and *-sunu* [son], both of which explicitly referenced the bearers as being young.[92]

84 Although, as with lall-names, consonant gemination is common.
85 Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 136–37.
86 Adolf Noreen, *Vårt Språk* (Lund, 1903), 390, cited here in translation from Redin, *Uncompounded Personal Names*, xxviii–xxix. As Colman explains, the term hypocorism (from the Greek *ὑποκοριστικός*) means 'to speak like a child'. Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 126.
87 Insley, "Pre-Conquest Personal Names," 378–79.
88 John Insley and David Rollason, "English Monothematic Personal Names," in *Durham Liber Vitae*, ed. Rollason and Rollason, 1, 165–87, at 181. Although it is possible that it is lall formation, as suggested in Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, 129.
89 Redin, *Uncompounded Personal Names*, 61; Insley and Rollason, "English Monothematic Names," 168.
90 Redin, *Uncompounded Personal Names*, 128.
91 For the various instances of these names and linguistic commentary, see: Insley and Rollason, "English Monothematic Names," 165–87.
92 Insley "Pre-Conquest Personal Names," 379.

Of course, hypocorisms were not, and are not, exclusively used for children. They are sometimes used as terms of familiarity for adults, often within a close-knit group of friends. They also often become names in their own right and given at birth baptismal names. Because of this, it is not possible to distinguish with complete certainty between a newly formed hypocorism and one which was used as a given name. However, the frequent occurrences of such forms suggests that many names were shortened during the lifetime of the bearer, sometimes to demonstrate familiarity, but surely also as terms of endearment and affection for children. Even in cases where such shortening only took place in adulthood, the diminutive nature of these names functions specifically to denote smallness and youth. The familiarity they engender arises precisely because they are the types of names used *within a family*. Even when not applied to a child, they are *child-like*. It seems unlikely that these names would be used only for adults — rather their use was extended to adults to perform the social function of indicating closeness and familiarity. So, in the case of both lall-names and hypocorisms it is possible to see how names given at birth were transformed through parental interaction during childhood. As such, it seems safe to add these names to the list of evidence in favor of meaningful and caring relationships between medieval children and their parents.

Youth is wild, and age is tame: transforming identities in adulthood

As a person moved past childhood and into adulthood, their names continued to evolve to reflect different aspects of their identity. A common way of doing this was through bynames. These became increasingly common from the late tenth century onwards. They typically referred to one of a number of aspects of the bearer's life, including: their relationship to another person (often a parent, but not always); a location (usually a place of residence or origin); occupation or status (such as a job or ceremonial role); and personal characteristics (often through a humorous or insulting nickname). In pre-Conquest England, bynames were not hereditary — they were created for a living person — and not every person would have borne a byname.[93] However, as early as the mid-eleventh century, there is evidence to suggest that the use of creative bynames was on its way to becoming systematic.

This can be seen clearly in the 1057 survey of Winton Domesday and the list of Burgesses of Colchester from Little Domesday. Both of these sources show widespread use of bynames used in conjunction with, or instead of, given names. In the Colchester list, almost a quarter of men are listed with a byname of some sort, while in the Winchester list it is nearly fifty percent. This does not appear to be down to any particular desire to distinguish individuals with the same given name. For example, the names *Wulfgar*, *Colsvein* and *Sunric* were not common names, appearing only once each in the 1057 Winton Domesday survey, yet each of these was listed with a byname: Ulgarus wantarius [Wulfgar the glover], Golsewanus presbiter [Colsvein the priest] and Sonricus hosarius [Sunric the hosier].[94] In

[93] Although the hereditary surnames which developed in the later medieval period did originate as bynames. See P. H. Reaney and R. M. Wilson, *Dictionary of English Surnames*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 2005), xi–l; Postles, *Naming the People of England*, 91–92.

[94] Olof von Feilitzen, "The Personal Names and Bynames of the Winton Domesday," in *Winton Domesday*, ed. Biddle, 143–239, at 204 "wantar'", 203 "presbiter" and 202 "hosarius".

contrast, many of the bearers of the very common names, *Godwine*, *Leofwine* and *Leofing*, are not listed with bynames: ten of thirty in the case of *Godwine*; five of twelve in the case of *Leofwine*; and five of nine in the case of *Leofing*.[95] So, the inclusion of these bynames does not seem to be to distinguish between namesakes. Instead, it seems likely that key role fulfilled by the bynames featured in these lists was to position individuals within a wider social matrix, referring to their role, status, occupation, family relationship or standing in the community.[96] For example, Alwinus Watmaungre [the wet-monger], was known, rather matter-of-factly, as a seller of drinks.[97] In the same way, Edwinus faber [the smith], Alwinus presbiter [the priest] and Algarus harengarius [the herring-monger], were also known by their occupations.[98] These occupational bynames also contain secondary categories of inferential information that would have been obvious to name-users. A person's occupation was very often an obvious indicator of social status, and these bynames would have indicated the standing of that individual in the community. They would also have told people something, indirectly, about the age of their bearers — all of these occupations are very clear markers of adulthood.

Nicknames also featured regularly amongst the bynames of eleventh-century Winchester. They usually refer to something more personal about the name-bearer, such as an incident in their life or their personal characteristics. Very often, these were derogatory or insulting. For example, Aluricus Penipurs [penny-purse], was probably less than generous with his money, and Lipestanus Bittecat [cask-cat], appears to have been fond of a drink. This is not the place to delve into the meanings of nicknames of Godwinus Clawecunte [scratch-cunt] or the individual recorded simply as Balloc [bollock]; however, these names demonstrate the level to which nicknames could be offensive or defamatory.[99] It is possible that insulting names such as these were used as tools of marginalization and exclusion, but they may have been humorous in nature, at least in part, and used as much as markers of belonging to the wider social group.[100] Like all bynames, nicknames were created not by the name-bearer, or their parents, but were given to people by the other members of their community, and were in essence, community items. They were bestowed in response to developing characteristics and symbolized an emergent or achieved identity — rather than one which was assigned at birth.[101] This social identity was one that was intrinsically connected with a new phase of life. As Alford points out, "most nicknames are created by age-mates and peers", and this shift from the original name-givers (usually parents) demonstrates the advancing importance of peers in the shaping of an individual's identity.[102] The bestowing of a byname can therefore be seen as a rite of passage, marking the transition

95 This can also be seen in the Colchester list, whe bynames usually appear as the only name listed. Only one of the thirteen bearers of the most popular name, *Leofwine*, is listed with a byname. There are also four men known exclusively as *Sprot* [sprout; twig], a nickname for a short person.
96 Alford, *Naming and Identity*, 30–3.
97 Feilitzen, "The Personal Names of the Winton Domesday," 204 "watmaungre", 201 "faber", 203 "presbiter" and 202 "harengarius".
98 Feilitzen, "Personal Names of the Winton Domesday," 215 "Penipurs" and 208 "Bittecat".
99 Feilitzen, "Personal Names of the Winton Domesday," 210 "Clawecunte" and 207 "Balloe".
100 Stanley Brandes, "The Structural and Demographic Implications of Nicknames in Navanogal Spain," *American Ethnologist* 2 (1975): 139–48, at 141–3 and Alford, *Naming and Identity*, 82–5.
101 Alford, *Naming and Identity*, 83.
102 Alford, *Naming and Identity*, 84.

from childhood, where social identity was formed by the parents, to adulthood, where social identity was formed increasingly by the wider community.

Of course, as well as inferential and symbolic meaning, certain bynames did explicitly demonstrate the stage of life of the bearer. Bynames often referred to characteristics such as age, appearance, marital status, as well as physical prowess or infirmity. Hair was a common focus of nicknames, as was the lack of it, as in the case of Not [close-cropped, bald], a burgess of Colchester in 1086, whose name referred to his baldness.[103] Burewoldus Horloc [grey locks] and Adam Witegos [white goose] may have still had hair, but their nicknames suggest that it was no longer the color of their youth.[104] Indeed, these names can all be assumed to refer to men of a certain age, in contrast to the man known only as Brunlocc [brown locks], whose seems youthful in comparison.[105] Nicknames could also refer directly to the physical frailty or infirmity of the bearers, such as Godwinus Sarz [the deaf], Edricus cecus [the blind], Godman Helteprest [the lame priest], and Goduuin uuachefet [weak feet].[106] While these are not necessarily always indicators of old age, they are conditions that are more likely to have been associated with the elderly, and contrast starkly with Got flet [the fleet].[107] Unlike some other examples cited above, none of these age-related nicknames are overtly insulting or offensive, but they do clearly contrast the youth of certain members of the community with the age and infirmity of others, and highlight the drawbacks of old age. Indeed, the physical manifestations of age embodied through these names mirror closely those listed by an eleventh-century scribe in the Lambeth Psalter:

> Iam pertrahit me deuictum senectus ad occasum, floret uertex, hebet uisus, crescit dolor capitis, ruunt dentes, [t]remunt membra, decident tote uires.
>
> [Now old age drags me, subdued, to my end, the crown of my head is blooming (i.e. growing white), my vision is fading, headache is increasing, my teeth are falling out, my limbs are trembling, my powers are completely diminishing.][108]

In this way, the nicknames borne by these individuals were representations of their ever-evolving identities. While many bynames may have been long-term identifiers, they were not necessarily permanent. They changed and adapted with the passage of time, just as their bodies did. As these physical changes took place, the way in which they were perceived by other people transformed, and bynames reflected this transformation in public perception.

Bynames could also be a means of creating inter-generational links between members of a family or wider group of relations at different stages of life. This was done through relationship bynames. In most cases paternal relationships were emphasized through

103 *Domesday Book: Essex*, fol. 105r. See *OED Online* (Oxford, 2019), s.v. *nott*, adj. and n. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/128491?redirectedFrom=hnott& (accessed February 01, 2020).
104 Feilitzen, "Personal Names of the Winton Domesday," 212 "Horloc", 217 "Witegos".
105 *Domesday Book: Essex*, fol. 105v.
106 Feilitzen, "Personal Names of the Winton Domesday," 216 "Sorz", 209 "Cecus", 212 "Helteprest"; *Domesday Book: Essex*, fol. 104v. Feilitzen suggests *Sorz* is from the Old French *sort*, with Anglo-Norman nominative *-s*. There is also an instance of Latin *surdus* [deaf], most likely a translation of Old English *dēaf* or Old French *sort*, in the 1148 Winton Domesday Survey.
107 *Domesday Book: Essex*, fol. 104v.
108 Max Förster, "Die altenglischen Beigaben des Lambeth-Psalters," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 13 (1914): 328–35, at 328–29, cited with translation from Thijs Porck, *Old Age in Early Medieval England: A Cultural History* (Woodbridge, 2019), 80.

patronyms, as in the case of Godwinus Elemeressone [son of Elmer].[109] But other links are emphasized in this way too, including matronyms, such as Siward Leverunessone [son of Leofrun], as well fraternal ties, as in the case of Sawinus frater Wnstani [brother of Winstan]. Downward links could also be emphasized, in the case of Alwinus pater Chepingi, [Chepping's Father].[110] The use of relationship bynames such as these was, in part, a way of linking an individual to members of their family, aiding identification by referencing a well-known relative. However, for individuals in early adulthood, patronymic bynames could also represent a phase where their identity was still implicitly grounded within the broader familial identity of their parents, and one that would be discarded in later life as their identity developed: as they found their own occupation, started their own family, or perhaps just grew fat and bald. Despite this, it is clear that many people bore relationship bynames throughout their lives, as is demonstrated by the fact that so many persist today as modern surnames. In such cases, relationship bynames helped emphasize the web of kinship relationships as they spread out throughout the wider community. Very often, they connected family members across generations, linking the young to the old and, as time went by, the living to the dead.

For early medieval English women, the evidence is less clear, largely due to the lack of it. For example, the Winton Domesday survey of 1057 lists 277 men and just nineteen women, while the list of burgesses of Colchester from Little Domesday contains just twenty-three women alongside 251 men. Amongst these recorded women, it is striking how few are listed with bynames — just four from the Winton Domesday and none at all from the list of burgesses of Colchester. This might be because their bynames were just not recorded, or it might reflect something about the different social identities of men and women. Women, whether children or adults, may have not been as visible to, or as well integrated into, the wider social identity of the community. While the identify-forming agents of young men seem to have shifted from the family, in the shape of parents, to the wider community as they transitioned into adulthood, for women it seems like the shift that took place was from one family to another. It was her role as wife and mother which formed the basis of a woman's adult identity. That said, unlike in many post-Conquest sources, there are no women in these two lists that are only referred to as "the wife of" or "daughter of" someone, without reference to their actual name, something which becomes very common over the next century or so.[111] In contrast, all the woman referred to in these earlier lists are recorded using their given name, either alone or with an accompanying byname.

Of the four female bynames in Winton Domesday, three refer either explicitly or implicitly to the stages of the life course.[112] Brihtwen vidua [the widow] has a byname which refers specifically to her status as a widow. The name of Ulveva Betteslaf [Betti's widow]

[109] Feilitzen, "Personal Names of the Winton Domesday," 205.
[110] Feilitzen, "Personal Names of the Winton Domesday," 206.
[111] For example, in the 1148 survey of Winton Domesday 30 percent of the women listed are referred to only by their relationship to a man with no given name. See Biddle, *Winchester Studies I*, 69–141 for the survey. Cecily Clark also notes this tendency amongst post-Conquest records of women's names: Cecily Clark, "Women's Names in Post-Conquest England," in *Words, Names, and History*, eds. Clark and Jackson, 117–43, at 125.
[112] The fourth, Leuret de Essewem, bears a locational byname, which Feilitzen suggests refers to Ashwell in Hertfordshire (*Essewelle* > Ashwell). See Feilitzen, "Personal Names of the Winton Domesday," 194 "Essewem". If this is the case, her newcomer status may have been the most prominent aspect of her identity.

refers to both her widow status and links her to her deceased husband. Finally, Leflet Ecregeles doctor [daughter of Ecregel] has a name that links her to her deceased parent.[113] While this is a small sample, the focus on stage of life via marital status and family relationship is notable, particularly in the case of the two widows. Widowhood does not necessarily imply old age. Porck points out that Judith of Flanders was widowed twice before she reached twenty years of age, and, as Julia Crick explains, rates of mortality suggest that many men and women would have lost a marital partner by the age of thirty.[114] However, widowhood certainly is a potential feature of old age, so reference to a woman in this way could indicate that the bearers were old, rather than young. In the case of Brihtwen vidua, the lack of reference to a deceased husband also gives the impression that her widowhood was not a temporary state of young woman who may yet remarry, but of a woman whose widowhood was permanent, and her defining characteristic in the eyes of the community. Indeed, both these two demonstrate that these women were in a third, distinct phase of life, being neither unmarried nor married. While this sample is small, it does suggest that female bynames were more concerned with referencing one of these three phases of life, rather than embodying any judgment of the wider community on their behavior or physical appearance — something noted by both Clark and Postles in studies of post-Conquest names.[115]

Therefore, system of bynames that developed from the tenth century onwards functioned, in at least in part, as a means of positioning individuals within the wider social framework. By referencing personal and physical characteristics, occupations and relationships to other people, community-created bynames were used to situate individuals within a social matrix of relationships, drawing links with other members of the community, both past and present. In many cases, they also reflected how an individual's identity changed over the course of their lives. While for men this was often done through references to physical appearance, women's social identities remained less outward-facing, and more linked to a family identity through references to marital status and relationships to fathers and husbands.

Conclusions

The picture painted of naming practices in the *Last Kingdom* is, therefore, inaccurate — as is Philippe Ariès' judgment that the medieval family was concerned only with the transmission of a name and estate. Naming practices in early medieval England were not static, but the one constant is that the naming decisions were never only concerned with a direct line of

113 Whether this is her mother or father is unknown, as the name is unidentifiable. See Feilitzen, "Personal Names of the Winton Domesday," 205.
114 Porck, *Old Age in Early Medieval England*, 218; Julia Crick, "Men, Women and Widows: Widowhood in Pre-Conquest England," in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner (Harlow, 1999), 24–36, at 25. For more on pre-Conquest widowhood, see also: Rolf Bremmer Jr, "Widows in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Between Poverty and the Pyre: Moments in the History of Widowhood*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Lourens van den Bosch (London, 1995), 58–88.
115 Cecily Clark, "Onomastics," in *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume II: 1066*–1467, ed. Norman Blake (Cambridge, 1992), 542–606, at 587; David Postles, "'Gender trouble' (Judith Butler): describing English women in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries," *Nomina* 24 (2001): 47–66, at 48–9.

transmission from parent to child. In the early Old English period, names were created to preserve the uniqueness of a child's name, while still demonstrating belonging to a group of kinship relations through techniques such as alliteration as variation. There is also evidence to suggest that the semantic meaning of name elements played a role in decisions, and the popularity of these fluctuated over time. Towards the end of the period practices shifted, and parents did begin to copy names more frequently. But this was not done to keep one name within one family. Naming became an outward-facing act, done in the view of the wider community, and the sharing of common names allowed connections to be made with a wider web of people. This still included the extended family group, but also friends, neighbors and other important local people. In doing so, it helped to create inter-generational links between living namesakes, as well as to remember past members of a family or community. Birth and death, celebration of new life and commemoration of the past, became intertwined within one act of naming.

Baptismal names formed just one part of a person's onomastic identity, however, and names were manipulated, transformed, added to, or even replaced completely, to reflect the changing status of that individual over time. Names used during infancy and childhood, such as lall-names and hypocorisms, allow us a glimpse into the interactions between parents and young children. They suggest that children were not ignored or neglected, but spoken to and cared for in much the same way they are today. In adulthood, names were often transformed once again, especially from the tenth century onwards, as the use of bynames became more systematic. Just as the choice of given names for children began to be more rooted in the local community, and more outward-facing, so too were the bynames people acquired throughout their lives. They combined with the name chosen by the parents given at birth to form a more complex social identity — one that integrated them into a more complex social structure. These names explicitly and implicitly reflected the age, status and physical appearance of the bearer. They evolved throughout the life course of an individual, reflecting their changing social identity, and did so largely, without their input. These names did not reflect the hopes of parents for who their child may be, but rather the verdict of the community on who that child had become.