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The Tardy Adoption of the Plantagenet Surname

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Accounts of the origins of *Plantagenet* have ignored a tradition of similar names, some of which had a bawdy insinuation. There could have been a mischievous interpretation of *Plantagenet*, building its currency amongst neighbouring commoners whilst delaying its acceptance for official royal purposes. This and other developments such as the spread of contemporary scholastic teachings can explain the slow but eventual adoption of the *Plantagenet* nickname as a hereditary royal surname despite the scarcity of its early mentions.

Curiosity of *Plantagenet*

A curious feature of *Plantagenet* is that the name is often incorrectly applied as though it were the surname of all (or many) of the English kings throughout the 330 years from Geoffrey Plante Genest's son Henry II to Richard III. However, as John Gillingham explains:

But although Henry II's father Count Geoffrey was known as Plantagenet [actually *Plantegenest* or *Plante Genest*] it was not until the fifteenth century that this term came to be used as a family name,...¹

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2000 version) adds:

Geoffrey's descendants in England remained without one [a hereditary surname] for more than 250 years, although surnames became universal outside the royal family. ... The first official use of the surname Plantagenet by any descendant of Count Geoffrey occurred in 1460, when Richard, Duke of York, claimed the throne as "Richard Plantagenet".

John Gillingham continues:

... and for the story that the name came from the sprig of broom (*Planta Genista*) that he [Count Geoffrey] liked to wear in his hat to be put into writing we have to wait until the nineteenth century.

¹ J. Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*, 2nd edn (London, 2001), p. 3.

In fact, it was not as late as the nineteenth century: two centuries sooner, in 1605, William Camden had written that Geoffrey Plantagenet was so called because ‘he ware commonly a broom-stalk in his bonnet’.² Even so, although this story can be traced back to 1605, this is still long after the evidence around 1170 for Geoffrey’s *Plantegenest* nickname.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica*³ credits a different story of how Geoffrey’s nickname could have originated:

Although well established, the surname Plantagenet has little historical justification. It seems to have originated as a nickname for Count Geoffrey and has been variously explained as referring to his practice of wearing a sprig of broom (Latin *genista*) in his hat or, more probably, to his habit of planting brooms to improve his hunting covers.

However, the *Complete Peerage*,⁴ which favours the traditional sprig-wearing story, dismisses a hunting explanation with:

Mrs Green says that Geoffrey was so called “from his love of hunting over heath and broom” (Henry II, p. 6). This may be deduced from Wace (loc. cit.):

E al contre Geffrei son frere,
Que l’en clamont Plante Genest,
Qui mult amout bois e forest.

However, it is more likely that Geoffrey’s love of wood and forest was inserted for the purpose of rime than as an explanation of his nickname.

A hunting explanation can be regarded as an alternative possibility; but sprig-wearing is the most common explanation.

² W. Camden, *Remains Concerning Britain* (1605), repr. as *Remains Concerning Britain with a New Introduction by L. Dunkling* (Wakefield, 1974), pp. 111–12, photographic reprint of the edition published (London, 1870).

³ The 1950 edition mentions only the ‘sprig wearing’ story, but a hunting explanation was added by 1974.

⁴ *The Complete Peerage or a History of the House of Lords and all its Members from the Earliest Times*, vol. 11 edited by G. H. White (London, 1949), Appendix G, pp. 140–41, note (e).

Significance of a simple nickname

The traditional story might seem an odd explanation for a royal surname; but I shall venture to lend it more credibility by conjecturing that Geoffrey could have worn a broom sprig to reinforce that his nickname was an echo of a conquering predecessor's name.

Geoffrey Plante Genest was most famous for his marriage in 1128 to Matilda, the heiress apparent to the English throne, and for his conquest of Normandy by 1145. Geoffrey (1113–51) was the youthful suitor of Matilda, who was twelve years his senior; and, in his attempts to regain their 'inheritance' from the 'usurper' king Stephen, he attracted some powerful allies for his 1136 campaign into Normandy, most importantly the Duke of Aquitaine⁵ whose duchy had once been founded⁶ by Bernard Plantevelu around 869–872 AD.⁷ Geoffrey's nickname could have recalled Plantevelu's similar name and his similar success in gaining a new duchy. In contemporary documents Bernard is called *Planta-pilosa* which, like *Plantevelu*, means either a 'hairy shoot' or a 'hairy sole of foot' (Appendix A). A broom shoot is hairy.⁸ The meaning 'hairy broom shoot' can be ascribed to both *Planta-pilosa* and *Plante Genest*.

Appendix B outlines some other opinions about the *Plantagenet* name. It includes a theory that the significance of broom to the Angevin royal family may have related to its golden flower. However,

⁵ Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*, p. 14.

⁶ Aquitaine passed to William of Poitiers in 951 and, by 1086–1126, to the troubadour grandfather, William IX, of Eleanor of Aquitaine who, in 1152, married Plante Genest's son who became King Henry II in 1154.

⁷ *Histoire de l'Aquitaine*, publiée sous la direction de C. Higounet (Toulouse, 1971), p. 173; W. Kienart, *Der Herzogstitel in Deutschland und Frankreich (9 bis 12 Jahrhundert)*, (München and Wien, 1968), p. 164; N. L. Taylor, 'Saint William, King David and Makhir. A controversial medieval descent', *American Genealogist*, 72 (1997), 205–23.

⁸ The *genista scoparius* has leaves which are hairy when young and pods which are hairy on the edges. Sometimes called the *cytiscus scoparius*, it is widely distributed (e.g. J. Akeroyd, *The Encyclopedia of British Wild Flowers* (London, 2001), p. 114). The *Middle English Dictionary*, edited by H. Kurath and S. M. Kuhn (Ann Arbor, 1930–2001) [hereafter *MED*], defines the meaning of the Middle English word *geneste* as 'broom (*Cytiscus scoparius*)'.

it may have related instead to the vegetable soul. Since the time of Aristotle (c.384–322 BC), a soul had been ascribed to plants as well as to animals and man,⁹ and those who knew scholastic teachings would have been aware of plant-like aspects to man from the outset.

Like Plantevelu, Johannes Scotus Erigena (c.800–c.877) was at the court of Charles the Bald of France,¹⁰ and he held that ‘It is the will of God to create all creatures, visible and invisible, in man’. He added that bone, nail and hair contained only vegetable life,¹¹ and so Plantevelu’s name could have been intended to reflect that such vegetative substance formed his sturdy frame. By the time of Geoffrey Plante Genest, this intimation of the vegetable soul had developed into wider concepts of a robust constitution (Appendix A).

Later, during the reigns of the royal descendants of Plante Genest, there are descriptions of a highly-developed vegetable soul with its three powers: nutrition; augmentation; and generation.¹² Each power can be applied to a legendary lord with a ‘hairy broom shoot’ name who excelled at any or all of feeding his troops, augmenting his lands, and generating offspring:

nutrition: broom shoots were fed to animals¹³ and, since the times of Vegetius,¹⁴ controlling the food supply had been of paramount

⁹ B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 2nd edn (London, 1961), pp. 182–83. Earlier, Pythagoras (c.532 BC) had believed in the transmigration of souls; and the soul was superior to the body in the dualism of Plato (b.428–27 BC) (*ibid.*, pp. 50 and 140).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 396–97.

¹¹ H. Bett, *Johannes Scotus Erigena: A Study in Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1925), pp. 57–61 (pp. 58 and 60).

¹² J. J. McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 291–95 and 314; C. McKeon, *A Study of the Summa Philosophiae of the Pseudo-Grosseteste* (New York, 1948), p. 151.

¹³ Akeroyd, *The Encyclopedia of British Wild Flowers*, p. 114. Also, the late-fourteenth-century Pearl poet wrote: ‘Sesez childer of her sok, soghe hem so neuer, Ne best bite on no brom, ne no bent nauther’ (*Patience*, ll. 391–92). Text in, for example, *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, edited by M. Andrew and R. Waldron, York Medieval Texts, 2nd series (London, 1978).

importance in medieval campaigns such that a 'hairy broom shoot' epithet might have held relevance for a lord who successfully controlled nutrition;

augmentation: in his Normandy campaigns, Plante Genest steadily ramified his authority (1135–45) like the seasonal spread of a germinating shoot, and this could have been to the fore in the mind of the Norman poet Wace (1135–74) when he wrote his poem mentioning Plante Genest, with his love of wood and forest, romancing Geoffrey's love for augmenting his lands like his predecessor Plantevelu;

generation: the direct interpretation 'hairy shoot' could have drawn attention to *Planta-pilosa's* virility and gallantry, forming a fitting epithet for a war lord (Appendix A); John Marmoutier¹⁵ mentioned the name *Plantegenest* in his chronicle which he wrote to please Plante Genest's son, Henry II; Geoffrey had generated a fine heir—he had sent his nine year old son Henry to England in 1142 while he consolidated his continental possessions; generation in the sense of generating a fine offspring could have been significant for the *Plantegenest* nickname.

Popular opinion may have been tinged with another scholastic belief. The *Plantagenet* name can be associated with transubstantiation¹⁶ through the vegetable (*planta*) and animal (*genet* as a civet cat¹⁷ or horse¹⁸) genera to a human. This is consistent with the writings of

¹⁴ References to the fourth-century *De Re Militari* of Vegetius and its subsequent use by the medieval military appear in J. Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses: Peace and Conflict in 15th Century England*, pbk edn (London, 2005), pp. 44–49.

¹⁵ *The Plantagenet Chronicles*, edited by E. Hallam, (London, 1995), p. 43.

¹⁶ Transubstantiation had become an article of Christian faith in 1079 though it had been believed by many earlier (Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 403).

¹⁷ *MED* defines *genet* n(1) as 'the genet (*Genetta genetta*); the fur of a genet'. Similarly, F. Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de L'Ancienne Langue Française et de tous ses dialectes de IX^e au XV^e siècle* (Paris, 1938), defines *genete* as 'sorte de fouine, espèce de civette'. Also, D. R. Howlett, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, Fascicle 4: F–G–H (Oxford, 1989), p. 1064, defines sense (2) of *geneta* [AN *genette*] as '(fur of) civet cat'.

¹⁸ *MED* defines *genet* n(2) as 'a small Spanish horse, a jennet'. La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, *Dictionnaire Historique de l'ancien langage françois* (Niort and

Averroes (1126–98),¹⁹ who had developed a scheme for the generation of life from the elements, such as clay, through plants, and then the seed and blood of animals, to man.²⁰ For the civet cat, augmentation by its vegetable soul could explain its elongation. A similar notion can be applied to the Swiss name *Plantaporrets* (Appendix C) associated with the porrection of the leek plant. It seems likely that not everyone would have appreciated metaphysical explanations such as these; but, more mundanely, for some, the *Plantagenet* nickname could have come to evoke an image of the young Geoffrey, as a scion or establisher²¹ shoot (*planta*), at one with his mount²² in 1128 in his pre-nuptial joustings at Rouen (Marmoutier's chronicle) in which his Spanish horse²³ (*genet*) features.

Prurient sense in the common culture

The *Plante Genest* nickname can be considered alongside Geoffrey's other twelfth-century name *formosus* 'well formed' which appears later as *le Bel* or 'the handsome'.²⁴ Conjugal fidelity was not a characteristic of the Angevin kings, and Plante Genest's grandson John (1199–1216) was no exception: he was something of a profligate. Though he was

Paris, 1879), defines *genet* as 'cheval d'Espagne, de petite taille'. Similarly, Howlett, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, defines sense (1) of *geneta* [AN *genet*] as 'jennet, a small Spanish horse'.

¹⁹ Averroes (Ibn Rushd) was translated into Latin in the early thirteenth century and had a very great influence in Europe (Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 419).

²⁰ *Averroes' Tahafut Al-Tahafut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)*, translated from the Arabic with introduction and notes by S. van den Bergh, 2 vols (1954, repr. 1969), I, 327 and 332.

²¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1989) [hereafter *OED*], s.v. *plant*, v, sense 3.a.

²² Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de L'Ancienne Langue Française*, defines *genetaire* as 'cavalier monté sur un genêt'; and Howlett, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, defines *genetarius* [OF *genetaire*] as 'a jennet rider'. In R. E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* (Oxford, 1965), *genetes* is taken to mean 'light horsemen'.

²³ Hallam, *The Plantagenet Chronicles*, p. 48.

²⁴ J. Chartrou, *L'Anjou de 1109 à 1151* (Paris, 1928), p. 85.

unequaled in his dealings with the Welsh, Scots, or Irish, he was nicknamed 'soft sword' (*mollegladium*).²⁵ John's unpopularity with some may have encouraged the bandying of uncomplimentary senses to his relative's names, such as for his *Longspée* 'long sword' cousin. Beneath royalty, there have been such names as *Wagstaffe*, *Wagetail*, *Waghorn*, *Wagpole*, *Shakelance*, *Shakeshaft* and *Shakespeare* which could, it has been argued, have alluded to activity with the *membrum virile*.²⁶ Like these, *Longstaff*, *Longsword* and 'soft sword' could have evoked a male image, though the last of these suggests a lack of firmness in comparison to 'hairy shoot', which intimates rather a maturing male potency. Informality can turn a virile boast obscene or humorous,²⁷ and this may have happened for the *Plante Genest* nickname: prurient sense could have become attached to John's nickname 'soft sword' and also to the 'hairy broom shoot' and 'well formed' nicknames of Geoffrey.

There is a record of an unknown *Galfrido Plauntegenet* in 1266 in connection with a garderobe.²⁸ This suggests a digestive association since a function of the vegetable soul was to regulate the urino-genital system and the bowels (Appendix A). It is even possible that this may relate to the origins of the *Plante Genest* nickname since, in Geoffrey's 1136 campaign into Normandy, his advance was halted when he was wounded in the foot and his troops suffered an outbreak of diarrhoea.²⁹ It is conceivable that contemporaries may have seen it as more than a coincidence that Geoffrey had been damaged in his *planta* (sole) and then failed to fulfil his 'plant soul' obligation of nutrition. The clerics would likely not have wished to dwell on this digestive failure, and such a connection to *Plantagenet* can help to explain the sparsity of its

²⁵ A. L. Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta 1087–1216*, 2nd edn (Oxford 1993), pp. 426 and 428.

²⁶ P. H. Reaney, *The Origin of English Surnames* (London, 1967), pp. 285 and 292.

²⁷ A. Cruse, *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics* (Oxford, 2000), p. 61.

²⁸ *Plauntegenet Galfrido*, serjeant at arms, Wodestock, *Close Rolls 1266*.

²⁹ Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*, p. 14.

early mentions. By comparison, even a libidinous insinuation for Geoffrey's 'broom shoot' nickname might have seemed less repugnant.

Names of philandering were popular,³⁰ though obscene meanings were sometimes disguised by alternatives.³¹ In the Welsh Marches, there was a particularly unfortunate sense. In Welsh, *planta* meant 'to beget',³² which can be related to the planting of seed.³³ In his eighteenth-century dictionary, Samuel Johnson concurred with the same meaning in English, writing that *to plant* can mean 'to procreate'.³⁴ To this we can add that *genet* meant 'a small Spanish horse', and so *Plantagenet* carried a sense of bestiality.

To test the validity of such a meaning, we can see if there is consistent sense in similar names. There was, in particular, the English by-name *Plantefolie*. *Folie* can mean 'lechery' or 'fornication' in Middle English³⁵ and Old French.³⁶ Also, the adjective *foli* can mean 'sinful' or 'lascivious'.³⁷ *Plantefolie* seemingly meant 'lewd shoot' or a

³⁰ R. McKinley, *A History of British Surnames* (London and New York, 1990), pp. 158–59.

³¹ Reaney, *The Origin of English Surnames*, pp. 289–94.

³² *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru / A Dictionary of the Welsh Language*, edited by R. J. Thomas and G. A. Bevan (Cardiff, 1950–2003), p. 2818, defines *plantaf*: *planta* as 'to beget or bear (children), procreate, breed'.

³³ Job 5:25; cf. Genesis 38.

³⁴ S. Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language*, 8th edn (London, 1798), defines *to plant* v. a. as '(1) to put in the ground in order to grow; to set; to cultivate; (2) to procreate; to generate; (3) to place; to fix; (4) to settle; to establish; as, to plant a colony; (5) to fill or adorn with something planted; as, he planted the garden or the country; (6) to direct properly; as, to plant a cannon. Also, *to plant* v. n.: to perform the act of planting'.

³⁵ *MED* defines *folie* as '1(a) Foolishness, stupidity, dullness; folly, imprudence, lack of wisdom; (b) a foolish act, or course of action; (c) foolish talk, nonsense; an idle tale; also, falsehood, slander; 2(a) sinfulness, wrongdoing, sin or crime; (b) lechery, fornication, adultery; 3 madness, insanity, anger; 4 harm, injury damage'.

³⁶ La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, *Dictionnaire Historique de l'ancien langage françois* (Niort and Paris, 1879), defines *folie* as '(1) action ou parole folle, téméraire; (2) viol, débauche; (3) duperie; (4) attaque téméraire, coup de main; (5) injure; (6) crime'.

³⁷ *MED* defines *foli* as '(a) foolish, ignorant; imprudent, unwise, ill-advised; (b)

'planter of wickedness'. 'Lewd shoot' might be glossed to 'wickedness offshoot' or 'bastard child',³⁸ but an associable ribaldry remains. The name *Plantefolie* is found throughout England in the thirteenth century: Leicestershire in 1209; Somerset in 1226; Weston' in 1263; and Yorkshire in 1270.³⁹

Such a thirteenth-century English *Plant*-like name is usually taken to have a verb-noun construction. Thus, there were evidently allusions to the 'horse procreator' sense of *Plantagenet* in the names *Plantebene* ('seed⁴⁰ planter'), *Plantefolie* ('wickedness planter'), and *Planterose* ('orifice⁴¹ planter'). A 'gardener' meaning⁴² is quite possible for *Plantebene*⁴³ and *Planterose*. However, there is also a salacious sense to both, as well as for *Plantefolie* and *Plantagenet*.

Although attributive adjectives most commonly precede the noun, they can follow it, in Middle English verse for example,⁴⁴ and this would then cast the names *Plantebene*, *Plantefolie* and *Planterose* more nearly in the same genre as a classical understanding of the names *Planta-pilosa* and *Plantegenest*. Though the 'shoot' sense of

sinful; (c) lascivious, libidinous'.

³⁸ *MED* lists the 1(e) meaning of *fole* as 'a young child' and the 1(a) and 2 meanings as 'a foal or a horse', recalling a sense of transubstantiation through the genera as for *Plantagenet*.

³⁹ *Plantefolie Gilbert, Leic'*, *Curia Regis* 1209; *Plantefolie John*, Somerset, *Curia Regis* 1226; *Plantefolie Maud, Weston'*, *Close Rolls* 1263; and *Plantefolie Adam, Welle Fanerwal'* (co. York), *Close Rolls* 1270.

⁴⁰ *MED* defines *bene* n(1) as '1(a) the seed of the broad bean plant; 1(b) the bean plant; 2(a) an amount equal to a bean; 2(b) something of little value; 3(a) the plant called the Egyptian bean; also, the seed of this plant; 3(b) the seed of the Egyptian lupine'.

⁴¹ The rose can refer to the female genitalia (S. Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 292–301).

⁴² P. H. Reaney, *A Dictionary of English Surnames*, 3rd edn with corrections and additions by R. M. Wilson (Oxford, 1991), p. 354.

⁴³ *Plantebene Radulphus*, Norfolk, *1 John Pipe Rolls*, 1199; *Planteben' Radulphus*, *2 John Pipe Rolls*, 1200.

⁴⁴ J. A. Burrow and T. Turville-Petre, *A Book of Middle English* (Oxford, 1992), p. 44.

plante may have had priapic connotations, a 'pleasant'⁴⁵ (off)shoot' sense to *Plantebene* could, at least, have been less offensive than a satirical sense to 'plant pleasantly'⁴⁶ and 'plant seed'. However, even the adjectival senses of these English *Plant*-like names can stand as parodies of noble gallantry with, for example, a 'lewd shoot' sense to *Plantefolie* parodying a 'hairy broom shoot' sense for *Plantagenet*.

In the face of any inclination to use *Plantagenet* as a royal surname, religiously trained clerks would no doubt have wished to avoid any hint of a bawdy sense, seeking instead a more pious presentation. With the Queen's uncle Boniface of Savoy as archbishop of Canterbury and his compatriot Peter of Aigueblanche as bishop of Hereford, the mid-thirteenth-century Savoyard influence⁴⁷ can be expected to have favoured a godly image. There is for example a Swiss (?Savoyard) name *Plantevin* and a biblical reference to Jesus as the vine.⁴⁸ There may have been some interaction with possible meanings of the English *Plant*-like names described above—this may have led on to more pious meanings, though the following Swiss names (cf. Appendix C) may not have developed until later:

13th century English		undated Swiss	
Plantebene	pleasant shoot	Plantefoi	planter of faith
Plantefolie	wickedness shoot	Plantamour	planter of love
Planterose	risen shoot	Plantfor	planter of conscience

It seems that early English senses, though not polite, could have garnished *Plantagenet* with a common intrigue. This could have brought prominence to the name. However, the Count's nickname evidently had senses that were sufficiently offensive to render it unacceptable as the official surname of his royal descendants while bawdy sense persisted in England.

⁴⁵ *MED* defines *bene* (adj) as 'good, fair, pleasant, kindly'.

⁴⁶ *MED* defines *bene* (adv) as 'beautifully, pleasantly'.

⁴⁷ M. Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225–1360* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 93–96.

⁴⁸ John 15:1–5.

Centuries of *Plantagenet* in hiding

The apparent problem of salacious sense to *Plantegenest* was gradually alleviated, it seems, by rose heraldry and a scholastic sense of creation.

By adopting the rose (cf. Appendix B), the royal family may have been settling on a romantic association. In the mid-thirteenth century, Henry III's sons sported a rose in their heraldry: there was the gold rose of Edward I and the red rose of Edmund of Lancaster. This had been predated by the name *Planterose*⁴⁹ which, alongside its generative meaning, had a poetic sense as 'an implanter of ephemeral life'. This is indicated by the symbolism of Alain de Lille (c.1115–1202), who had written: "The rose depicts our station, a fitting explanation of our lot, a reading of our life, which while it blooms in early morning, 'flowers out', the flower deflowered".⁵⁰ Similar sense for the ephemeral rose remained in the fourteenth-century writings of the so-called *Pearl* poet,⁵¹ the author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. However, the rose also had a lasting significance. As a part of his theory of universals, Peter Abelard (1079–1142) had written: "Once we allow the proposition, 'If there is a rose, there is a flower (*si est rosa, est flos*),' it is always true and necessary", even if the rose no longer exists or has never existed.⁵² Similarly, the *Pearl* poet associates the rose with Christ's birth,⁵³ which could explain its lasting presence in heaven.⁵⁴ The moralising of Alexander Neckham, who was a foster brother of Richard I,⁵⁵ suggests a further sense as an 'instiller of foreboding longing',⁵⁶ apparently for

⁴⁹ *Planterose Robert, Warr' Wigorn'*, *Curia Regis* 1230.

⁵⁰ Quoted in A. J. Haft, J. G. White and R. J. White, *The Key to "The Name of the Rose"* (Ann Arbor, 1999), 100–01.

⁵¹ 'For that thou lestez wotz bot a rose That flowered and fayled' (*Pearl*, ll. 269–70). Text in, for example, *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, edited by Andrew and Waldron.

⁵² Haft, White and White, *The Key to "The Name of the Rose"*, p. 29.

⁵³ 'and there watz rose reflayr where rote hatz ben euer' (*Cleanness*, l. 1079).

⁵⁴ 'And thou so ryche a reken rose, And bydez here by this blysfyl bonc There lyuez lyste may neuer lose' (*Pearl*, ll. 906–08).

⁵⁵ Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta 1087–1216*, p. 245.

⁵⁶ 'A bramble of spine armour begets the rose whose touch is sweet and smooth ... Just as under the rose are concealed afflicting thorns so is desire of familiarity

love on earth⁵⁷ though perhaps in heaven. In short, the rose was morally flexible.

Scholastic teachings, though initially esoteric, eventually had an impact on common culture. Such teachings as those of Grosseteste promoted a less base sense than the generative meaning of *plant*, complementing the planting of seed with a more godly sense of spiritual instillation. Robert Grosseteste (c.1175–1253) had been a friend of Henry III in his minority,⁵⁸ and he had been responsible for ridding Oxford of its prostitutes in 1234⁵⁹ before being appointed bishop of Lincoln in 1235. His character was such⁶⁰ that he may have been aware that, regardless of officially-preferred meaning, there were bawdy connotations to *Plante Genest*. His teachings were conducive to alleviating this problem. Other scholastics, at Paris and Bologna (e.g. Phillip the Chancellor and St Thomas Aquinas), considered that man's vegetable soul was baser (more corporeal) than his sensory and intellectual souls.⁶¹ Grosseteste considered that the three souls were indivisible,⁶²

disquieting to the soul' (Alexander Neckham, *De Naturis Rerum*, edited by T. Wright (London, 1863), pp. 168–69).

⁵⁷ For example, the Dreamer finally possessing the rose is given a libidinous interpretation in a 1329 manuscript illustration of Meun's c.1275–80 continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* (MS B. N. Rothschild 2800, fol. 137v).

⁵⁸ According to Richard of Bardsley, his friendship with the young king accounted for a turning point in Grosseteste's career (R. W. Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: the Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1992), p. 81).

⁵⁹ Southern, *Robert Grosseteste*, p. 71. A royal mandate of 23 June 1234 directed Grosseteste to supervise the arrest of all prostitutes in Oxford who had disobeyed a royal order to leave the town (*Close Rolls*, 1231–34, p. 568).

⁶⁰ Southern, *Robert Grosseteste*, p. 21. Hollinshed extracted from the chronicles of Matthew Paris a picture of Grosseteste as a prurient investigator of monastic sins who, for example, in his visitation of monasteries 'entered into the chambers of the monks and searched their beds, and, coming to the houses of the nuns, went so near as to cause their breasts to be tried that he might understand their chaste livings'.

⁶¹ P. Hoffman, 'St. Thomas Aquinas on the halfway state of sensible being', *Philosophical Review*, 99 (1990), 73–92 (pp. 77–79).

⁶² McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, pp. 312–19.

and he devised a scheme whereby the vegetative component was powered by light,⁶³ thereby entertaining that its power of generation⁶⁴ was motivated by a heavenly force since, in his schemes, heavenly light (*lux suprema*) engendered spirit (*irradiato spiritualis*) in the flesh. Much of his philosophy was continued by Roger Bacon (c.1214–c.1294), who said modern philosophers taught that only the intellectual soul was directly created (by God):⁶⁵ this suggests there were developing perceptions of a ‘planting’ which could be either by man or by God. That a planting could be of a spiritual quality can be related back to an Old English translation of Boethius; but it seems that the corresponding 2(c) sense of *plaunten*⁶⁶ came more to the fore from 1340 onwards following Grosseteste’s development⁶⁷ of Boethius’s theology.⁶⁸ By then, there is Middle English reference to virtue⁶⁹ and gentleness⁷⁰ being *planted* into man.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 294–95.

⁶⁴ The three powers of the vegetable soul were nutrition, augmentation and generation, though the *Summa Philosophae* conceded that there may have to be a different type of generation for the mineral power.

⁶⁵ McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, p. 314.

⁶⁶ *MED* defines the 2(c) meaning of *plaunten* as ‘to instill (a virtue, a quality), infuse (grace), implant (the natural law, contrition, etc.); instill (one’s will); impart (truth, the word of God)’. It cites eighteen examples of this usage between 1340 and 1500. *OED* defines the 3(a) meaning of *to plant* as ‘to instil (an idea or feeling) in the mind, heart, etc.; to introduce, cause to spring up and grow (a quality, emotion, belief, etc.)’. It cites twelve examples of this usage, one being an Old English translation of Boethius and others dating from 1340 to 1993, citing also eight further examples dating from 1529 to 1996 in support of its 3(b) definition ‘to establish (a principle, doctrine, practice, etc.); to cause to be accepted’.

⁶⁷ McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, pp. 15, 344 and 448.

⁶⁸ Boethius (480–525) had allowed that not only Christ, but also virtuous men, could receive divine goodness (cf. the Pseudo-Dionysius). For Boethius, the absolutely simple Being of God (*esse*) may be precisely distinguished from the composite being of creatures (*esse plus id quod est*) (McKeon, *A Study of the Summa Philosophae*, pp. 117 and 159).

⁶⁹ ‘The holy ghost .. plonteth [F plante] and norisseth zeue uirtues’ (1340) *Dan Michel’s Ayenbite of inuryt*, edited by R. Morris, Early English Text Society, original series, 23 (London, 1866, repr. 1895), p. 122, l. 3. Also, ‘The fend .. desireth to destroye the goodness of vertues that god plantith [L plantat] in holy

In the fourteenth century, there is further evidence of a godly sense to *plant*. The *Pearl* poet recalled the biblical creation by referring to the Lord as ‘that wyz that al the worlde planted’.⁷¹ John Wycliffe’s translation (c.1382) of Genesis 2:8 includes ‘the lord god hadded plauntid paradise of delyte’ and also, for Matthew 15:13, ‘Eueri plaunt-yng that my fadir of heuen hath not plauntid, shal be drawun up by the roote’. William Langland described the tree of *Trewe-love* shored up by the *Trinitie of hevene* as: “‘This is a propre plonte”, quod I, “and priveliche hit bloweth””.⁷² The salacious by-name *Plantefolie* had by then died out, it seems, though the *Pearl* poet may have been thinking unfavourably about transubstantiation through a horse, recalling *Plauntegenet*, with his tirade against ‘the fylth of the flesch that foles han used’.⁷³

This was still not the time for officialdom to resurrect the *Planta-genet* name. In the reign of the first Lancastrian king, Henry IV, there remained the scandal that had surrounded his father, John of Gaunt, whose reputation for lechery dated back to the four illegitimate children born to his mistress Katherine Swynford in 1373, 1375, 1377 and 1379.⁷⁴ This may be why, in 1394, the spelling *Plaint* was used for a witness⁷⁵ to the proof of age of another child of Katherine. The spelling *Plaint* is unusual, but it has the innocent meaning ‘petition’ which would have avoided any embarrassments that might otherwise have arisen in these official proceedings from the meanings ‘fertility’ or ‘offspring’ of the more usual spellings *Plente* or *Plonte* (Appendix D).

chirche & in gode soules’ (a 1398) John de Trevisa, tr. Bartholomew de Glanville’s *Proprietatibus Rerum*: photostat. of MS Add. 27944, in poss. of MED.

⁷⁰ ‘If gentillnesse were planted naturelly Vnto a certeyn lynage doun the lyne .. They mighte do no villeyne or vice’ (c.1395) Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale*: Manly-Rickert 3, pp. 234–67, 270–85, l. 1134.

⁷¹ *Patience*, l. 111.

⁷² *Piers Plowman*, C-Text version, Huntingdon MS HM 143, ll. 9, 26, 101. Text in E. Slater and D. Pearsall, *Piers Plowman* (London, 1967).

⁷³ *Cleanness*, l. 202.

⁷⁴ A. Goodman, *John of Gaunt: The Excercise of Princely Power in Fourteenth-Century Europe* (Harlow, 1992), pp. 357 and 363.

⁷⁵ *Callendar of Inquisitions*, 1394.

In c.1400, the poet laureate, John Gower, wrote to Henry IV:

My lord, in whom evere yit be founde Pite withoute spot of violence,
Kep thilke pes alwei withinne bounde, Which god hathe planted in thi
conscience;⁷⁶

A simple interpretation is that the king is cautioned to limit his peace or, more specifically, his jurisdiction since the king's peace was the areas over which he was directly responsible for maintaining law and order.⁷⁷ It may not be accidental, however, that there is another interpretation: that he should limit his seed—*pes* might allude to his seed since the broom plant has hairy pea-like pods.

Though an ambiguity for the meaning of *plant* seemingly continued, it seems that there was a developing spiritual sense of creation to alleviate a bawdy sense of generation such that there may have been less cause to censor the *Plauntegenet* name by the mid-fifteenth century.

Eventual adoption of Plantagenet

Gravitas in the face of frivolity may be relevant to answering the question: “Why in the mid-fifteenth century did Richard, Duke of York adopt as a surname the nickname of Geoffrey Plantagenet, who was not even a king, instead of the by-name of a more prestigious and recent forefather?” Some three hundred years earlier, Geoffrey had fathered the Angevin Empire, which extended far beyond England, and reclaiming dominion in France had remained important in such times as those of Edward III and Henry V. In discussing the royal succession, it would have been pertinent that an intact male-line of kings dated back to when Plante Genest of Anjou had planted legitimate male issue in Henry I's daughter, Matilda. This suggests that there could have been quasi-continuous mention of the *Plantagenet* name. A likely answer as to why it is absent, however, from documents has been given already.

⁷⁶ J. Gower, *In Praise of Peace: the English works of John Gower*, edited by G. C. Macaulay, Early English Text Society, extra series, 82 (London, 1901), pp. 481–92.

⁷⁷ Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta 1087–1216*, p. 392.

A number of events could have prompted the adoption of *Plantagenet* as a royal surname.

The pious Henry VI squandered his father's gains in France; and his rival, Richard, Duke of York took advantage in England of Henry's loss of acclaim. In 1460, there was a rumour in London that the Earl of Warwick and the Duke of York planned to pass over Prince Edward on the grounds that he was not Henry VI's true son; in his place, they intended to make one of York's sons king.⁷⁸ A manly contender was at hand in the person of York's supposed son Edward, Earl of March whose skeleton measures 6 feet 3½ inches,⁷⁹ albeit that, because of wifely infidelity, it was claimed that March was not a true son of York.⁸⁰ This may have encouraged York to proclaim his power of generating a fine offspring, fit like Plantagenet's son Henry II to reign, maintaining that March's descent was intact. At that time March was eighteen; and Prince Edward, aged seven, had been disowned at birth by Henry in his madness.

It has been argued that events since 1455 had brutalised the aristocracy: this was not a time for noble good manners.⁸¹ Nor could the views of the commoners be ignored.⁸² Coarse gossip of Plantagenet in a 'hairy broom shoot' tradition was evidently ripe to spring forth, in these subsequently-named 'Wars of the Roses', to support the augmentation of the House of York which, though descended from the old dynasty, held little right to succession without a claim to be better fit to reign in legendary 'Plante Genest' style. Even by the 1440s, popular opinion had held that Henry VI was a foolish young man,⁸³ and York's 'hairy broom shoot' claim of generative renewal would have pressed

⁷⁸ Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 115.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁸⁰ In 1483, Dominic Mancini alleged that Edward's mother had confessed to this (*The Usurpation of Richard the Third: Dominicus Mancinus, Ad Angelum Catonem de Occupatione Regni Anglie per Riccardum Tercium Libellus*, translated with an introduction by C. A. J. Armstrong, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1969), pp. 60–63).

⁸¹ Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 217.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

home an advantage amidst allegations of Henry's cowardice, weakness and naïvety as well as his madness.

In 1460, Edward, Earl of March received his first independent command. He raised his army in the Welsh Marches, where there may have been a '*Plantegenest-like*' name tradition (Appendix D). He was victorious at Mortimer's Cross. This was in February 1461 and the next month he was proclaimed King Edward IV.

The fame that accrued to *Plantagenet* as the first English royal surname, after 1460, has led to a common misconception that it had been an official surname throughout this dynasty's reign (1154–1485) which followed on from the times of Geoffrey Plante Genest.

Conclusion

Considering first the onomastics, I have argued that much can be explained by positing that there was a connection between the names *Planta-pilosa* and *Plante Genest*. Both came from the same region of France. Both can refer to a hairy broom shoot. A 'hairy broom shoot' tradition can be associated with all three of: the ninth-century cognomen of Bernard Plant-pilosa; the twelfth-century nickname of Geoffrey Plante Genest; and the fifteenth-century surname of Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York. As to the significance of a broom shoot, it could exemplify the powers of the vegetable soul in a tradition that relates back to the times of *Planta-pilosa* (Appendix A). There are correspondencies between certain features of the vegetable soul and aspects of the *Plantagenet* name:

vegetable soul:	Plantagenet name:
vegetable life in bones	broom as therapy for bones (Appendix B)
digestion	<i>Galfrido Plauntegenet</i> (1266) with a garderobe
the urino-genital system	ribaldry in similar names
strong limbs and a robust constitution	name appears at times of virile conquest

Turning to the chronology, the adoption of *Plantagenet* as a surname was evidently belated though the name was then applied retrospectively. Geoffrey Plant Genest's grandson John had a stronger association with England than his absentee brother, Richard I (1189–99). From his times, there are bawdy allusions in names such as *Plantefolie* (1209, 1226, 1263 and 1270), which seem to parody the *Plantegenest* nickname. The name *Plauntegenet* appears momentarily at the end of the Barons War (1264–65). Eventually, scholastic teachings evidently redeemed much of the offence that was being caused by an association with excretion and procreation: the word *plant* was being complemented with a sense of spiritual instillation. Then, during the Wars of the Roses (1455–85), the House of York adopted *Plantagenet* as a surname, as a life-seeding symbol of dynastic foundation, making its claim of superiority over the less virile leadership of their Lancastrian rivals in the person of the feeble Henry VI though his French queen was more warlike. The *Plantagenet* name lasted through the supremacy (1460–85) of the royal House of York and it continued for York's descendants into Tudor times until Edward, Earl of Warwick was executed in 1499 and his sister Margaret in 1541. By then, there was developing sense in God's plantings of faith and intellect into man to counter bawdy connotations; and, anyway, the reputation of the earlier regime was now of less concern. Shakespeare applied the 'broom shoot' epithet retrospectively to royalty in his plays *King John* and *Henry VI*. By 1605, it seems that the name was being used indiscriminately, as William Camden wrote:

So in the house of Anjou, which obtained the Crown of England, Geffrey, the first Earl of Anjou, was surnamed Grisogonel, that is, Grey-cloak ; Fulco his son, Nerra ; his grandchild, Rechin, for his extortion. Again, his grandchild, Plantagenet, for that he wore commonly a broom-stalk in his bonnet ; his son Henry the second, King of England, Fitz-Empresse, because his mother was Empress ; his son King Richard had for surname Coeur de Lion, for his Lion-like courage ; as John was called Sans-terre, that is Without land : so that whereas these names were never taken up by the son, I know not why

any should think Plantagenet to be the surname of the Royal House of England, albeit in late years many have so accounted it.⁸⁴

So begins the modern misconception that *Plantagenet* was the name of a late-medieval English royal dynasty, throughout its 330 years, rather than its being a ‘hairy broom shoot’ implication of virility, strong limbs, and a robust constitution, with bawdy connotations of virility that evidently delayed the name’s acceptance until late in this dynasty’s reign.

Appendix A. An opinion concerning the name *Planta-pilosa*

There is evidence for the name *Planta-pilosa* in writings of 880 by Hincmar of Rheims and, in her translation, Janet Nelson indicates that *Planta-pilosa* means ‘hairy paw’, suggesting that ‘hairy paw’ has negative connotations of ‘foxiness’.⁸⁵ Nelson was following Lina Malbos, who had proposed that a contended meaning ‘foxiness’ could be used as a subsidiary consideration when questioning whether the identity of Bernard Plantevelu (i.e. *Planta-pilosa*) was Bernard de Gothie or Bernard II d’Auvergne.⁸⁶ Malbos notes that historians had referred severally to the name *Plantevelu* as astonishing, a baffling parody, a dash ridiculous, a bizarre surname and a ridiculous enough surname. Malbos surmises that they were thinking of a physical attribute, as for the cognomen of *Bucca Uncta* (‘oily’ or ‘voluptuous mouth’); but then goes on to suggest that *Planta-pilosa* did not mean *poil-aux-pattes* (‘hair on paws’), rather *patte-pelu*. Cassell’s French dictionary translates *patte-pelu* as ‘a wolf in sheep’s clothing, a sneak, a hypocrite’.⁸⁷ Malbos refers to the sixteenth-century writer Rabelais and associates the term with the fox.

However, there are writings more precisely contemporary with Bernard *Planta-pilosa*. European thought was dominated from about 400 to 1400 by Catholic philosophy.⁸⁸ *Planta-pilosa*’s contemporary, Johannes Scotus Erigena (c.800–c.877),⁸⁹ was an ally of Hincmar of Rheims,⁹⁰ and he was

⁸⁴ Camden, *Remains Concerning Britain*, pp. 111–12.

⁸⁵ *The Annals of St. Bertin, a 863*, edited and translated by J. L. Nelson (Manchester, 1991), p. 221.

⁸⁶ L. Malbos, ‘Du surnom de Plantevelue’, *Le Moyen Age*, 70 (1964), 5–11.

⁸⁷ *Cassell’s French–English English–French Dictionary*, 21st edn (London, 1949), p. 423.

⁸⁸ Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 303.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 396–401 (pp. 398 and 401).

most influential for translating from Greek the fifth-century pseudo-Dionysius who was held, for mistaken reasons, to be orthodox and who had written, 'As the mighty root sends forth a multitude of plants ... so created things owe their origin and conservation to the All-Ruling Deity',⁹¹ and that the sun is mediate of god as the source of corporeal being and it confers perfections such as nourishment and growth.⁹² Scotus's translations seemingly led to the adoption in Christian Europe of associated schemes for the vegetable soul. As outlined above, the name *Planta-pilosa* could have alluded accordingly to a sturdy frame of vegetable life and this was divinely sourced. The writings of Avicenna (c.980–1036)⁹³ developed this plant soul connection further into the sense of a robust constitution:

The physical element He [God] implanted in his [man's] liver, to regulate his digestion and evacuation (or attraction and repulsion), to balance the members and replace by means of nourishment the parts lost through dissolution ... his physical soul links him with the plants ... The function of the physical soul is to eat and drink, to maintain the parts of the body, and to cleanse the body of its superfluities ... The purpose of its function is to keep the body in order and the limbs in proper balance, while supplying strength to the physique. The proper order of the body is proved by well-oiled flesh, sturdy limbs and a strong physique; and these are acquired from eating and drinking.⁹⁴

Hincmar of Rheims had indicated that *Planta-pilosa* was a cognomen,⁹⁵ rather than an accidental combination of nomen and cognomen. Hair had been important for the Merovingians, for whom it has been associated with social standing and magical properties as well as with a Frankish cult of virility.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Scotus sided with Hincmar of Rheims in challenging the doctrine of predestination.

⁹¹ *De divinis nominibus*, x, 1 in *Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1857), 936D.

⁹² McKeon, *A Study of the Summa Philosophiae*, p. 159.

⁹³ Avicenna (Ibn Sina), though of Persia, was used as a guide to medicine in Europe from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries (Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 419).

⁹⁴ A. J. Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology* (Frome and London, 1951), pp. 50–52.

⁹⁵ Hincmar of Rheims in *Annals of Saint-Bertin*, sub anno 880: '... In quo itinere ejectis de castro Maticano Bosonis hominibus, ipsum castellum ceperunt, et ceum comitatum Bernardo cognomento Planta-pilosa dederunt ...' [1871 edn, p. 285].

⁹⁶ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings and other Studies of Frankish*

This can be associated with hair on plants, such as the hairy broom shoot; since, given the contemporary belief that humans contained vegetable life, plant hair as man's hair could stand for virility. Hair need not necessarily be associated with fox paws. Even if it were not the original intent, *Planta-pilosa* literally meant 'hairy shoot' and this can be linked to virile powers and a robust constitution.

Appendix B. Various views about the Plantagenet name

For the surname *Plantagenet* or *Plantegenest*, Josèphe Chartrou⁹⁷ admitted that he did not understand the explanation of Dom Housseau that it originated from the setbacks suffered by Geoffrey following the death of his father-in-law, King Henry I. He also mentions the views of *Vestigia Anglicana* that it related to Geoffrey's wearing broom as a belt. Chartrou conceded that the old explanation of Geoffrey's wearing a broom sprig in his bonnet was common, whilst adding that the only image recorded for Geoffrey does not show this. He personally gave credence to Mrs Green's view concerning Geoffrey's love of hunting on the grounds that an excerpt "Mathildis quae fuit soror Goffridi formosi consulis Andegavorum miricem plantatis", found in a text of Fontevrault Abbey, might imply "Geffroi qui plante le genet". However, judging by this unreferenced excerpt, it seems that this may refer rather to Geoffrey as a beautifully-formed scion.⁹⁸ Chartrou also mentions that some chroniclers had applied the name *Plantagenet* to Geoffrey's son Geoffrey; but he then concurs with the view that the name was abandoned until Richard, Duke of York adopted it in 1460.

Jim Bradbury lists the appearance of the name, as for example *Plantegenest*, in such twelfth-century Angevin sources as Diceto, Wace,

History (London, 1962), pp. 62, 156ff, 162, 232 and 245ff.

⁹⁷ Chartrou, *L'Anjou de 1109 à 1151*, pp. 83–85.

⁹⁸ In apposition to Goffridi, the Latin word *plantatis* may be the genitive singular of *plantat* which may mean 'a scion' in either its vegetable or human sense. The noun *plantat* is listed as 'branche à planter, bouture', in E. Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française du Seizième Siècle* (Paris, 1965). *OED* gives much the same meaning for sense (1) of *scion* as 'a shoot or twig; also a sucker; a slip for grafting, a graft'; and adds sense (2) as 'an heir, a descendant'; though it traces the latter usage back only to 1814. The relatable 'young person' meaning of *plant* n¹ 1.1.b in *OED* is traced back however to 1393. The Latin word *miricem* might be a subjunctive interjection of 'may I marvel', rather than its being the object of *plantatis*.

Marmoutier and Geoffrey de Vigeois, but adds that in no case do these, or the thirteenth-century chronicles of Coggeshall and Matthew Paris, give any further clue to the reason for its use, so there is no contemporary explanation.⁹⁹ Bradbury's own view is that the origins of the surname may date back earlier than the times of Geoffrey V of Anjou; and, despite the fact that Geoffrey himself had illegitimate children, he points to the philandering Fulk IV to complicate, in a footnote, a sexual explanation of Geoffrey's Plantagenest nickname:

Dr Cyril Edwards suggests, on good grounds, that broom could have a sexual connotation, which might fit the reputation of Fulk IV, but seems less suitable for Geoffrey V.¹⁰⁰

Fulk IV was the grandfather of Geoffrey Plante Genest, and Bradbury goes on to suggest that the 'sprig of broom' name might have derived from a yellow flower mentioned in a fragment of Angevin history concerning Fulk:

Urban was led from the church of St Maurice to the church of St Martin. Then he gave me a golden flower, which he carried in his hand. I decided, in commemoration and from love of him, that from then on I and my successors would always carry it on Palm Sunday.¹⁰¹

The broom plant has small yellow flowers tightly attached to the stem and Bradbury continues:

This may have no relevance at all to our discussion. Historians have apparently thought that to be the case, and one finds everywhere that Fulk was given a golden rose, though the *Fragment* clearly only says golden

⁹⁹ J. Bradbury, 'Fulk le Réchin and the origin of the Plantagenets', in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown*, edited by C. Harper-Bill, C. J. Holdsworth and J. L. Nelson (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 27–41 (p. 40 n.42), lists the references as follows: Chartrou, 83; Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. F. Madden, 2 vols, RS 1866, 239; Matthew Paris, *Flore Historiarum*, ed. H. R. Luard, RS 1890, ii, 52, 55; Ralph Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, RS, 1875, 9; Diceto, *Historical Works* i, 243, 245, 246, 269, 291, 293; *Le Roman de Rou de Wace*, ed. A. J. Holden, 3 vols, Paris 1971, ii, 266, l. 10271; *Chronicon Angliae Petriburgense*, ed. J. A. Giles, 1845, 83; *Chroniques des Comtes d'Anjou*, ed. P. Marchegay and A. Salmon, Paris 1856–71, 336, 361; and Geoffrey de Vigeois in M. Bouquet, RHF xii, Paris 1877, 438.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 40 n. 43.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

flower. The somewhat hesitant suggestion here is that this may be the origin of the Plantagenets carrying golden flowers as a symbol: the broom after all is golden. Certainly Fulk and his successors would want a papal gift and the papal link to be remembered. It would be a useful support for a new dynasty.¹⁰²

Alternatively, however, there is a connection of the *Plantagenet* name to sturdy bones and limbs, which is indicated by the teachings of the pseudo-Dionysius, Scotus and Avicenna (Appendix A), and which is consistent with the alternative nickname *formosus* of Geoffrey Plante Genest. Such sense is also consistent with the fourteenth-century English herbal *Agnus Castus*, which states that 'Genescula is an herbe that men clepe [call] genestres or broom ... The vertue of this herbe is to knyttyn bonys and senewis to-gedere that ben brokyn'.¹⁰³

Appendix C. Some Swiss *Plant*-like names

In the first century AD, the name *Julius Planta* was recorded in the Italian Alps,¹⁰⁴ though it is not until the thirteenth century that there is evidence for the noble Swiss *Planta* family.¹⁰⁵ Their emblem is the sole of a bear's foot. The *Planta* (or *Von Planta*) family are noted as for example ministers from the Engadine in the Grisons with a family seat at Zutz (Zuoz), site of the Tour *Planta*. In a modern Swiss telephone book the following names are found mostly around the Grisons: *Plant* (1 occurrence); *Planta* (52); *Plantahof* (2); *Plantak* (2); *Plantam* (1); *Plantamura* (1); *Plantera* (7); *Von Planta* (78). The following are found mostly in the Geneva or Lake Lemman area: *de la Planta* (1); *de Planta* (10); *Plantadis* (1); *Plantaporrets* (1); *Plantard* (3); *Plantaz* (2); *Plante* (1); *Plantefoi* (3); *Planterose* (2); *Planterose de Berville* (3); *Plantevin* (3); *Plantefor* (4); *Plantier* (2); *Plantin* (3).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁰³ *Agnus Castus, A Middle English Herbal, Reconstructed from Various Manuscripts*, edited by G. Brodin, *Essays and Studies on English Language and Literature*, 6 (Upsala, 1950), p. 160.

¹⁰⁴ Edict of Emperor Claudius 46 AD. Bronze tablet found at Val di Non near Trento. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 5.5050.

¹⁰⁵ *Dictionnaire Historique et Biographique*, edited by V. Attinger (Neuchâtel, 1921–34).

Appendix D. Cultural context of the *Plant* surname

An unwelcome influence on the *Plantagenet* name can be associated with the Welsh Marches where the word *planta* meant ‘to procreate’. Here, there is the English surname *Plant* (3756 phonebook entries in the UK), an understanding of which has recently been enlightened by Y-DNA findings.¹⁰⁶ These indicate that modern Plants have a single-ancestor, rather than a multi-origin, surname. Though some family branches with early ‘*Plant-like*’ name spellings may have died out, much of the medieval evidence for the formative *Plant* surname might represent the travels of a single family.

In the nineteenth century it was claimed that *Plant* was a corruption of *Plantagenet*;¹⁰⁷ but there are other, less presumptuous possibilities. Though the Plant blazon indicates illegitimate cadetship, it is not clear to whom. Illegitimacy, however, can provide an explanation of why the Welsh meaning ‘offspring’ of *plant*¹⁰⁸ could have been sufficiently noteworthy for its use as a surname. In lowerth’s thirteenth-century codification of Welsh law, a bastard was treated equally with a legitimate child,¹⁰⁹ though that was not the case in Canon law. The *Plant* name could have purported to status in Wales though a bastard had no automatic right to inheritance or a father’s surname in England.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ J. S. Plant, ‘Modern methods and a controversial surname: Plant’, *Nomina*, 28 (2005), 115–33 (p. 119).

¹⁰⁷ M. A. Lower, *A Dictionary of Family Names of the United Kingdom* (London and Lewes, 1860), p. 185; J. Sleigh, *A History of the Ancient Parish of Leek* (Leek and London, 1862), p. 33.

¹⁰⁸ *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, p. 2818, defines *plant*¹ as ‘children, young persons; children (of parents), offspring (sometimes of animals), progeny, issue; descendants; followers, disciples, servants; persons regarded as product of a particular place, time, event, circumstances, etc.; ?boys, sons; also fig’.

¹⁰⁹ D. Jenkins, ‘Property interests in the classical Welsh law of women’, in *The Welsh Law of Women: Studies Presented to Professor David A. Binchy on his Eightieth Birthday, 3 June 1980*, edited by D. Jenkins and M. E. Owen (Cardiff, 1980), pp. 69–92 (pp. 90–92).

¹¹⁰ *Blackstone’s Commentaries of the Laws of England*, Vol. I, edited by W. Morrison (London, 2001), pp. 352–53, states, ‘Yet he [a bastard] may gain a surname by reputation [Co. Litt. 3] though he has none by inheritance. All other children have a settlement in their father’s parish; but a bastard in the parish where born, for he has no father [Salk. 427]. ... A bastard may, lastly, be made legitimate, and capable of inheriting, by the transcendent power of an act of

Though exaggerated claims of a Plantagenet connection should be debunked, it is possible that there was some cultural influence from the *Plantagenet* name to sustain the *Plant* surname's attraction. This could have been through the diminutives *Planteng'* and *Plantyn* and a wider Welsh definition of *plant*: to wit 'follower' or 'servant'. Roger *Planteng'* or *Plantyn* (1254–68) was butler to the Earl of Norfolk¹¹¹ whose mother, Maud Marshal, held lands in the Welsh Marches. Maud's marriages formed close ties amongst the Norfolk-Longspée-Warenne nobility.¹¹² As both the Longspées and the Warenaes were illegitimate descendants of Geoffrey Plante Genest, there could have been a connection between the *Plantegenest* name and that of Norfolk's butler *Planteng'* or *Plantyn*, perhaps inspired by the *Plante Genest* nickname; and, moreover, further evidence indicates that a cultural influence could have extended locally to the names *la Planteland*, *Plantefolie* and *Plonte*, though various other opinions have been proffered for *Plant*: 'sprig; cudgel; young offspring; from the plantation; gardener; or, a tender or delicate individual'.

As one possibility, it can be conjectured that the Plants were a family from Wales, with a Welsh meaning to their name, who migrated around the coast to East Anglia. It may be relevant that royal galleys were in forty-six ports around the south coast of England in 1205, from Gloucester to Lynn; and, in 1208, Welsh mariners were impressed into service.¹¹³ The Plants may have originated near the Chepstow (Strigul) estate of Maud Marshal (d 1248) with which there is reference to the manor of *la Planteland* in 1310¹¹⁴ though this is spelled *Plateland* in 1311.¹¹⁵ The Plants' sea trade¹¹⁶ and official duties may have become associated with Longspée and Warenne lands. Across the

parliament, and not otherwise [4 Inst. 36]: as was done in the case of John of Gant's [sic] bastard children, by a statute of Richard the second'.

¹¹¹ Plant, 'Modern methods and a controversial surname: Plant', 131.

¹¹² Maud Marshal married Longspée's half brother and then the Earl Warenne, becoming Countess of Warenne and Norfolk. She married Hugh le Bigod, Earl of Norfolk (d 1225) and, in 1225, William Warren, Earl of Surrey. She bore Roger le Bigod, Earl of Norfolk and John de Warenne, Earl of Surrey.

¹¹³ This was done by King John in 1208 at Ilfracombe (Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta 1087–1216*, pp. 435–36).

¹¹⁴ *Callendar of Patent Rolls*, 1310 Oct. 10, Carmyle.

¹¹⁵ *Callendar of Patent Rolls*, 1311 March 7, Berwick-on-Tweed.

¹¹⁶ There were three merchants at Rouen called *de la Plaunt* or *Plaunt* in 1273 (*Patent Rolls*, May 30, St Pauls, London and June 2, 1273, Westminster).

Bristol Channel from Maud's Chepstow estate, there is evidence for the *Plant* surname in Somerset¹¹⁷ in proximity to the Charlton lands of the Longspée descent. Between Charlton and Keynsham¹¹⁸ was Robert *Plonte* of Saltford (c.1280) who had been bailiff of *Maresfelde*: this may have been Marshfield¹¹⁹ with its market granted in 1265 to the Abbot and Convent of Keynsham.¹²⁰ Specifically in Somerset, there is evidence for the philandering name *Plantefolie* in 1226 followed by *Plonte* near Keynsham Abbey by c.1280, and there is explicit evidence that the *Plonte* name was hereditary here by 1329 by when the Warennes held Charlton. There are some other coincidences of proximities of the Plants to Warrene lands and, in particular, this offers an outline of how origins near Wales could have led on to the Plants' presence in Norfolk and then their subsequent main homeland of east Cheshire where the illegitimate Warrene descent also settled.¹²¹

Another possibility, however, is that the *Plant* surname originated with the spelling *Plente*: the *Middle English Dictionary* lists *plente* and *plante* as variant spellings of *plaut*. In 1219, *Radulphus Plente*¹²² had responsibilities for the castle and royal palace (Woodstock)¹²³ of Oxford. By 1262, there is

¹¹⁷ *Ancient Deeds Belonging to the Corporation of Bath*: refs. BC 151/4/14, 151/4/15, 151/3/55, 151/2/46, 151/2/47, 151/3/56, 51/2/44, 151/2/27, 151/2/48, 151/2/25, 151/6/70, 151/5/90, 151/2/43, 151/2/38 (in chronological order c.1280–c.1360).

¹¹⁸ A dependent chapel at Charlton had as its mother house the nearby Augustinian Abbey at Keynsham ('Houses of the Augustian canons: The abbey of Keynsham', in *A History of the County of Somerset: Volume 2* (Victoria County Histories, 1911), pp. 129–32). Keynsham Abbey was visited by Edward I in 1276 on his way from Bath to Bristol.

¹¹⁹ This is recorded as *Maresfeld* in 1221 (E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th edn (Oxford, 1960), p. 316).

¹²⁰ 'Placita de Quo Warranto, Edward I–Edward III', in *Curia Receptae Scaccarii Westm. Asservati*, edited by W. Illingworth (London, 1818), p. 249. An earlier market at Marshfield had been granted to the Abbot and Convent of Keynsham on 17 Jan 1234 but was levelled in August 1234 because it was detrimental to that at Bristol: *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, 14 vols (London, 1902–38), 1231–34, pp. 369, 499 and 502.

¹²¹ Plant, 'Modern methods and a controversial surname: Plant', 131–32.

¹²² *3 Henry III Pipe Rolls*. Also, *Radulphus Plente (A Cartulary of the Hospitals of St John the Baptist)*, edited by H. E. Slater (Oxford, 1914), p. 202.

¹²³ Though Beaumont Palace had been the king's residence in the city of Oxford, the record refers to the king's dwelling 'outside the town', suggesting Woodstock

the name *William Plaunte* in Essex¹²⁴ followed by the names *William Plauntes* (1275)¹²⁵ and *William Plente* (1272–84)¹²⁶ in Norfolk records, perhaps all the same person. The loss of inflectional endings similar to the *-e* of *Plente* or *Plante* or *Plonte* occurred later in the South West dialect region than in the West Midlands¹²⁷ where the spelling *Plonte* is mostly found. Hence, it could have been that it was the same name that developed into *Plenty* in the South West dialect region but *Plant* in the West Midlands. It is mainly in Somerset that the surname *Plenty* (a possible respelling of *Plente*) is now clustered. The *Plente* name may have originated with an ‘abundance’ or ‘fertility’ meaning,¹²⁸ and then austere sentiments¹²⁹ could have led, by the mid-thirteenth century, to an incentive to ameliorate the spelling of *Plente* to a less extravagant meaning; this could have produced *Plante* and its dialect equivalent *Plonte*, though the spelling *Plente* is known to have survived outside the West Midlands into the fourteenth century.¹³⁰

It has not yet been DNA tested whether *Plenty* belongs to the same male-line family as *Plant* or whether this relates to similar names overseas. A notable *Plente* in the South West was the king’s minister in Devon, *Roger Plente*,¹³¹ who for example, in 1364, was licensed ‘to take 20 packs of cloth

where Henry II had frequently come for hunting (Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta 1087–1216*, pp. 236–37).

¹²⁴ *Pleas of the Forest* (PRO).

¹²⁵ *Rotuli Hundrederum* (London, 1812–18).

¹²⁶ Norwich Cathedral Charters.

¹²⁷ Burrow and Turville-Petre, *A Book of Middle English*, pp. 3–4, 6–7 and 20–21.

¹²⁸ *MED* defines *plente* as an alternative spelling of *plaut(e)* or ‘1(a) abundance, prosperity, wealth; also, the goddess of abundance; ... [(b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) similar meanings] ... (h) fertility, productivity, fruitfulness; abundant production of crops, profusion of flowers; (i) generosity, bounty; 2(a) fullness, completeness, perfection; 2(b) full measure or number; totality; 2(c) satiety, satisfaction; 3 a projection of the extremity of a bone structure. Also, as an adjective: abundant, plentiful’.

¹²⁹ Both abundance and sexuality were renounced by the Franciscan ‘spirituals’ as well as the Cistercians. For example, the austere Joachim of Calabria (c.1135–1202) became one of the most respected religious figures by the thirteenth century (Haft, White and White, *The Key to “The Name of the Rose”*, pp. 68–69).

¹³⁰ e.g. *John Plente*, vicar of the cathedral church of Chichester, *Patent Rolls* 1343; *John Plente*, witness at Theydene Boys, *Close Rolls* 1343; *Reynold Plente*, Cornwall, *Close Rolls* 1393.

¹³¹ *Patent Rolls* 1364; *Fine Rolls* 1364; *Patent Rolls* 1365; *Patent Rolls* 1367;

of divers colours from the port of Exeter to Gascony, Spain, and other parts beyond seas; and to return with wine and other merchandise to the ports of London, Suthampton, Sandwich or Exeter'. It is not yet clear whether this relates to a cluster of the name spelling *Plante* (817) or *Plantie* (102) or *Planty* (105) in modern Gascony, though recent advances in Y-DNA testing offer improved prospects for investigating the possible travels of single families despite variations in the spellings of their names.

Most names have not yet been Y-DNA tested and there are, for example, no results to report for such names as *Plante* in Spain (32), or the noble name *Planta* in Switzerland (52), or the English name *Somerset* which is said to descend down intact male lines from the noble 'Plantagenets' (Beauforts). So far it can only be added that the initial Y-DNA results indicate that a French-Canadian *Plante* family¹³² is genetically distinct from the main English *Plant* family.¹³³

In short, it is possible that there may have been some cultural influence from the *Plante Genest* nickname but there is no evidence that the *Plants* were genetically related to the *Plantagenets*. It is possible that the English *Plants* began with an 'abundant' or 'fertile' meaning to their name, with the spelling *Plente*, and that this had been influenced by a 'hairy shoot' meaning to *Plante Genest*. Though the nature of this influence may not seem immediately clear, a medieval study reveals that there was a metaphysical connection, since the plant powers (i.e. vegetable soul) of a 'hairy shoot' (*Plantagenet*) brought forth the plenty (*Plente*) of growth and offspring. Then, with the spelling *Plante* or *Plonte*, the meaning of *Plente* could have been sanitised to 'offspring', if that was not indeed the meaning of the *Plant* surname from its outset for this family.

Patent Rolls 1368.

¹³² So far, only four members of this family have been Y-DNA tested of which three match each other but are genetically distinct from the main English *Plant* family.

¹³³ So far twenty *Plant* males from England and North America have been Y-DNA tested of which eleven match, including two with the name spelling *Plantt*. When half or more match, the name can be said to be a single-family surname. Those that do not match can be expected to have descended, at some stage down the centuries, through a false paternity event (i.e. an event involving the adoption of the *Plant* surname though the true father was not a *Plant*).