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WHAT'S IN A NAME? EXPLORING THE USE OF 'CREATURE' AS A CHRISTIAN NAME IN EARLY MODERN KENT **MASTER**

VERONICA CRAIG-MAIR[†] AND SHEILA SWEETINBURGH

As Thomas Lilley lay dying in late June 1594 his family, friends and neighbours gathered around him while he composed his last will and testament.¹ Such a scenario would have been common in late Elizabethan England, and Thomas, a husbandman from Cranbrook, seems typical of his generation in his bequests to his wife, children, and grandchildren, with smaller monetary gifts to friends or perhaps more distant kin. Yet there are certain features of his will-making that might be considered striking or at least unusual. Firstly, Thomas made no reference to his funeral, but more interesting in terms of this article is the Christian name of his son. Creature Lilley was to be the old man's executor and overseer of his worldly goods. He was also to invest £5 on behalf of his nephew until Richard came of age, and he was similarly charged to act as guardian of the £5 each of his own daughters was to receive when they reached the age of twenty.

This reference to an adult named Creature, and one who was also a father, raises a number of questions regarding early modern naming practices at a time of continuing religious and social upheaval. It was such references that led Veronica Craig-Mair to begin her investigation of this phenomenon in Kent and she had completed a considerable body of research before her untimely death in 2012. This article draws on her findings, and, by setting it in the context of the extensive historiography on naming practices, seeks to highlight this issue as a means of stimulating further discussion on the use of 'Creature', and on naming practices more broadly in early modern society. Consequently the article

presented here should be seen as ‘work in progress’, rather than a definitive assessment of the incidence and significance of the name Creature.

So why the name Creature and who may have been responsible for its choice? The name in its Latin form is probably *Creatura Christi*, that is Creature of Christ, recalling Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, ‘Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come’.² Such an epithet was considered wholly appropriate in late medieval society and Margery Kempe, a fifteenth-century mystic, refers to herself by this term throughout the account of her spiritual development during her adult life.³ Further contemporary references to the term are used in early English publications such as ‘... a lytell treatyse of the dyenge creature ...’, a text on how to die ‘well’ that was printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1506, 1507, 1514 and 1532; and ‘... a treatyse how ye fader of heuen sendeth dethe to somon euery creature to come and gyue a counte of theyr lyues in this worlde’, which was also printed in London, in 1528 and 1535.⁴ Nor did the notion of mankind becoming a Creature of Christ disappear at the Reformation, for example Nicholas Udall in his preface to the interlude ‘Roister Doister’, printed in 1566, opens with: ‘What creature is in health, eyther yong or old ...’ and reformist divines in the seventeenth century adopted the term in their sermons on the duties and expectations of the faithful, seeing them as members of Christ where each became an object of his exclusive devotion.⁵ And in speaking metaphorically of the marriage feast between the Christian soul and Christ, the preacher Richard Sibbes referred to ‘All creatures shall be changed, renewed, and delivered from the state of corruption and vanity into the glorious liberty of the sons of God...’.⁶ Such a belief may have resonated strongly with contemporaries, and in the founding of the Congregational Church at

Canterbury in 1645 the first brothers referred to themselves as ‘Wee poore Creturs ...’.⁷ Thus in early modern England the term continued to carry spiritual and redemptive connotations, and perhaps especially for those who might be labelled puritans.

In this context, it is worth noting that in recent decades sociologists and anthropologists, as well as historians, have become interested in the pool of names associated with different ethnic, religious and social groups, and in the ways whereby a name was assigned to a particular individual. This concern with form and process is important with respect to the current investigation (see below) so the first section provides a brief introduction to the recent historiography on naming.

Naming practices

Many commentators have started from the premise that the study of naming practices can provide a means of investigating behaviour within a given society in terms of family relations and networks, and also more broad-based cultural networks and associations.⁸ Nevertheless when such studies are actually carried out the results have been at times difficult to interpret and, in keeping with such problems, there has also been some discussion regarding the merits of large statistical studies compared to the use of detailed studies of a few families over several generations.⁹ A small number of researchers have adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods as a means of producing a more holistic approach that can then be replicated for other communities. In some cases this has been successful, but at times the rationales contemporaries deployed can still remain problematic concerning the significance of cultural and other factors in the naming process.¹⁰

The linking of baptism and the giving of a baptismal or Christian name highlights the importance of timing in the process of naming because from the early Christian centuries the sacrament of baptism was viewed as imperative for the soul of the new-born infant.¹¹ According to the Church whenever possible baptism should be ministered by the most senior cleric available, which most often was the parents' parish priest, but in an emergency to ensure the child was baptised before it died others were permitted to perform the required rite. Such persons in order of seniority were deacons, laymen, women; and even pagans or heretics were deemed suitable if they followed the decreed form and acted with the same intentions as that sanctioned by the Church. The critical measures were that the child must be baptised in the name of the Trinity and that water must flow over at least some of the child's principal parts, generally the head. However in very extreme cases if the child was unlikely to survive the birth itself, it might be baptised in the womb if the water could be administered sufficiently.¹² As a consequence the Catholic Church, and later the Church of England, was, as noted above, prepared to accept baptism by members of the laity if a priest was unavailable, which in most of these cases probably meant a midwife, although this practice was deemed inappropriate by churchmen in England from the early seventeenth century onwards.¹³

In contrast to these emergencies where baptism presumably took place at the child's home or in the dwelling place where the mother had given birth, the sacrament was performed at the church font. Although the exact interval after birth was not enshrined in canon law, most infants were baptised within a few days and generally within eight days, which may reflect the time interval regarding the Jewish custom of circumcision that it symbolically replaced. From the early centuries, the doctrinal value placed on the sacrament of baptism meant that the beneficiary was given

his/her Christian name and having received remission of all sin, original and actual, through the priest's actions at the font, was believed to be a partaker in a new and spiritual life, that is the infant had received the dignity of adoption as a son of God and heir of His kingdom.¹⁴ The complexity of the theological reasoning underpinning this most important of sacraments was probably of little concern to most medieval and Tudor parents, but many were presumably acutely aware of the spiritual dangers for their new-born and the necessity of trying to ensure the child's soul was not consigned to being in limbo.¹⁵

Thus in the sacrament of baptism naming was crucial and the role of the godparents was central to its correct performance, because even though the father was often present the mother was not (assuming baptism took place soon after birth) for she was seen as spiritually unclean until her churching, usually a month after giving birth. As well as providing the name for the infant when asked by the clergyman, the godparents' duty at the font included renouncing the devil and his works on the child's behalf, so officially beginning a lifelong responsibility to aid the godchild in his/her spiritual development.¹⁶ This linking of godparents and naming would seem to imply the choices of both were important for parents, and perhaps also the wider family and community.

It has been proposed that in some societies there was a belief that 'godparents imparted moral character, complementary to the physical character imparted by parents'.¹⁷ This idea of beneficial spiritual kinship demonstrates the importance placed on such bonds and the need to select appropriate persons. Recent studies have shown that selection criteria apparently differed across time and space. For example Rob Lutton found that in late medieval Tenterden a significant number of blood relatives were chosen as godparents, however it was not the child's grandparents but rather his/her uncle or aunt.¹⁸ How typical his findings are for late

medieval England is unclear because not all studies uncovered such familial links.

Studies of early modern France have demonstrated similar diversity from a traditional system where the rules regarding the selection of particular natural kin as godparents was apparently rigorously adhered to, to a much more fluid practice that included the far greater use of distant relatives and those from outside the family.¹⁹ Such diversity was not confined to Catholic society and similarly in the Lutheran societies of pre-industrial Iceland (see Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson and Loftur Guttormsson) and early modern Sweden (see Fagerlund) social status was a significant factor, parents often looking beyond the family to those of higher standing in the locality.²⁰ In Sweden this was more common for those parents from lower social groups, the parents of leading families employing a far tighter kinship network, drawing on relatives of their own social standing, especially their siblings.²¹ Of those outside the family, Gunnlaugsson and Guttormsson observed that in Iceland of those chosen as godparents the most common groups were midwives (80% of baptisms) and upstanding men within the community such as church wardens or other local office-holders.²²

Such choices in part were seemingly intended to enhance the child's circumstances through association, either by binding the family more tightly together or in the case of high status non-kin providing opportunities for advancement. Parents might also seek to strengthen these links through naming, and as Lutton and others have found in late medieval England there was a correlation between the names of godparents and their godchildren.²³ This phenomenon did not disappear at the Reformation and has been seen in both early modern Protestant and Catholic European families. Yet the situation remains complex because other factors need to be taken into account such as the use of relatives as

godparents. In such circumstances the choice of name may relate to both godparenthood and familial naming patterns.²⁴

Naming for a particular reason had long been advocated by the Church one of the earliest exponents being St John Chrysostom (c.347–407), a great preacher and Doctor of the Greek Church, who stressed that naming should be spiritually meaningful, not the product of ‘a whim’ or family tradition, and that contemporaries should heed ‘the Just of the Old Testament [who] gave names to their children ... to give evidence of the graces which they had received from Heaven’.²⁵ Nor do these concerns appear to have receded over the centuries among senior Catholics; Girard de Villethierry in his *La vie des gens maries* (1696) wrote that ‘Let them plan, in choosing patron saints, to encourage [the children] to imitate their virtues and to follow them on the path to salvation; and let them try to induce the saint, through their prayers, to become their protector; and let them ask God for the graces which are necessary to sanctify the children. These are the true motives which ought to determine how the faithful give names to the children they hold at the baptismal font’.²⁶

Protestant divines too sought to ensure that godparents did not give ‘vaine or idle names’, and certain clergymen believed it was also the duty of the minister to refuse to baptise using such names and even to provide a more suitable substitute.²⁷ For parents and godparents in early modern society such strictures did not preclude the use of most traditional family names, as evidenced by the continuing employment of a considerable pool that crossed doctrinal boundaries. However in more puritanical communities, both in England and the Americas, researchers have uncovered naming patterns that favour Old Testament persons and those derived from godly attributes.²⁸ Although resulting in what many contemporaries may have felt were unusual names, such as Faintnot, Nostrength and Truthshallprevail, they were apparently viewed as

tolerable in most communities and by the ecclesiastical authorities.²⁹ A few, however, may have been considered to be on the cusp, leading on occasion to unease or tension within the locality. In a case cited by Cressy, the father's choice of Ichabod (the glory is gone) at Thurlaston, Lincolnshire (1611), as the baptismal name for his new-born child was considered by his neighbours and the newly-appointed minister as a 'great scandal of community and church'.³⁰ On investigation, it was found to be part of the response by local Puritans to the departure of the former incumbent, who had been deprived of the living for nonconformity. These examples demonstrate the deployment of names as political and religious statements of which a small minority went beyond the limits deemed acceptable, and it is against this backdrop of the unusual and meaningful, but not frivolous, that the use of the name Creature will be examined.

Creatures in east Kent

To date the incidence of the name Creature in early modern English society has not been explored, although it is possible to gain some indication of its usage from the IGI, the database compiled by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) for large swathes of England. Nonetheless the geographical coverage remains patchy because not all parishes are included and some dioceses are especially poorly represented in the database. East Kent is one of these sparsely recorded areas. Yet of the thirty-six references to the name Creature or its variant spellings found by the Mormons, twelve are from this same area. Such a scenario might indicate that the level of incidence in the county was the proverbial tip of the iceberg and that the reasons behind its employment as a Christian name in Kent extended beyond those for the country more

generally. Moreover following extensive, even though not exhaustive, study of its occurrence in Kent, it has now been found to occur in twenty-seven parishes producing ninety-two individuals who were or had been given this baptismal name. There is an even balance between male and female, and the name seems to have been used by and for those across the social spectrum, including a substantial number from yeoman families.³¹ For although the majority of the references in the parish registers document burials of infants, with or without their recorded baptisms, there are at least fifteen examples of adults, the name arising from marriage or adult burial entries, or from testamentary records.

In many of the baptismal entries a notice of burial follows immediately or soon after, which is likely to reflect the generally posited deployment of the name regarding the hurried baptism of weak new-born infants who had yet to be named and who were believed to have little chance of survival.³² As noted above both the medieval Church and its Church of England successor sanctioned non-clerics to perform the ceremony in extreme conditions, and the baptism of John Rickard's two new-born daughters by the midwife, both of whom were called Creature, at Ulcombe in 1573 just prior to their burial was probably such an example.³³ Similarly baptism at home (where the child had been born) was noted for Creature Wood at Harrietsham (1583) and Creature Beerye at Staplehurst (1547), the latter being one of twins.³⁴ These entries also record the burial of the same infants, and for the parents, minister and parish it meant they had become part of the Christian community through baptism, even if the sacrament had not been celebrated at the font. In such circumstances it seems likely the only people present at the rushed baptism would have been the parents, the midwife and any other women who had attended the mother during childbirth.³⁵ Although ministers were presumably called if there was sufficient time, in a significant number of

the east Kent cases the minister's first and only act would have been to bury the infant. However, notwithstanding this scenario, the fact that the infants were registered at burial may imply that some form of baptism had taken place before death. Because even though the official doctrinal position of the Church of England was somewhat unclear, it seems only the most radical clergy did not believe baptism before death was essential for a child's spiritual well-being.³⁶ Yet very rarely such baptisms, either by the minister or midwife, were not the prelude to burial and Creature Holden of Headcorn was by far the longest lived of the known children so baptised, living until the age of seven.³⁷

Nevertheless, if it was considered acceptable and possibly desirable with respect to its biblical and theological implications for those infants unlikely to survive, why was it not used more widely since the level of infant mortality during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was far higher than the incidence of the name would suggest? Moreover under such circumstances a far more even spread of its usage would be expected, both nationally and regionally, and over time. Yet in Kent (and probably elsewhere) the geographical and chronological distribution is extremely skewed, which may imply the importance of particularity and so provide ideas regarding who was responsible for its use, and the potential influence of those beyond the child's parents.

Concentrating first on the records for infant Creatures, the seventy-seven known individuals came from nineteen parishes and by far the greatest number (twenty-eight) were from Staplehurst. Thereafter seven were listed at Headcorn, six at Chart Sutton and five each at Bethersden, Little Chart and Northbourne. Looked at in terms of clusters, there is an arc of parishes stretching into the Weald with Staplehurst at its centre, and a second cluster in and around Sandwich, including St Mary's at Sandwich, Northbourne, Nonington, Staple and Chislet (see **Map 1**). The

chronology also appears significant, although there are certain difficulties due to the incomplete survival of parish registers and bishops' transcripts, especially for the early period from 1538 to 1558. Nevertheless the first known entry dates from 1547 in Staplehurst and because this is one of the parishes for which there are records from 1538 it would seem to suggest that it may mark the beginning or very near the start of this practice in Kent. Furthermore, during the remainder of Edward's short reign there are further ten known cases in the county, but none under Mary, and it is seemingly only after Elizabeth's accession that the name is again used rising rapidly to reach a peak (twenty-seven cases) in the second decade of her reign. Indeed, over half the baptisms/burials of known infant Creatures took place between 1559 and 1579. Thereafter the use of the name declined rapidly so that by the final decade there are only a couple of instances, and this scenario continued into the seventeenth century (a total of four infants in James I's reign and one in that of his son, in 1638).

The parishes too offer examples of uneven usage over time. At Staplehurst after the initial entry in 1547 there were three more infant Creatures during Edward's reign. Five years after Elizabeth's accession the name was revived and thereafter at least one Creature is recorded in almost every year until 1579 after which it is only found once more in 1593 for the burial of the son of Walter Turner. Similarly the far lower numbers at Headcorn, Little Chart Sutton and Chart Sutton are mostly concentrated in much shorter periods: 1561 to 1569 with 2 later entries; 1566 to 1576, and 1579 to 1584 respectively. Yet it is interesting that the five entries from Northbourne comprise a single example in 1586, another in 1600 and a group of three in 1612 to 1613.

If these do imply some degree of clustering it is possible they may relate to personnel or events in the respective parishes. As noted above, the selection of a name in this period is unlikely to be a random choice,

being influenced by a number of factors and perhaps people. In these circumstances, among those who may have been influential were the midwife and the incumbent, especially when the former actually performed the baptism.³⁸ Even though the ecclesiastical authorities intended midwives should be licensed in Elizabethan England, the records are scanty in some dioceses and for Canterbury licences for midwives only appear between 1615 and 1742.³⁹ Other references do very rarely occur in wills, church court cases, parish registers and visitation returns but these are insufficient to track particular midwives. Therefore their influence cannot be discounted but must remain merely a possibility, for as Veronica Craig-Mair noted, Elnor daughter of Creature Frost was christened in Northbourne on 28 January 1587 and a fortnight later ‘Creatour’, the son of Richard Verrier, was buried, the first child so named to be recorded in the parish.⁴⁰ It is tempting to suggest that the midwife chosen by Creature Frost shared his views and then stayed on for the birth of a neighbour’s child.

In contrast it is feasible to follow the careers of some incumbents and also to ascertain to a degree their religious beliefs.⁴¹ Again Staplehurst is important, but it is first worth considering the evidence from Headcorn, and especially Little Chart and Chart Sutton. Francis Rawson became vicar at Headcorn in 1566 and remained there until his death in 1573; however his predecessor had been appointed during Mary’s reign and was presumably responsible for at least some of the baptisms involving infant Creatures. Nevertheless, at Little Chart and Chart Sutton the respective periods when infant Creatures were baptised were under the control of Nicholas Champion (appointed 1560 and resigned 1578) at the former and Nicholas Hayman/Heyman (appointed 1562 and was still vicar there in 1591) at the latter parish. Thus such men were responsible for the baptisms of infant Creatures in their parish even

if due to extreme circumstances they had not physically performed the deed. Regarding the religious stance of these men, Champion may have been related to Dr Richard Champion, a renowned scholar and one of the original prebendaries at Canterbury in 1640, who held reformist views.⁴² Heyman, too, may have had kinsmen with such views because Peter Heyman, a lawyer who had accumulated an estate in the county in the mid 1540s, was a member of the Protestant minor gentry.⁴³

Turning to the situation at Staplehurst, the incumbent's reformist religious stance is more striking. Richard Beseley was rector there in 1541 and he continued to hold the living until he was deprived of it in 1554 because of his radical views. He was one of a number of exiles during Mary's reign, but following Elizabeth's accession he returned, was reinstated and continued to hold the living until his death in 1584. However, this was not his sole appointment because he was also rector of Sandhurst (1560 to 1577) and a Six Preacher at Canterbury Cathedral in 1570. Such positions within the Church of England may have curtailed much of his influence on his Staplehurst parishioners but there was at least a group within the parish who would have been in agreement with his religious views. Among those imprisoned and executed for their beliefs during Mary's reign were several women from Staplehurst, and like other Wealden parishes the area had long been associated with opposition to the medieval Catholic Church.⁴⁴ Consequently, in several of these parishes it is feasible that in some instances the incumbent's religious persuasion may have contributed to the decision to baptise the new-born with the name Creature.

However, as the testimony gathered in 1543 by Archbishop Cranmer and his servants in the wake of the Prebendaries' Plot demonstrates, there could be considerable differences of belief among parishioners, and between them and the incumbent.⁴⁵ At times this might

lead to disagreement and sometimes even strife within communities, leading on occasion to cases before the ecclesiastical courts. Such polarization of views might also be articulated in other ways, and, as noted above, the use of ‘puritan’ names was a feature in certain Kentish parishes. Whether the name Creature falls within this category or not, does the presence of at least fifteen adult Creatures in Kent indicate that its deployment extended beyond its use for new-born infants having little life expectancy?⁴⁶ In such circumstances the influence of midwives and even incumbents may have been far less. Instead choice may have rested with parents, with possibly some input from godparents and the wider family.

From the evidence it seems the adult Creatures were born (and baptised, although these records have not been found) within the period 1540 to 1570, except for Creature Lilley who died at Cranbrook in 1686, which is broadly within the same chronology of the infant Creatures. Nevertheless it is often difficult to determine from later events their natal parish. For example, Creature Howline married Tomyson Fermenge[r] at Milton near Sittingbourne on 4 July 1589 and Creature Standish married Luce Smith at Chilham on 29 June 1592.⁴⁷ In neither case did the couple have issue christened in the parish in which they married, and it is unlikely that either bridegroom was born there. Yet it appears three families did employ the name in Kent, including sometimes over more than one generation.

For example, testamentary documentation provides evidence of a network of families using Creature as a forename for both adults and infants in the Wealden area. Like a number of local families, the Whitsperhawke family enhanced their status and economic condition in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁴⁸ As a consequence Thomas Whitsperhawke of Headcorn was a man of substance when he died in

1592. He had sold the family house the previous year after the death of Creature his wife and at the time of his death was residing with his hosts Creature and Joan Lilley (Creature was one of the two witnesses). Among the numerous bequests recorded in his will is a gift of twenty shillings to ‘my servant that was Cretor Gibben’.⁴⁹ Even though little is known about Creature Gybben, she had recently married Robert Frenche at Staplehurst in February 1592.⁵⁰ The presence of three individuals all named Creature in Thomas’ will would seem more than coincidental, and thus that other issues were influencing naming choices among those closely associated with the Whitsperhawkes. For in addition to Thomas’ own links, a beneficiary from his will was his cousin Margaret who married Alexander Berry at Cranbrook in 1569.⁵¹ The groom had been baptised at Staplehurst in 1542, the eponymous son of Alexander Berry whose other children included an infant called Creature, who died soon after birth in 1547.⁵²

Notwithstanding the methodological problems of using preambles from wills as indicators of religious beliefs, that of Thomas Whitsperhawke is not typical for the period: ‘I commend my soule into the hands of Almighty God, my creator and my body to the earth and dust from whence it came hoping assuredly that through the merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour and Redeemer I shall at the later day receive it again a glorified and immortall body’.⁵³ Even though Thomas does not refer to the hope that he is one of the elect, the terms used imply that he may have favoured the teachings of Calvin. Furthermore his will demonstrates he strongly advocated the importance of education, leaving five pounds to keep his godson Thomas Odiarne at school, and his Bible and his desk to James Marler of Smarden. James had been named after his father, and, just as family networks were constructed through links such as godparenthood, they were similarly connected through the witnessing of

each other's wills. Two years before Thomas Whitsperhawke made his own will he and John Fetherby had acted as witnesses for James Marler senior, perhaps at the sick man's bedside.⁵⁴ The Fetherby family also used the name Creature: Richard Fetherby's son 'Creter' was buried at Chart Sutton in 1582. Nor is this the final link because Richard's will made in 1607 includes Thomas Skoales as one of the witnesses and Thomas' daughter 'Creter' had been buried in 1583.⁵⁵

Nor was Thomas Whitsperhawke the only sixteenth-century Staplehurst parishioner who believed in the value of education. And, as the Calvinist interlude (published early in Elizabeth's reign) stressed, education was a key factor for those seeking to live a godly life.⁵⁶ An entry in the Staplehurst parish register notes that in 1547 'There was buried Richard the son of Henry Malym which began to lerne rede whose soll Jhu pardon'. Other entries in the register from this period may suggest that the compiler sympathised with the reformist cause: 'There was buried James Bragelond an honest man & a goode housholder whose soule Jhu pardon & bring to eternal rest'.⁵⁷ This family, too, included Creature amongst the names they used because Peter Bregland's wife and daughter called Creature were buried at Staplehurst in January 1572.

The Lilley family is one in which the forename Creature was used by more than one generation. The marriage of Creature Lilley and Dorothy Saunders is recorded in the Cranbrook register under August 1579. She cannot have lived for long as his wife because he had re-married by 1590 when he was appointed as the overseer of James Marler's will (see above), his father-in-law. Joan lived until July 1597, dying a month before her husband.⁵⁸ No further references to a Creature Lilley appear in the Cranbrook records for nearly a century. In January 1679 'a chrysomer' and two years later 'a child' of Creature Lyilly were buried and it is noteworthy that the forenames of the children were not

recorded. Creature himself was buried on Christmas Day 1686 and six years later, in May 1694, the burial of Ann, daughter of Creature Lilley, is recorded.⁵⁹ The listing of a deceased parent was unusual, particularly when he had been dead for some years, which may indicate there was another Creature Lilley in the parish, or that for some reason the scribe wished to identify the child more precisely.

It appears a somewhat similar scenario can be seen at Northbourne where Creature Frost was raising a family from at least 1563 but, after his daughter Joan was christened in 1567, there are no further references to the Frost family in this parish for twenty years.⁶⁰ In 1587 Elnor, daughter of Creature Frost was christened, followed by other issue, Ellis and Daniel who were buried in 1588 and daughter Anne christened in 1591. The burial of only one Creature Frost is recorded in the Northbourne register and that is in November 1601.⁶¹ Even though it is theoretically possible that all the Frost children had the same father, who re-married late in life, but it seems far more likely that the father of the children born between 1587 and 1591 was the second generation to be named Creature Frost, who had been born before the available records commence in 1563.

To conclude, this article has provided a contextual framework for a study of the forename Creature. Although not exclusive to Kent, the name seems to have been more prevalent in the county than elsewhere, and most particularly during the mid and later sixteenth century, and especially in certain parishes. Several of these parishes are known to have included families who held strongly reformist religious views. How far, if at all, these two statements are linked is perhaps impossible to ascertain. Nevertheless as an idea it would seem to warrant further investigation, and possibly a study of 'Puritan' names more broadly, because naming practices and the processes involved appear to provide valuable insights

regarding the religious and cultural perspectives of early modern English society.

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ENDNOTES

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- ¹ Kent History Library Centre [hereafter KHLC]: PRC 17/49, fol. 128.
- ² II Cor 5:17.
- ³ The Book of Margery Kempe, ed. B.A. Windeatt (London, 1985).
Although a century later, it is interesting that Calvin describes 'the original human creature [as] the couple' in his reference to Adam and Eve; cited by Chrisman, 'Family and religion', p. 192.
- ⁴ See, for example, Anon., *The deyenge creature* [Imprynted at London: In the fletestrete at the sygne of the sonne, by me Wynkyn de Worde [1532?]] [STC (2nd ed.)/6035a] held at the Bodleian Library; Anon. *Here begynneth a treatyse how hye fader ... maner of a morall playe*, [London: J. Skot, 1535?] [STC (2nd ed.)/10606.5] held at the British Library: Early English Books Online at eebo.chadwyck.com.chain.kent.ac.uk/search [accessed 15/09/2013].
- ⁵ Nicholas Udall, *What creature is in health, eyther yong or olde*, [London: H. Denham for T. Hacket?, 1566?] [STC (2nd ed.)/24508] held by Eton College Library: Early English Books Online at eebo.chadwyck.com.chain.kent.ac.uk/search [accessed 15/09/2013].
- ⁶ Stephen Baskerville, 'The family in Puritan political theology', *Journal of Family History* 18:2 (1993), 169.
- ⁷ CCAL: U37, *Canterbury Congregational Church Memorandum Book, 1645-1715*.
- ⁸ Andrew London and S. Philip Morgan, 'Racial differences in first named in 1910', *Journal of Family History*, 19:3 (2003), 262;

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- ¹⁰ An assessment of the significance of religion in America, for example, is discussed by J. David Hacker; idem, 'Child naming, religion, and the decline of marital fertility in nineteenth-century America', *The History of the Family* 4:3 (1999), 344-8. See also London and Morgan, 'Racial differences', pp. 277-9.
- ¹¹ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), p. 161.
- ¹² Catholic Encyclopedia: Baptism;
www.newadvent.org/cathen/02258b.htm [accessed on 12/09/2013].
- ¹³ The Boke of Common Prayer (1552); Templeman Library, University of Kent: H/L-6-210. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 121-2.
- ¹⁴ Catholic Encyclopedia: Baptism.
- ¹⁵ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 114-17.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-61.
- ¹⁷ Rob Lutton, 'Godparenthood, kinship and piety in Tenterden, England 1449-1537', in I. Davis, M. Mueller and S. Rees Jones (eds), *Love, Marriage and Family Ties in the Later Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2003), p. 219; Swedish traditional belief that physical and mental attributes passed from godparent (especially godmother) to godchild; Solveig Fagerlund, 'Women and men as godparents in an early modern Swedish town', *The History of the Family*, 5:3 (2000), 354.
- ¹⁸ Lutton, 'Godparenthood', p. 225.
- ¹⁹ Dupâquier, 'Naming-practices', pp. 149, 153; Jean-Claude Sangoï, 'Forename, family, and society in southwest France (eighteenth-nineteenth centuries)', *The History of the Family*, 4:3 (1999), 244-6.
- ²⁰ See notes 21 and 22, also the work of Tom Ericsson who notes that in pre-Reformation Sweden the relationship between godparents and godchildren was to be solely in spiritual terms; idem, 'Godparents, witnesses, and social class in mid-nineteenth century Sweden', *The History of the Family*, 5:3 (2000), 277.
- ²¹ Fagerlund, 'Women and men', pp. 350-6.
- ²² Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson and Loftur Guttormsson, 'Cementing alliances? Witnesses to marriage and baptism in early nineteenth-century Iceland', *The History of the Family*, 5:3 (2000), p. 265.

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- ²³ Lutton, 'Godparenthood', p. 231.
- ²⁴ Dupâquier, 'Naming-practices', p. 154. Another factor that needs consideration is birth order and naming patterns; Olof Gardarsdottir, 'Naming practices and the importance of kinship networks in early nineteenth-century Iceland', *The History of the Family*, 4: (1999), 301, 306.
- ²⁵ Dupâquier, 'Naming-practices', p. 140. For a short biography of St John Chrysostom, see *Catholic Encyclopedia: St John Chrysostom* www.newadvent.org/cathen/08452b.htm [accessed on 22/09/2013]
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 162.
- ²⁸ Hacker, 'Child naming', p. 344.
- ²⁹ Many of these Kentish examples are from the Starr family of Cranbrook and Ashford; Diane Thomas, 'Motivations for the 'Great Migration' to New England 1628-1640: the case of the Hercules, March 1634/1635', unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Kent, 2012, p. 6.
- ³⁰ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 162-3.
- ³¹ For example *Creatura Sydley* (1572 Little Chart) was the son of Robert Sydley, a gentleman, whereas the second child of Agnes Mathewe, a single woman, was called *Creature* in 1550 (Staplehurst); KHLC: Parish Register, Little Chart; P347/1/1 Staplehurst.
- ³² Or perhaps for one where the sex was indeterminate.
- ³³ KHLC: Parish Register, Ulcombe.
- ³⁴ Canterbury Cathedral Archives & Library [hereafter CCAL]: DCa/BT/89 Harrietsham; KHLC: P347/1/1 Staplehurst.
- ³⁵ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 118-23.
- ³⁶ Ibid., pp. 114-16.
- ³⁷ CCAL: DCa/BT/95.
- ³⁸ Especially, if early modern England was in the least similar to modern Iceland where midwives constituted a significant category among the chosen godparents; Gunnlaugsson and Guttormsson, 'Cementing alliances?', p. 269. For comparative evidence on the influence of the priest in certain French regions; Sangoï, 'Forename', p. 248.
- ³⁹ S.A. Fincher, 'An examination of material relating to the licensing of midwives in the diocese of Canterbury, 1615-1640 and 1660-1742, compiled from the General Licences, Volumes 1568-1858' (Institute of Heraldry and Genealogical Studies LH22, June 1988, Revised November 1988, October 1989).
- ⁴⁰ CCAL: Parish Register, Northbourne.

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- ⁴¹ All references to clergymen taken from The Clergy of England Database: www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/index.html [accessed on 01/09/2013].
- ⁴² Patrick Collinson, 'The Protestant Cathedral, 1541-1660', in idem, Nigel Ramsey and Margaret Sparks (eds), *A History of Canterbury Cathedral* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 160-1.
- ⁴³ Patricia Hyde and Michael Zell, 'Governing the county', in M. Zell (ed.), *Early Modern Kent 1540-1640* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 31; Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent 1500-1640* (Hassocks, 1977), pp. 52, 81, 86.
- ⁴⁴ For a list of the Marian martyrs recorded by John Foxe, see; www.johnfoxe.org/freeman-marion.pdf [accessed on 06/09/2013]. For the more recent accusations of heresy; Norman Tanner (ed.), *Kent Heresy Proceedings 1511-12*, Kent Records 26 (Maidstone, 1997), pp. xxiii-xxiv.
- ⁴⁵ James Gairdner and R.H. Brodie (eds), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, 18, ii (1543) (London, 1902), pp. 291-378; Sheila Sweetinburgh, 'Neighbours across the religious divide: coping with difference in Henrician Kent', in B. Kane (ed.), *The Experience of Neighbourliness in Europe, c.1000-1600* (Ashgate, forthcoming).
- ⁴⁶ Although too simplistic to see a connection between the use of the name Creature, these parishes and the apparent overlap with the places from which the emigrants of the Hercules came from, there are tantalizing similarities; Thomas, 'Motivations', Appx 1.
- ⁴⁷ CCAL: DCa/BT/124; parish register, Chilham.
- ⁴⁸ The family had three members among the eighty from Headcorn who joined Cade in the revolt of 1450.
- ⁴⁹ KHLC: PRC 17/48, fol. 330.
- ⁵⁰ KHLC: P347/1/1.
- ⁵¹ CCAL: DCb/BT1/69.
- ⁵² KHLC: P347/1/1.
- ⁵³ The literature of this topic is extensive.
- ⁵⁴ The preamble of James' will is remarkably similar in tone to that of Thomas Whitsparhawke; KHLC: PRC 17/48, fol. 251.
- ⁵⁵ KHLC: PRC 17/58, fol. 343.
- ⁵⁶ Among the short plays probably used at Elizabethan grammar schools is *Nice Wanton*, which teaches the importance of education for spiritual development from a Calvinist perspective; Anon. *A Pretty Interlude called Nice Wanton* (London, 1560).
- ⁵⁷ KHLC: P347/1/1.

⁵⁸ The preamble in Creature Lilley's will includes '... laude and pryse be unto Almighty God my maker and redeemer and I hartely thanck him that he hath vouchsaffed mee tyme and space of Repentance and turning to him and humbly desyre him in the multitude of his mercyes to have mercye on mee to geve me free passage to my Lorde Jesus Christ me only Redeemer ...'; KHLC: PRC 17/50, fol. 191.

⁵⁹ CCAL: DCb/BT1/69.

⁶⁰ CCAL: U3/74/1/1.

⁶¹ Ibid.