

# TRANSACTIONS OF THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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### ENGLAND AND THE CONTINENT IN THE NINTH CENTURY: II, THE VIKINGS AND OTHERS

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**ABSTRACT.** This essay reviews the historiography of the Vikings, especially in England, from the nineteenth century onwards. Successive constructions of Vikings as ‘ancestors’ or ‘Others’ are shown to reveal more about quests for identity on the part of those who devised them than about ninth-century Scandinavians. In the rest of the essay, the interactions of Danish groups and individuals with Franks and Anglo-Saxons are examined in particular places and times. It is argued that these display contacts of multiple kinds, including much collaboration and some integration, often promoted by lordly and royal interests. It is suggested that these findings are explicable in terms of reshapings of individual and group identities in a broad context of cultural likeness and adaptability.

Come . . .  
. . . sniff the wind  
With the expertise  
Of the Vikings –  
Neighbourly, scoretaking  
Killers, haggars  
And hagglers, gombeen-men  
Hoarders of grudges and gain.  
I push back  
through dictions  
. . .  
and the ivied Latins  
of churchmen  
To the scop’s  
Twang, the iron

Flash of consonants  
Cleaving the line.<sup>1</sup>

Seamus Heaney's *North* will do very well as an introduction to the sources of modern conceptions of Vikings. The scop's twang in the song and story of the North was what inspired the construction of the Vikings in nineteenth-century England. William Morris set out for Iceland in 1871, a copy of *Njal's Saga* in hand to guide him from Svinafell to Bergthorshvoll. Morris had succumbed long since:

O South! O sky without a cooling cloud;  
O sickening yellow sand without a break  
...  
I cannot love thee, South, for all thy sun  
...  
But in the North forever dwells my heart...<sup>2</sup>

Similar sentiments inspired the aged Gladstone: 'When I have been in Norway, or Denmark, or among Scandinavians, I have felt something like a cry of nature from within, asserting (credibly or otherwise) my nearness to them.'<sup>3</sup>

Maybe the sort of Scandinavians Gladstone met were like the Stockholm bourgeois fancy-dressed Vikings of 1869 in a photograph that has achieved a certain *éclat* through recent reproductions.<sup>4</sup> Helmets notwithstanding, these are distinctly domesticated gentlemen – and ladies. By the time Gladstone wrote about nearness (credibly or otherwise), the Vikings had been part of English culture for the best part of a century. The word is first recorded in modern English, though in the not fully anglicised form *vikingr*, in a historical compendium published in 1807.<sup>5</sup> Soon, the malleable North was on the way to becoming a mirror and model to the nineteenth-century present. All that was needed was for pagans to be pursued as converts and vices could turn into virtues – or rather, excesses once pruned, vices could *be* virtues, and necessary ones, to check the malign propensity of the

<sup>1</sup> S. Heaney, *North* (1996; first pub. 1975), 'Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces', 14–15, and 'Bone Dreams', 20. I should like to thank the following friends and colleagues for offprints, papers in advance of publication, advice and criticism: David Bates, Simon Coupland, Michael Gelting, Neils Lund and especially Stéphane Lebecq, whose maps I have anglicised.

<sup>2</sup> A. Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians* (Cambridge, 2000), 249–57.

<sup>3</sup> Wawn, *The Vikings*, 312, 330–1: Gladstone was here enthusing in a letter to Paul du Chaillu whose *Ivar the Viking: A Romantic History Based upon Authentic Facts* (1893) he had just read.

<sup>4</sup> *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*, ed. R. Samson (Glasgow, 1991), 60; P. Sawyer, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings* (Oxford, 1997), 241.

<sup>5</sup> G. Chalmers, *Caledonia: Or, an Account, Historical and Topographic, of North Britain* (3 vols., 1807–24), 1, pt III, iii, 341.

English (especially the southern English) to effeminacy and corruption from the Continent. No wonder men felt stronger and purer for a blast of northern winds. By 1883, Stubbs had coined Vikingism – signifying a peculiarly muscular form of muscular Christianity.<sup>6</sup> The Vikings have been celebrated more recently too. In the USA, at the New York exhibition marking the millennium of America's discovery by Leif Eriksson, Hillary Clinton affirmed Americans' pride in their 'Nordic roots', for America, 'like the Vikings, gave the world new ideas', while longships were 'the Internet of the year 1000'. In Novgorod, Mr Putin applauded archaeologists' success in discovering more evidence of Viking settlements – the sort of evidence long denied in the Soviet period: post-1989, Russians acknowledge with pride their ninth-century Scandinavian ancestors, the Rus.<sup>7</sup>

But in England, nearness has never excluded Otherness. Otherness is what was stressed in many nineteenth-century representations of the North, from Thomas Carlyle's 'Heathen, Physical-Force, Ultra-Chartists, otherwise known as Danes'<sup>8</sup> to W.G. Collingwood's 'bearsark' men of 'rapine and massacre'.<sup>9</sup> Echoing still in scholarly analysis and school-book story is J.R. Green's bloodcurdling evocation, which links the ninth century's experience firmly with that of the fifth:

The first sight of the northmen is as if the hand on the dial of history had gone back three hundred years ... There was the same wild panic as the black boats of the invaders struck inland along the river-reaches, or moored around the river islets, the same sights of horror, firing of homesteads, slaughter of men, women driven off to slavery or shame, children tossed on pikes<sup>10</sup> or sold in the market-place, as when the English invaders attacked Britain.<sup>11</sup>

The modern dictionary translates the horror-story into a prosaic definition: 'viking: one of those Scandinavian adventurers who practised piracy at sea, and committed depredations on land, in northern and

<sup>6</sup> W. Stubbs, *Seventeen Lectures on the Study of Medieval and Modern History and Kindred Subjects Delivered at Oxford 1867–1884* (Oxford, 1886), 222: Robert Curthose saw the First Crusade as 'a sanctified experiment in Vikingism'.

<sup>7</sup> 'Die Wikinger. Eroberer, Barbaren, braune Kultfiguren', *Der Spiegel*, 32 (2000), 184–98. For recent archaeology in Russia, see *Les centres proto-urbains russes entre Scandinavie, Byzance et Orient*, ed. M. Kazanski et al., *Realités Byzantines* 7 (Paris, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> T. Carlyle, *Past and Present* (1843), 112.

<sup>9</sup> Collingwood, quoted in Wawn, *The Vikings*, 339, and see further 335–41, in *The Bondswoman: A Saga of Langdale* (1896), 100–1, contrasted the bearsark days with 'the time of our story', i.e. the tenth century.

<sup>10</sup> Green had read his *Landnámabók*.

<sup>11</sup> J.R. Green, *A Short History of the English People* (1874). I cite from the second edition of 1878, 45. For Green's context and influence, see P. Mandler, *History and National Life* (2002), 38–42, with, 141–2, a note of scepticism on the recipe's appropriateness now.

western Europe from the eighth century to the eleventh'.<sup>12</sup> Externality, lawlessness and violent expropriation remain the key ideas here. And in popular usage, where the Vikings tend to be plural and homogeneous, savagery has always been to the fore. In *Alfred the Great*, written for primary school children in the mid-1950s, the ahistorical horned helmets betoken Otherness.<sup>13</sup> In museums and on television, the message has hardly changed. Think Vikings, think 'rape and pillage', or – deliciously ambiguous – 'the Blood of the Vikings'.<sup>14</sup>

Does the blood of those migrant blood-spillers course now in English veins? Which English? Cumbrians, Yorkshiremen and Hampshiremen have answered variously, and still do. Such variousness subverts modern simplicities. Nineteenth-century Scottish nationalists found Teutonist ethnology inhibiting because far from opposing Scots to English, it linked them together.<sup>15</sup> Confronted by Vikings, the English, ancient and modern, have oscillated between repulsion and association. English identity has been constructed against a Viking Other, as a narrative of shared victimhood and resistance, personified by King Alfred the Great.<sup>16</sup> Yet it has been constructed, too, on an assimilationist paradigm,

<sup>12</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, ed. J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, xix (Oxford, 1989), 628.

<sup>13</sup> L. Du Garde Peach, *King Alfred the Great* (1956), 7, 25, 27, 35, with 31 for the (equally ahistorical) winged helmet variant.

<sup>14</sup> This was the title of a recent TV series presented by the archaeologist Julian Richards: it was among the most widely watched History programmes of 2002. In its earlier years, the Jorvik Museum at York greeted visitors with a large display panel on 'rape and pillage' but it has since been replaced (if not consigned to the dustbin of museology). On the question of Viking rape, see J.L. Nelson, 'The Vikings in Francia', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*, ed. P. Sawyer (Oxford, 1997), 47, which represents an arguable position more fairly than that parodied (with some justification) by D.N. Dumville, 'The Churches of North Britain in the First Viking-Age', Fifth Whitorn Lecture (Stranraer, 1997), 9–10. The saga material is thoughtfully, but inevitably inconclusively, considered by W.I. Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago, 1990), 208–9.

<sup>15</sup> C. Kidd, 'Teutonist Ethnology and Scottish Nationalist Inhibition', *Scottish Historical Review*, 74 (1995), 45–68.

<sup>16</sup> S. Trafford, 'Ethnicity, Migration Theory, and Historiography', in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. D.M. Hadley and J.D. Richards (Turnhout, 2000), 17–39, at 28–30. For perspectives on the constructedness of national identity, see the seminal paper of P. Wormald, 'Bede, the *Bretwaldas*, and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*', in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, ed. P. Wormald et al. (Oxford, 1983), 99–129; P. Wormald, 'Engla Lond: The Making of an Allegiance', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 7 (1994), 1–24; S. Reynolds, "'Anglo-Saxon" and "Anglo-Saxons"', *Journal of British Studies*, 24 (1985), 395–414, repr. in S. Reynolds, *Ideas and Solidarities of the Medieval Laity* (Aldershot, 1995), ch. iii; and S. Foot, 'The Making of Angelcynn: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, sixth series, 6 (1996), 25–50. For Alfred, see J.L. Nelson, *Rulers and Ruling Families in Early Medieval Europe* (Aldershot, 1999), chs. 1–vi; and cf. K. Davis, 'National Writing in the Ninth Century', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 28 (1998), 611–37.

in which the Vikings, like those of Collingwood's saga of Langdale, become no longer 'them' but 'us'. The passage from Green I quoted a moment ago continues: 'But when the wild burst of the storm was over, land, people, government reappeared unchanged. England still remained England; the conquerors sank quietly into the mass of those around them.' Green's explanation was twofold. First,

the battle was no longer [as in the fifth century] between men of different races. It was no longer a fight between Briton and German ... The life of these northern folk was in the main the life of the earlier Englishmen. Their customs, ... their social order, were the same; they were in fact kinsmen bringing back to an England that had forgotten its origins the barbaric England of its pirate forefathers.

Second, religion: 'Woden yielded without a struggle to Christ.' Today, most of us would abjure the vocabulary of race, but happily use, instead, that of culture and acculturation. Today, whistle-blowers among the archaeological fraternity are drawing attention to prejudice that obscures evidence for (im)migration, and signalling new ways in which 'situational "ethnicities"' can be read in burials.<sup>17</sup> If scholars working in this country are in the forefront, that is because here the question of identity has mattered and matters again. For multiple reasons, 'Peoples are back on the historian's agenda.'<sup>18</sup> But back on historians' agenda, too, is religion, and its capacity both to mark difference and to promote sentiments of transcendent community. Conversion as social adaptation rather than individual 'reorientation' raises important questions of chronology and process.<sup>19</sup>

In the single ninth-century manuscript of the 'Alfredian' *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, MS 'A', the main source for ninth-century England south of the Humber, Vikings are hard to find. Just three groups are so designated and the term, *wicenga*, may denote some authorial particularity.<sup>20</sup> Otherwise, a group of 'Danes' is usually designated collectively as a *here*, an 'army'. Sometimes they are called 'Danishmen',

<sup>17</sup> H. Härke, 'Archaeologists and Migration: A Problem of Attitude?', *Current Archaeology*, 39 (1) (1998), 19–45; G. Halsall, 'The Viking Presence in England? The Burial Evidence Reconsidered', in *Cultures in Contact*, ed. Hadley and Richards, 259–76.

<sup>18</sup> R.R. Davies, 'The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100–1400', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, sixth series, 4 (1994), 1–20.

<sup>19</sup> See L. Abrams, 'Conversion and Assimilation', in *Cultures in Contact*, ed. Hadley and Richards, 135–53.

<sup>20</sup> J. Bately, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, general eds. D. Dumville and S. Keynes, III: *MS A* (Cambridge, 1986) [hereafter *ASC*], s.a. 879 and 885, 51 (on *hlop wicenga*), 52 (.xvi. *scipu wicenga... hie micelne sciphere wicenga*), trans. G. Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (1975), 76, 78 ('pirates').

and very occasionally ‘heathen’.<sup>21</sup> But a more insistent Otherness has been back-projected. In 1955, Dorothy Whitelock’s translation added clarificatory references to ‘Danes’ and ‘English’ where few or none were present in the original’s account of two types of armies, *here* and *fyrð*, so that Alfred’s battles became international ones, trials through which England was formed and united.<sup>22</sup> In the translation of Asser’s *Life of Alfred* by Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, Asser’s *pagani* become, consistently, ‘the Vikings’, despite clear evidence in the same text that the term (with or without any religious significance) had become a synonym for Danes, as when Asser refers to *pagani* in Alfred’s retinue or at one of his monastic foundations.<sup>23</sup> An alternative and still more insidious Othering was effected by twelfth-century churchmen who, in ivied Latin, blamed the flaws and gaps of pre-reformed monasticism on Viking destruction three centuries before. The *Liber Eliensis*, c. 1170, described the Vikings’ arrival at St Æthelthryth’s shrine at Ely, in or about 870:

When the mob of evil ones reaches the monastery of virgins which Æthelthryth the glorious virgin and bride of Christ had built, alas, it invades, pollutes the holy things, tramples and tears (*contaminat, ... conculcat et diripit*). The sword of the madmen is stretched out over the milkwhite consecrated necks (*Protenditur rabidorum gladius in lactea sacrataque colla*).

Julia Barrow’s fine translation does full justice to the original.<sup>24</sup> For critical historians, lurid, even faintly salacious, stories are no substitute for contemporary evidence – of which there is none. True, some prominent convents are unrecorded in the post-Alfredian period, before being ‘restored’ later, in the tenth or eleventh centuries, but to impute the caesura to Viking activity may be a methodological bridge too far, when other endogenous reasons for convents’ fortunes (so often tied to

<sup>21</sup> See Bately’s Index of people-names, 117, s.v. *Denisc, þa Deniscan, Denescan*. For *heþne men, heþen here*, see *ASC* 855, 865, 45, 46.

<sup>22</sup> *ASC* 865–96, trans. D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 1, 2nd rev. edn (1979), 191–206 (using MS B as her base-text but with ‘A’ variants noted). In the single annal for 893, Professor Whitelock added no fewer than seven ‘Danes/Danish’ or ‘English’ identifiers.

<sup>23</sup> Asser, *De Gestis Ælfredi Regis*, ed. W. Stevenson (Oxford, 1904; repr. with introduction by D. Whitelock, 1959), cc. 76, 94, pp. 60, 81, trans. S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great* (Harmondsworth, 1983), 91, 103.

<sup>24</sup> J. Barrow, ‘Survival and Mutation: Ecclesiastical Institutions in the Danelaw in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries’, in *Cultures in Contact*, ed. Hadley and Richards, 155–76, at 155, translating *Liber Eliensis* 1, c. 41, ed. E.O. Blake, Camden third series, 92, Royal Historical Society (1962), 55.

royal and aristocratic family fortunes) are not hard to find.<sup>25</sup>

Further, MS 'A' does not record a single case of the destruction of a church by the Vikings. Canterbury can be inferred to have suffered, and apparently the community 'by the 870s' found it hard to field a single competent scribe.<sup>26</sup> If so, it may be hasty to infer that the Vikings alone were to blame. As earlier in the century, those in charge of the church of Canterbury may have seen their chief problem as royal seizures of church property rather than the attacks of external enemies which simply allowed kings to seize more windows of opportunity.<sup>27</sup> At York, the establishment of Viking lordship from 867 does not seem to have led to the wholesale destruction or dispersal of the cathedral library – which makes you wonder how far you can generalise from Canterbury.<sup>28</sup> Asser, pondering in 893 the question of responsibility for the state of monasteries among the English, was inclined to blame 'that people' themselves rather than the Vikings.<sup>29</sup>

It is worth comparing the ways in which *les Normands* have been represented in both French and Belgian historiography in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In brief, Northmen were assigned relatively limited historical significance.<sup>30</sup> In neither case did historians trying to explain the decline and fall of the Carolingian Empire give pride of place to external forces; and in neither case did the (re)formation of national identity depend on a Viking Other. True, there were local variations on the Norman theme – most evidently in Normandy, famously founded in *c.* 911 by the Danish warlord Rollo and his followers.<sup>31</sup> But increasingly this is a story re-presented by historians in terms of institutional and sociological continuities with Frankish Neustria

<sup>25</sup> S. Foot, *Veiled Women: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England* (2 vols., Aldershot, 2001), 71–84, gives a carefully nuanced version of the 'caesura' story; but see the review by P. Stafford in *Early Medieval Europe*, 10 (2001), 287–8, and P. Stafford, 'Queens, Nunneries and Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Status and Reform in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England', *Past and Present*, 163 (1999), 3–35.

<sup>26</sup> N. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 to 1066* (Leicester, 1984), 167–74, offering a rather different perspective from that of Brooks, 'England in the Ninth Century: The Crucible of Defeat', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, fifth series, 29 (1979), 1–20; cf. Foot, 'Violence against Christians? The Vikings and the Church in Ninth-Century England', *Medieval History*, 1 (1991), 3–16.

<sup>27</sup> J.L. Nelson, "'A King across the Sea": Alfred in Continental Perspective', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, fifth series, 26 (1986), 45–68, at 58–9; G. Halsall, 'Playing by Whose Rules? A Further Look at Viking Atrocity in the Ninth Century', *Medieval History*, 2 (1992), 2–12.

<sup>28</sup> M. Lapidge, 'Latin Learning in Ninth-Century England', in M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899* (1996), 409–54, at 426–32.

<sup>29</sup> Asser, *De Gestis alfredi Regis* c. 93, p. 81, trans. 103.

<sup>30</sup> This did not exclude, of course, a large amount of interest on the part of literary savants and scholars: see T.J. Beck, *Northern Antiquities in French Learning and Literature* (2 vols., New York, 1934); R. Boyer, *Le mythe viking dans les lettres françaises* (Paris, 1991).

<sup>31</sup> D. Bates, *Normandy before 1066* (1982), 8–9.

and the ecclesiastical province of Rouen.<sup>32</sup> A generation or two ago, the silence of the late ninth- and tenth-century sources on Bordeaux was imputed to Viking destruction, and that scenario was extended to Aquitaine as a whole.<sup>33</sup> Yet recent researchers have put more stress on endogenous forces: the extension of the lordship of the dukes of Gascony south-west of the Garonne, and over Bordeaux itself from 887, and further inland, the entrenchment of aristocratic and ecclesiastical power at Limoges, Angoulême and Périgueux.<sup>34</sup> In the regions of northern and north-west Francia, French historians used to argue for the Vikings' crucial, if indirect, role in weakening the monarchy, since only regional aristocrats could mount effective defence: hence the famous rise of princely powers.<sup>35</sup> More recently, though, there has been a clearer recognition of continuities between the structures of Carolingian government and the 'new' principalities of the tenth century.<sup>36</sup> In the ecclesiastical historiography of Lotharingia and the regions that were to become Belgium, plentiful allegations of Viking responsibility for monastic poverty and decline drew on the propagandistic chronicles of monasteries restored by the great reformers of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. Some thirty years ago, a major piece of revisionist scholarship convincingly demonstrated the minimal trace of Scandinavian impact in the documentary record.<sup>37</sup> More recently, in French and Belgian historiography (and in general parlance), *les Normands* have become *les Vikings*. But I do not think this denotes any francophone embrace of generalised Othering. Normandy apart, the Vikings themselves had always remained marginal, even exotic, in relation to modern French and Belgian identities; and if the overnight transformation of

<sup>32</sup> J. Yver, 'Les premières institutions du duché de Normandie', in *I Normanni e la loro espansione in Europa nell'alto medioevo*, Settimane di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo xvi (Spoleto, 1969), 299–366; D. Bates, 'The Northern Principalities', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. T. Reuter, III (Cambridge, 1999), 398–419, at 404–6; cf. D. Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix du Dieu* (Paris, 1999), 241–8 (reconstruction rather than continuity).

<sup>33</sup> C. Higounet, *Bordeaux pendant le haut moyen âge* (Bordeaux, 1963), 41, relying on letters of Pope John VIII, which in turn relied on letters of Charles the Bald; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Vikings in Francia', in J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Medieval History* (Oxford, 1976), 228–30.

<sup>34</sup> M. Zimmerman, 'The Southern Principalities', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. Reuter, III, 420–55.

<sup>35</sup> M. Bloch, *La société féodale* (2 vols., Paris, 1939–44), I, trans. J. Anderson (1961) as *Feudal Society*, 56, and cf. 53: 'The problem, in short, was the very same one which French officers encounter today when they try to maintain security on the Moroccan borders on in Mauretania – made ten times worse, needless to say, by the absence of any higher authority capable of exercising effective control over vast areas.'

<sup>36</sup> Bates, 'The Northern Principalities', 398–419.

<sup>37</sup> A. d'Haenens, *Les invasions normandes en Belgique au IXe siècle: le phénomène et sa repercussion dans l'historiographie médiévale* (Louvain, 1967); A. d'Haenens, 'Les invasions normandes dans l'Empire franc au IXe siècle: pour une renouveau de la problématique', in *Settimane di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, xvi (Spoleto, 1969), 235–98.



Rollo and company from scourges to ‘serviteurs de la civilisation’ is seen nowadays in terms of more complicated and protracted processes, there is scholarly agreement on the definitiveness in the long run of the Normans’ reconstruction as *Franci*.<sup>38</sup> Thus for the French and the Belgians, the Viking impact has hardly seemed problematic, as it has in England and, for some different reasons, in Scotland. In Britain, philology conditioned the roles of the Vikings in modern nation-building, and still has something to answer for in terms of constructional weaknesses in Britishness.<sup>39</sup>

In the rest of this essay, I want to concentrate on ninth-century evidence, and look first at Francia. Paradoxically, where the Anglo-Saxon sources suggest co-existence, some Frankish ones present dramatic Othering. The contemporary entry in the Annals of St-Vaast, Arras, for 884 gave a lurid account of corpses of clergy and lay, nobles and others, women, young men and babies lying about *per omnes plateas* – ‘in every square’.<sup>40</sup> The shrill voice of Ermentar, the monk of St-Philibert de Noirmoutier, famed not least because Marc Bloch cited him in *La société féodale* vol. 1, reached a crescendo in describing events c. 855:

the innumerable multitude of the Northmen grows incessantly. On every side, Christians succumb to massacres, acts of pillage, devastations, burnings whose manifest traces will remain as long as the world endures. They seize every city they pass without anyone offering any resistance: they seize Bordeaux, Périgueux, Limoges, Angoulême and Toulouse. Angers, Tours and Orleans are laid waste ... Thus has been realised the threat uttered by the Lord through the mouths of his Prophets: ‘A scourge from the North will extend over all those who dwell in the land.’<sup>41</sup>

The St-Vaast annalist and Ermentar, both in fact atypical among ninth-century monastic writers in such lurid accounts of atrocity, had their own agendas, naturally. The annalist implicitly disapproved of the abbot of St-Vaast for cutting a protection deal with a Viking leader called Alsting (we will meet him again) which failed to work quite as

<sup>38</sup> Contrast J. Calmette, *Le monde féodal* (Paris, 1934), 26, with current debates over the intricacies of the Normans’ journey towards assimilation as appraised by E. Christiansen, *Dudo of St Quentin, History of the Normans* (Woodbridge, 1998), xvii–xxix.

<sup>39</sup> Kidd, ‘Teutomist Ethnology’; and cf. P. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002), esp. 27–40.

<sup>40</sup> *Annales Vedastini*, ed. B. von Simson, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* [hereafter MGH] (Hannover, 1909), 54. See H. Zettel, *Das Bild der Normannen und der Normanneneinfälle in westfränkischen, ostfränkischen, und angelsächsischen Quellen des 8. bis 11. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1977).

<sup>41</sup> Ermentar, *De translationibus et miraculis Sancti Philiberti Libri II*, ed. R. Poupardin, *Monuments de l’histoire de l’abbaye de Saint-Philibert* (Paris, 1905), 60–1.

intended, but St-Vaast's worst experience of these years ('an evil such that recovery from it was impossible' (*malum tale quod irrecuperabile est*)), as it turned out, was no Viking attack but a terrible fire in 892 as a result of which 'all the saint's relics were stolen from us, and the whole of the monastery's fortification was burned down'.<sup>42</sup> As for Ermentar, his string of different verbs to denote the Northmen's activities do not need to be read as carefully calibrating different types of violence.<sup>43</sup> This is just ivied Latin. And while it may be a shade unfair to claim that Ermentar's sole motivation was a desire 'to escape [his] Atlantic backwater and travel in the glamorous circles of the most powerful men of the Carolingian world',<sup>44</sup> there was collective self-interest in the community's appeal to King Charles the Bald to give St Philibert a refuge in Burgundy that was not just safe but lavish. Curiously, both St-Vaast and St-Philibert in fact came rather well out of the ninth century. But Marc Bloch, in reading Ermentar straight, and offering him as key witness to a 'catastrophic scenario'<sup>45</sup> of Viking destruction and disruption, wanted to make a much bigger point: it was the historiographic point I discussed in my lecture last year, about ends and beginnings. Bloch's Vikings neatly exploded the Carolingians' last chance of restoring continuity with the Roman Empire. Feudal society, and *Feudal Society*, thus had to start with Vikings signalling at once nadir and new start.<sup>46</sup> French ecclesiastical historians, like English ones, followed the lead given by medieval monastic writers themselves – writers not of the ninth century but of the eleventh and twelfth. In many cases, it was only when the cartulary habit, that is, the practice of collecting and copying into one big book the documents of institutional memory, charters along with charter-based history, that communities, or at least their memorialists, became aware of a gap, and an apologetic deficit.<sup>47</sup> Late ninth- and tenth-century monasteries seemed to later reformers to have fallen into the clutches of lay noblemen, who were

<sup>42</sup> *Annales Vedastini* 890, 69 (Alsting), 892, 71 (the burning down of St-Vaast).

<sup>43</sup> Pace Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Vikings in Francia', 222.

<sup>44</sup> F. Lifshitz, 'The Migration of Neustrian Relics in the Viking Age: The Myth of Voluntary Exodus, the Reality of Coercion and Theft', *Early Medieval Europe*, 4 (1995), 175–92, at 191–2.

<sup>45</sup> Lifshitz, 'The Migration of Neustrian Relics', 191, referring to Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 54–5.

<sup>46</sup> J.L. Nelson, 'Ends and Beginnings', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, sixth series, 12 (2002), 4. Behind Bloch, there is a long French tradition, from Michelet, and even Voltaire, of emphasising the late ninth- /tenth-century watershed: Barthélemy, *L'an mil*, 58–64.

<sup>47</sup> P. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994); D. Barthélemy, *La société dans le comté de Vendôme, de l'an mil au XIVe siècle* (Paris, 1993), 19–83; J. Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reforms: Lotharingia c. 850–1000* (Oxford, 2001), 3–21.

also the patrons and providers of monastic personnel. Though the charter-draftsmen themselves scarcely ever referred to Viking or any other destruction,<sup>48</sup> authors of monastic narratives evaded a dilemma by casting the Vikings as destroyers of a regular monastic life.<sup>49</sup> Once that image had been established, modern ecclesiastical historians until recently were more than happy to go with their sources in depicting ‘the Church in the clutches of the laity’.<sup>50</sup>

Othering Vikings was under way in southern England just as soon as Others were on hand to blame for monastic shortcomings. Asser says in his *Life of Alfred* that (I quote Keynes and Lapidge’s translation)

for many years past, the desire for the monastic life had been totally lacking in that entire race . . . I am not sure why: either it is because of the depredations by foreign enemies whose attacks by lands and sea are very frequent and savage (*saepissime . . . hostiliter irumpunt* [‘savage’ is the translators’ interpolation – I am not sure why]), or else because of that people’s enormous abundance of riches of every kind, on account of which I think this sort of despicable monastic life (*id genus despectae monasticae vitae*) became much more prevalent.<sup>51</sup>

(I wonder if Asser had been reading Bede’s Letter to Egbert?) As I noted earlier, Asser himself did not subscribe to blaming dark foreign forces. He was a foreigner himself, of course – and a Welshman.

Blame-displacement, in the ninth century and later, was required a bit more Othering of the Vikings, though. Calling them heathen, *pagani*, was one obvious tactic.<sup>52</sup> Calling their attacks ‘savage’ may be classed as another – if English attacks are never so described. Vikings have been quite systematically Othered by modern historians, by allegations of peculiar traits ranging from a kinship system that was one of large descent-groups rather than families, to distinctively elaborate arrangements for feuds and feuding,<sup>53</sup> to ruthless slave-trading, to a

<sup>48</sup> ‘Why should they?’, was the riposte (to d’Haenens’s painstaking demonstration) of Wallace-Hadrill, ‘The Vikings in Francia’, 230.

<sup>49</sup> Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons*, pp. 10–11. See also with similar conclusions A. Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres entre Sambre et Meuse (VIIe–Xie siècles)* (Sigmaringen, 1985), 330–1; A.-M. Helvétius, *Abbayes, évêques et laïques: une politique du pouvoir en Hainaut au moyen âge (VIIe–XIe siècles)* (Brussels, 1994), 208–9.

<sup>50</sup> E. Amann and A. Dumas, *L’église au pouvoir des laïcs, 888–1057* (Paris, 1943).

<sup>51</sup> Asser, *De Gestis Ælfredi Regis* c. 93, p. 81, trans. 103.

<sup>52</sup> Above, p. 6.

<sup>53</sup> For fine critical overviews of the historiography on descent-groups and feuds: E. Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age* (Oxford, 2002), 38–52, and M. Gelting, ‘Odelsrett – lovbydelse – bôdsrätt – retrait lignager: Kindred and Land in the Nordic Countries’, in *Family, Marriage and Property Devolution in the Middle Ages*, ed. L.I. Hansen (Tromsø, 2000), 133–66; cf. on historiography based on saga material, W.I. Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago, 1990), 139–220.

bizarre disposition to atrocity (blood-eagle sacrifices and all that), to exceptionally large bones, and hence large limbs – a race of giants, to a diet that resulted in farting on a heroic scale.<sup>54</sup> A lot of historians from Peter Sawyer onwards have rebutted or qualified those allegations so enthusiastically that they have provoked a lively counter-industry of neo-Othering. Rebuttal is only the half of a needful response. The other half entails acknowledging the sprawlier aspects of Frankish or Anglo-Saxon family consciousness; observing Frankish and Anglo-Saxon processes that involved what modern legal anthropologists (and sometimes the Franks) call feud (Frankish-Latin *faida*); admitting evidence (though frankly rather little) for Frankish slave-traders;<sup>55</sup> re-emphasising violence as what Peter Sawyer thirty years ago labelled ‘normal Dark-Age activity’; recognising in Tim Reuter’s inimitable phrase that ‘for most of Europe in the eighth and ninth centuries, it was the Franks who were the Vikings’;<sup>56</sup> or even noting that high-status Franks too could have large bones, or that farting was a major medieval monastic anxiety – hence rude monastic humour on the subject.<sup>57</sup>

So far I have looked at fantasies of Viking nearness and no less fantastic visions of their Otherness (a word whose Anglo-Saxon roots commend it rather than ‘alterity’, preferred in American academe). It is hard to say which is the more inimical to good history. Ancestral recognition can be more dangerous than denial if it ends in obliterating completely not only the Otherness of the Vikings but the Otherness of their ninth-century contemporaries in England and on the Continent. I should stress at this point that I am not for one moment denying that the Vikings were perceived, initially, as different, from those they encountered in England or Francia, different above all because of their sometimes considerable numbers, and violently disruptive impact in the short term. I am affirming, though, that that was a difference within a broader similarity – and a difference that progressively weakened in

<sup>54</sup> Slaving and atrocity: A. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles* (Oxford, 1977); bones: M. Biddle and B.K. Biddle, ‘Repton and the Vikings’, *Antiquity*, 66 (1992), 36–51, and the same scholars’ contributions to a BBC Timewatch programme on the Vikings, screened in 1995; farting: Christiansen, *Norsemen*, 202.

<sup>55</sup> Families: R. Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc* (Paris, 1995), 381–426; feud: G. Halsall, ‘Introduction’, in *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West*, ed. G. Halsall (Woodbridge, 1998), 1–45, at 19–29; Frankish slaving: M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300–900* (Cambridge, 2002), 733–52.

<sup>56</sup> P. Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings* (1962; 2nd edn 1971), 203; T. Reuter, ‘Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, fifth series, 35 (1985), 75–94, at 91. The present essay can be thought of as an extended footnote to these two works of two inspirational scholars. It has been written in the shadow of Tim Reuter’s death.

<sup>57</sup> J.L. Nelson, *The Frankish World, 750–900* (1996), 214–15.

contemporary perceptions. I want to consider a variety of evidence for those strange people, your and my ancestors, Anglo-Saxon and Frankish and Viking as well. The ninth century saw both the first construction of the Viking Other, and the beginning of its end, through economic, social and political contacts, through recognisably similar rites and relationships. Comparing evidence from England and the Continent seems a promising approach – though it must be said that few have seriously tried it.<sup>58</sup> The historiographies of Vikings in England and on the Continent have been, for the most part, victims of double, because mutual, neglect: ships that pass in the night with no means to grapple each other. But I want to stress how much extraordinarily good research, and interdisciplinary research, has been done recently by British scholars on Vikings in England and Britain.<sup>59</sup> If I say more about Francia than England, that is because there is more to be said, and a balance to be redressed.

Christianisation can mean a number of things – from participating in Christian cult to founding, or joining, an institution that Asser would have recognised as a monastery. Christianisation is obviously process rather than event. How easily it goes, and how long it takes, depend, amongst other things, on how resistant to christianity are the people on the receiving end.<sup>60</sup> That means also paying attention to where contacts occur. Edges become as important as centres. The *Life of Anskar*, a missionary saint active in the 840s depicts some Scandinavian merchants who frequented Dorestad in Frisia as having converted to Christianity, thereby gaining some protection on their travels back to Birka.<sup>61</sup> Their faith may also have been traded as a matter of place. The ninth-century Frankish evidence does not leave the impression of strong or exclusive adherence to Viking paganism, nor of resistance to Christianity. Frankish annals present a number of cases of convert chieftains and warriors for whom, it is clear, conversion was the price

<sup>58</sup> For discussion of some forays, see Nelson, *Rulers and Ruling Families*. Ireland has had to be excluded from consideration here, but see now C. Etchingham, *Viking Raids on Irish Church Settlements in the Ninth Century: A Reconsideration of the Annals* (Maynooth, 1996). Arguing from Ireland (or anywhere else) to anywhere else requires a great deal of care. J. Kocka, 'The Uses of Comparative History', in *Societies Made Up of History*, ed. R. Björk and K. Molin (Edsbruck, 1996), 197–209, points out the exceptional value, but also the difficulties, of historical comparison.

<sup>59</sup> Let *Cultures in Contact*, ed. Hadley and Richard, stand as an outstanding example.

<sup>60</sup> Invaluable now are R.A. Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity 371–1386 AD* (1997), esp. 5–9, 369–416 (with rich comparative material), and Abrams, 'Conversion and Assimilation'.

<sup>61</sup> Rimbart, *Vita Anskarii* c. 24, ed. G. Waitz, MGH *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* (Hannover, 1884), 53. See I. Wood, 'Christians and Pagans in Ninth-Century Scandinavia', in *The Christianization of Scandinavia*, ed. B. Sawyer, P. Sawyer and I. Wood (Alingsås, 1987), 36–67, esp. 52–5, and now I. Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe 400–1050* (2001), 123–41.

required for acceptance into alliance and service with a Frankish king or lord. Equally, there were Vikings who for decades showed no propensity to convert, yet with whom Christian kings wheeled and dealt. Take the case of Roric. Between *c.* 840 and the early 870s, this Northman of Danish royal blood became the faithful man, in turn, of no fewer than five Carolingian rulers.<sup>62</sup> His centre in Francia was the border-place of Dorestad, known in the ninth century as a *wic* or *vicus* or *emporium*. Roric was in charge of it on and off for most of his thirty years' recorded activity. A contemporary annal-writer having reached Roric's dealings with Carolingian number 3, reported, under 850:

He came [back] ... to Dorestad, seized and held it ... He was received back into fidelity on the advice of Lothar's counsellors and through mediators on condition that he would faithfully handle the taxes and other matters pertaining to the royal fisc (*ut tributes ceterisque negotiis ad regis aerarium pertinentibus fideliter inserviret*) and would resist the piratical attacks of Danes.<sup>63</sup>

Twice over, in the 850s, Roric spotted windows of opportunity in Denmark and returned in hopes of gaining royal power, and twice came back to Frisia when events turned against him. On the second of these attempts, 'other Danes' took advantage of his absence to storm Dorestad. But Roric returned to Frisia and in 863 defended his base there against 'other Danes' by deflecting them upriver and inland to other targets. Note the multiplicity of Danish groups: 'the Vikings', ubiquitous in the historiography, is of course an anglicism, since Latin, ivied or otherwise, knows no definite (or indefinite) articles. The groups Vikings came in were war-bands, bonded by *métier*, or fictive kinship, and the loyalty of followers to chief.<sup>64</sup>

In 863, and not before, Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, mentioned in passing that Roric had 'recently' been baptised: in a letter, Hincmar warned him that 'now' as a Christian he must not ally with pagans against other Christians; and in a companion letter to Bishop Hungar of Utrecht, not far from Dorestad, Hincmar said that if Roric had allied with pagans, the bishop should impose penance on him.<sup>65</sup> Worse

<sup>62</sup> S. Coupland, 'From Poachers to Gamekeepers: Scandinavian Warlords and Carolingian Kings', *Early Medieval Europe*, 8 (1998), 85–114, cunningly pieces together the careers of Roric (95–101) and others.

<sup>63</sup> *Annales Fuldenses* 850, ed. F. Kurze, MGH *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* (Hannover, 1891), 39.

<sup>64</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. F. Grat, J. Viellard and S. Clémencet (Paris, 1965), trans. J.L. Nelson, *The Annals of St-Bertin* (Manchester, 1991), 861, 86, trans. 96: a rare reference to these bands (*sodalitates*) as such, though both Frankish and Anglo-Saxon sources imply their existence.

<sup>65</sup> Hincmar of Rheims, *Epistolae*, ed. E. Perels, MGH *Epistolae VIII* (Berlin, 1939), nos. 155, 156.

still, Roric had offered a safe haven to an eloping couple, Judith, daughter of the West Frankish king Charles the Bald, and Baldwin, a young man in her father's entourage. This was an act of monstrous political cheek. Archbishop Hincmar duly warned Roric of royal as well as ecclesiastical wrath. But the king, who was every bit as resourceful as Roric, forgave Judith and Baldwin, allowed them to marry and set Baldwin up in Flanders as count, where his northern neighbour was none other than Roric.<sup>66</sup> Subsequently Roric appeared as Charles's faithful man, still running Frisia; and though Hincmar of Rheims, wearing his annal-writer's hat,<sup>67</sup> could not throw off the habit of referring to Roric as 'Northman', that Northman was now firmly inside the Frankish tent. Numismatic evidence presented with admirable clarity by Simon Coupland suggests that Dorestad was in decline throughout the period of Roric's career.<sup>68</sup> It need not follow, though, that Dorestad's concession was no great loss to the Frankish rulers concerned. Dorestad may indeed have been reduced to insignificance, because of the gradual silting of the river Waal, but Frisia was another story. Athwart the Rhine estuary, it retained its strategic importance to rulers in the Rhineland and the Meuse–Moselle region. But conceding Dorestad was clearly not a zero-sum game: both parties could profit when Roric kept his side of the bargain as a faithful Northman.

Dorestad's control was sufficiently important for the emperor Charles the Fat to arrange for a Danish successor to Roric: this was Godfrid *rex Danorum*, one of those Viking leaders who left England in 879, pushed by diminishing prospects on that side of the Channel, pulled by news of conflict between the West Franks following the death of King Louis, successor of Charles the Bald, on 10 April 879.<sup>69</sup> Charles the Fat, who despite his unfortunate sobriquet (a twelfth-century one, in fact) was a lithe political mover, planned to end Carolingian intra-familial conflict by allying with his cousin Hugh, who still hoped to inherit the kingdom of his father Lothar II (who had died in 869), and at the same time to ally with Godfrid and use him as a buffer against other Vikings' attacks. These objectives were to be linked by a Carolingian woman, Gisela, Hugh's sister and thus the emperor's cousin too.<sup>70</sup> Once Godfrid had accepted Christian baptism with the emperor

<sup>66</sup> S. Reynolds, 'Carolingian Elopements as a Sidelight on Counts and Vassals', in *The Man of Many Devices who Wandered Full Many Ways . . . : Festschrift in Honor of János M. Bak*, ed. B. Nagy and M. Sebök (Budapest, 1999), 340–6.

<sup>67</sup> Hincmar wrote the 861–82 section of the *Annales Bertiniani*, where Roric appears in 870 and twice in 872, 168, 184–5, 188, trans. 165, 177, 180, as 'the Northman'.

<sup>68</sup> S. Coupland, 'Trading Places: Quentovic and Dorestad Reassessed', forthcoming in *Early Medieval Europe* (2003).

<sup>69</sup> *Annales Vedastini* 879, 44.

<sup>70</sup> J.L. Nelson, 'Messagers et intermédiaires en Occident et au-delà à l'époque car-

himself standing godfather, Gisela was given to him to marry and Frisia to rule – perhaps this region was understood as Gisela's dowry. Conversion and spiritual kinship played a part, to be sure; but no less clear are the parts played by other rites and relationships: personal commendation, and the gift of a bride.<sup>71</sup>

In the years between 858 and 862, no fewer than three Scandinavian war-leaders are documented as joining Charles the Bald's service: Björn, Weland and Aslak. Their careers have recently been studied severally and collectively.<sup>72</sup> There may have been a fourth, who has attracted no attention from this point of view. His name, or the name the Franks called him by, was *Northmannus*: Northman, or more colloquially Norman.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps in 858, he had received a benefice and a countship from the king in the Tardenois near Rheims, and in 860, was allowed to keep it when the king negotiated terms of tenure with the recently appointed bishop of Laon, Hincmar, nephew of his famous namesake. The bishopric received extensive royal lands on condition that the king could determine which militarily useful men would be assigned them. Among them was Norman, thus faithful man of both king and bishop. By 868, Norman the count was a respectable local worthy: his military household had been given *beneficia* of their own on Norman's estates; and Norman had a manor-house (*mansus*) where he had settled down with his wife, and eventually children, and accumulated 'gold, silver, clothing, cloth, corn, wine and movables of various kinds and both sexes'. In 868, the king and the bishop fell out. Norman, and still more so his wife, got a terrible shock when the bishop turned up with *plurimi*

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olingienne', in *Voyages et voyageurs à Byzance et en Occident du VIe au XIe siècle*, ed. A. Dierkens and J.-M. Sansterre (Geneva, 2000), 397–413, at 412–13.

<sup>71</sup> 'Godofridus rex . . . ad eum [imperatorem] exiit', *Annales Vedastini* 882, 51; 'christianum se fieri polliceretur, si ei munere regis Fresia provincia concederetur, et Gisla filia Lotharii in uxorem daretur', Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon* 882, ed. F. Kurze, MGH *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* (Berlin, 1890), 120. For analysis of these and other contemporary sources, see S. MacLean, 'The Reign of Charles III the Fat (876–888)' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 2000), of which a revised version will shortly be published by Cambridge University Press.

<sup>72</sup> Coupland, 'From Poachers to Gamekeepers'.

<sup>73</sup> Norman's career can be reconstructed from (i) a dossier presented by the gout-afflicted and therefore absent Hincmar Senior to the Council of Attigny, June/July 870, ed. W. Hartmann, MGH *Concilia* iv, no. 33, pp. 392–3 (ii) a fragmentary formal complaint by Charles the Bald against Hincmar of Laon presented to the Council of Douzy, Conc. iv, no. 37, pp. 417–18 (iii) the *acta* of the Council of Douzy, August/September 871, Conc. iv, no. 37, pp. 437–8, 444, 468 (iv) the bishops' responses to the dossier, Conc. iv, no. 37, pp. 494–5 (v) the council's report to Pope Hadrian II, Conc. iv, no. 37, p. 525 (with the details about Norman's personal life). The hypothesis that Norman was a Northman is unprovable, of course; but in context, not improbable. The name-elements could be Frankish, but the name itself is unattested in Francia at this period. Otherwise the name might have to be interpreted as a nickname. Cf. J. Devise, *Hincmar, Archevêque de Reims 845–882* (3 vols., Geneva, 1975–6), II, 730–1, 772–7.



*armati homines* and a *permixta multitudo vulgi . . . cum gladiis et fustibus* ('a motley crowd of common people with swords and clubs') – at the very moment when Norman's wife was in childbirth *more femineo*. The family were driven out (what happened to mother and baby is not recorded) and all the movables seized *quasi per forciam non per justitiam*.<sup>74</sup> Poor Norman! Poor Mrs Norman! Fortunately, the king stood by them, and made the bishop return everything and the land as well. If Norman's wife was a Frank, the case would be comparable to that of Rollo in 911, marrying in to the local officialdom of north-west Francia through a local aristocratic bride.<sup>75</sup> But if Norman was a Northman why do Hincmar and company not say so in so many words? One answer might be: because labouring Norman's origin was irrelevant in the context of the story that, in the version as we have it, centred on a bishop behaving badly to his man. The man himself was assimilated, deeply implicated in a Frankish political system that had always had room for *extranei*. In terms of the secular everyday, ethnicity is as ethnicity does. Norman could be Frank. This Viking had merged so thoroughly into a Frankish landscape that he became invisible.

To get a sense of further personal networks, voyage to Quentovic, that is, the *wic* on the river Canche (see Map 1). It was sacked by Northmen in 842 in a raid that got noticed in Wessex as well as Francia: exceptional. 'They plundered it and laid it waste, capturing or massacring the inhabitants of both sexes. They left nothing in it except for those buildings which they were paid to spare.'<sup>76</sup> Yet Quentovic before 842 as well as after, so Simon Coupland now argues from the numismatic evidence, was no more than a minor mint, and, hence, was no wealthy emporium.<sup>77</sup> Its story was not one of decline, as previous historians have alleged, for here there had been no Carolingian apogée to decline *from*. In this period, Quentovic was not a place frequented by traders and payers of tolls. By contrast, from in or around 864, Quentovic's mint moved into overdrive, and this large output, Coupland invites us to think, both stimulated and reflected an 'economic boom'.

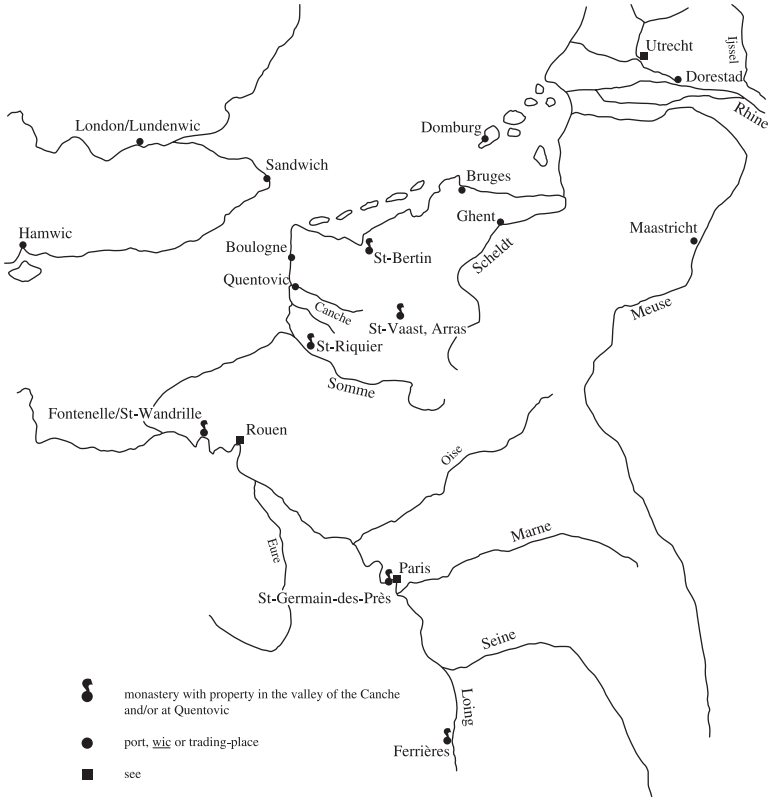
Though impressed by Coupland's expertise, I am not entirely convinced by either part of his equation. Quentovic, like Hamwic, must

<sup>74</sup> MGH Conc. iv, no. 37, p. 495.

<sup>75</sup> The hypothesis of Rollo's having married into an indigenous noble family is convincingly argued by Pierre Bauduin, 'La frontière normande aux Xe–Xie siècles: origine et maîtrise de la frontière sur les confins de la Haute Normandie (911–1087)' (Thèse de doctorat, University of Caen, Basse-Normandie, 1997–8), soon to be published.

<sup>76</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* 842, 42, trans. 53, and Nithard, *Historiarum libri III*, iv, c. 3, ed. and trans. P. Lauer, *Histoire des fils de Louis le Pieux* (Paris, 1926), 124–5; *ASC* 839 (*recte* 842), 43, trans. 64.

<sup>77</sup> Coupland, 'Trading Places'.



Map 1 Regions and connections of the Channel coast in the mid-ninth century

have had lootable wealth to make it an attractive target in 842. On the bluff overlooking the valley of the Canche, and hence overlooking the 35-hectare site identified in the early 1990s by David Hill and his team as Quentovic,<sup>78</sup> was a dependent cell, St-Josse, which belonged to the monastery of Ferrières in the diocese of Sens. Both Ferrières and its dependent cell were *de facto* in the king's gift: a highly suitable gift, Charlemagne thought, for his Anglo-Saxon court scholar Alcuin, since St-Josse was the first port of call for travellers from England, and

<sup>78</sup>R. Hodges, 'Trade and Market Origins', in *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, ed. Gibson and Nelson, 202–23, at 212–13, 216; D. Hill *et al.*, 'Quentovic Defined', *Antiquity*, 64 (1990), 51–8; S. Lebecq, 'Quentovic: un état de la question', *Studien zur Sachsenforschung*, 8 (1993), 73–82; R. Hodges, *Towns and Trade in the Age of Charlemagne* (2000), 88, 118, 122. Still worth citing (and not just for its title) is K. Maude, 'Quentovic: Dark Age Europort', *Popular Archaeology* (Aug. 1986), 10–16.

presumably profited from English alms.<sup>79</sup> King Charles the Bald, after giving Ferrières and its cell to the learned abbot Lupus, had been forced by circumstances – the need to recruit and retain supporters – to grant St-Josse to a lay aristocrat in 842. In 845, Lupus wrote to the king to complain about the consequences for Ferrières:

the servants of God, who assiduously pray for you, for three years now have not received their accustomed clothing, and so what they are forced to wear are garments worn and darned in many places; and they have to live on bought vegetables, and very seldom have the consolation of fish and cheese.<sup>80</sup>

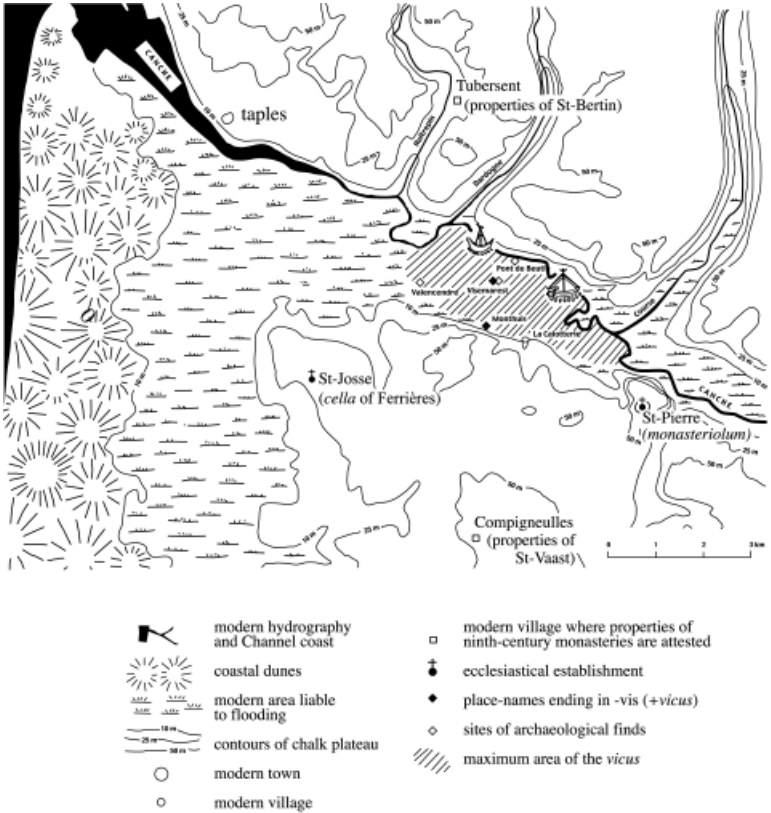
Lupus indicates what kinds of commodities were imported through the *wic* (and thence brought the further 280 km to Ferrières): the kind of commodities, incidentally, that leave no trace in the archaeological record. In 852, when the king had returned St-Josse to Ferrières, Lupus wrote requesting Felix, the Frankish chief notary of King Æthelwulf of Wessex, and a man whom Lupus knew personally, to urge his lord to send some lead to repair the roof of the monastery church at Ferrières: could it be delivered at Etaples, please?<sup>81</sup> Lupus's huge efforts to recover this monastic outlier, and huge relief when he succeeded, surely indicate an economic importance that depended on St-Josse's being deeply implicated in cross-Channel communications, commercial, or religious, or both at once.<sup>82</sup> To these snippets can be added documentary evidence for Quentovic's place in a network of exchanges involving at least six major West Frankish monasteries: St-Vaast Arras, St-Riquier, Ferrières, St-Germain-des-Près, St-Wandrille and St-Bertin – all attested at various dates between 770 and 850 as what we might call Quentovic's stake-

<sup>79</sup>Lupus of Ferrières, Ep. 11, *Epistolae*, ed. P. Marshall (Leipzig, 1984), 20; cf. Ep. 53, 62.

<sup>80</sup>Lupus, Ep. 71, 74–5.

<sup>81</sup>Lupus, Ep. 14, 22–3. Cf. Ep. 13, 21–2, sent at the same time to Æthelwulf himself, promising that, though the brethren were anyway lively intercessors for him, they would be 'alacriores ... si munus acceperimus' ('livelier still ... if we receive a gift'). For the campaign to recover St-Josse, see Lupus, Epp. 11, 20; 88, 67–8; 64, 71; 92, 90. For the contacts of 852, see P. Stafford, 'Charles the Bald, Judith, and England', in *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, ed. Gibson and Nelson, 139–53.

<sup>82</sup>Lupus, Ep. 61, 67 and 62, 68 are a second pair of letters dispatched to York at the same time as Lupus contacted the West Saxon court. Ep. 62, to Abbot Altsig, reveals the existence of a scriptorium at St-Josse, and, in the person of the scribe Lantramn (?kinsman of the like-named archbishop of Tours), previous close contacts between St-Josse and York. The prayer-association mentioned in Ep. 61, to Archbishop Wigmund, continued one already lively in Alcuin's time: Alcuin, *Epistolae*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH *Epistolae* iv (Berlin, 1895), no. 210 (probably sent in 800), 350–1, asking the patriarch of Jerusalem for prayers for himself and his *familia* and also for Archbishop Eanbald II of York. Alcuin, Epp. 175, 176 (July 799) suggest the importance of St-Josse/Quentovic as a listening-post at a critical moment.



Map 2 *Quentovic and its environs*

holders, that is, holding land near or actually in the *wic*, or benefiting from trade passing through it.<sup>83</sup> In the mid-ninth century, two little farms at Tubersent just north of Quentovic belonging to St-Bertin were in the hands of Saxger and Alfward respectively, the second of them formally labelled *ille Saxo* (that Saxon man), Anglo-Saxons, surely?<sup>84</sup> In

<sup>83</sup> See Maps 1 and 2: St-Bertin, St-Vaast, St-Riquier, Ferrières, St-Germain-des-Près, St-Wandrille. The documentary evidence is admirably discussed by Lebecq, 'Quentovic', 77–9.

<sup>84</sup> *Le polyptyque de l'abbaye de Saint-Bertin (844–859): édition critique et commentaire*, ed. F.-L. Ganshof *et al.* (Paris, 1975), 23 (*brevis* of Tubersent), with commentary, 123. Lebecq, 'Quentovic', 78, notes two Anglo-Saxon names among Quentovic moneyers. An 'ethnic factor' here was explored by M. Rouche, 'Les Saxons et les origins de Quentovic', *Revue du Nord*, 59 (1977), 457–78.

857, St-Bertin also received from one of the region's fairly substantial landowners 'one tenement (*mansus*) in Quentovic'.<sup>85</sup> Quentovic's economic importance before c. 864 seems inescapable. Negative numismatic evidence may not always translate easily into slump.

Any resolution of this conundrum must be reconcilable with the coin evidence for Quentovic's new importance as a mint from c. 864 onwards.<sup>86</sup> This was an economy in which markets could be accommodated (Lupus of Ferrières mentions one, otherwise undocumented, at Chappes far inland in the modern department of Aube, which attracted Viking interest<sup>87</sup>) but it was not a market economy. If Quentovic was a port, it was also a royal centre of operations, to which came commercial agents of the king, and of the great monasteries under royal protection. Many exchanges may not have involved money at all. Conversely, large volumes of coins minted may not translate into boom. They could just as easily reflect royal requirements, in this case for the pay of hired troops, or the interests of a local strong man in charge of the mint in securing cash for similar purposes. In the eight or nine decades before 864, there's intermittent evidence for a political and military authority at Quentovic: an authority that could be seen as royal but which at the same time was vested in and wielded by a magnate with power on the spot. How else to explain the 'payment' to the Vikings to spare buildings at Quentovic in 842? How explain Viking avoidance of Quentovic *after* 842? Just as Roric protected Frisia, someone protected Quentovic. He might, c. 860, be identified as the aptly-named Grippio, identified in a contemporary miracle-collection as *prefectus emporii*.<sup>88</sup> Did his job extend to running the mint? Again, Grippio's tenure of this post coincides with other textual evidence for the region's political importance at that point. The contemporary Annals of St-Bertin show that these northern coasts suffered most intensely from Viking raids during the years 857 to 865, but also that these years, especially from 861, were those in which Charles the Bald started to implement effective strategies for containing and repelling attackers – strategies that included large pay-offs.<sup>89</sup> The coinage reform of 864 comes in the midst of these efforts. Two stories in miracle-collections, the sort of ninth-century sources that need to be taken with

<sup>85</sup> *Diplomata belgica ante annum millesimum centesimum scripta*, ed. M. Gysseling and A.C.F. Koch (Brussels, 1950), no. 33, pp. 56–7, the gifts of Gundbert, with Abbot Adalard's *Breviis* of 867, no. 37, p. 67.

<sup>86</sup> The case is made by Coupland, 'Trading Places'.

<sup>87</sup> Lupus Ep. 125, 118: 'sedes negotiatorum Cappas'.

<sup>88</sup> *Miracula Sancti Wandregisili* II, c. 15, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH *Scriptores* xv (i) (Hannover, 1887), 408.

<sup>89</sup> J.L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (1992), 186–8, 193–4, 202–8, 212–13.

pinches of salt, are too circumstantial to be wholly invented.<sup>90</sup> First, the Miracles of St-Wandrille, recorded when this community, after repeatedly suffering Viking attacks on its vulnerable location near the mouth of the Seine, decamped to – of all places – Quentovic, in 858. This needs to be set against another story in the same collection, describing how Grippo, the *praefectus* in charge of Quentovic, threatened by drowning at sea while returning from a mission on King Charles's behalf to the king of the English, prayed to St Wandrille promising gifts if he came safe to shore, escaped and fulfilled his promise.<sup>91</sup> Grippo's personal commitment to St Wandrille, and his local power at Quentovic, make the St-Wandrille monks' choice of refuge entirely comprehensible. A second story, this time from the Miracles of St-Riquier, does not specifically mention Quentovic but does mention another cross-Channel voyager on King Charles's business: Aslak was a Dane who converted and joined the king's military household, subsequently negotiated on Charles's behalf with Vikings in England, escorted the hired troops to the king, visited St-Riquier en route back to the sea and 'at the coast', perhaps at Quentovic, witnessed a miracle that happened to a pagan Dane whom the saint first punished for lack of respect in church, and then cured, so that three days later, he was quite fit again for his line of business (*ad omne sui operis negotium*). The date must be 862–3. In this story of varied contacts between Franks and Danes, in a place that can be seen as on the edge but also as a hub, there is a lot more transacting than Othering.

Comparable to Quentovic as a place where Vikings and others met and did business was London. In the 870s, coins (again thank the numismatists) constitute most of the evidence, but they show, at the very least, a more complicated political state of affairs than the one that until very recently we thought we knew, namely, that London was in Viking hands from 871 until 886, when Alfred captured it. The coin evidence does more than complicate: it allows and provokes reflection on the political aims and expectations not only of London's rulers but of London's inhabitants (or perhaps their leading men) who for the first time appear under a collective name *burgware*.<sup>92</sup> The problem becomes less lack of evidence than anachronistic interpretation. On one rather

<sup>90</sup> Not all *miracula* can be relied on, even cautiously. Cf. N. Lund, 'Horik den Førstes udenrigspolitik', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 102 (2002), 1–22, at 9–13, effectively undermining the credibility of the *Miracula Sancti Germani* as a source for the Viking attack on Paris in 845 (which could remove, incidentally, the only specific case of atrocity attributed by a contemporary text to the Vikings in Francia: the hanging of 111 Frankish captives in full view of Frankish observers).

<sup>91</sup> See n. 86 above.

<sup>92</sup> *ASC* 893, 56, trans. 86.

older view, London in these years was ‘a species of “open city”’:<sup>93</sup> shades of Danzig after 1919 – or a really rather interesting possibility? More recent scholarship rejects that, on the assumption, apparently, that at this period any ruler worth his salt would seek a monopoly of control. Following Mark Blackburn’s clever reconstruction, ‘from ca 875/6 until ca 879/80, ... London was in Anglo-Saxon rather than Viking hands’, in other words, while ‘the Vikings were not in control of London during the later 870s and early 880s’, Alfred took ‘control’ of London (and other Mercian mints) from the early 880s on.<sup>94</sup> I am not entirely happy with that word ‘control’ any more than I am when historians talk about ‘control’ of their evidence (though it is understandable that talk of coinage should evoke ‘control’ vocabulary, whereas other, vaguer, words are used in discussion of political matters generally).<sup>95</sup> In my view a humbler posture is appropriate, perhaps one of indulgence in ‘controlled’ speculation. In such a spirit, A.P. Smyth takes full account of the fact that the Mercian king Ceolwulf was called by the Alfredian author of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* ‘a foolish king’s thegn’ (some modern historians have characterised him as ‘a puppet ruler’:<sup>96</sup> shades of Quisling?) and infers that the Danes were in overall control of London when coins were minted at London in Ceolwulf’s name.<sup>97</sup> Smyth concludes that if Ceolwulf was a Viking subsidiary, then, logically, Alfred when *he* issued coins at London in the 870s was ‘tributary to the Danes’. Smyth continues:

for Alfred, such an arrangement may not have been as humiliating or as economically disadvantageous as modern political commentators might imagine. He may have benefited from access to the lucrative London market and he must have availed himself of Danish supplies of silver ... [while] the Danes ... stood to gain tribute and taxation.

So far, so conceivable. When Smyth writes confidently that ‘the people in London’ could have had no part in choosing their ruler(s), or that

<sup>93</sup> M. Dolley and C. Blunt, ‘The Chronology of the Coins of Ælfred the Great’, in *Anglo-Saxon Coins: Studies Presented to F.M. Stenton on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday*, ed. M. Dolley (1961), 77–95, at 80–1.

<sup>94</sup> M. Blackburn, ‘The London Mint in the Reign of Alfred’, in *Kings, Currency and Alliances*, ed. M. Blackburn and D.N. Dumville (Woodbridge, 1998), 105–23, at 120, and see 120–3.

<sup>95</sup> S. Keynes, ‘Alfred and the Mercians’, in *Kings, Currency and Alliances*, ed. Blackburn and Dumville, 1–45; in this fine paper, compare the terms used at 12–14, 30, 35, where coinage is in question, with discussion elsewhere.

<sup>96</sup> H.R. Loyn, *Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1967), 22; E. Roesdahl, *The Vikings* (1991), 237; but cf. the more understanding tone of Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 1, 30; and R. Abels, *Alfred the Great* (1998), 144–7.

<sup>97</sup> A.P. Smyth, *King Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1995), 49.

‘Alfred was most likely free to monitor the activities of his die-cutters and their mints’,<sup>98</sup> lurking assumptions need to be tested. Smyth deserves all credit for thinking the unthinkable: that is, contemplating an Alfred who, early in his royal career, was, like Ceolwulf, a Danish sub-king. Yet this scenario sits oddly with Smyth’s otherwise strong vision of Viking Otherness (witness his many index references to ‘Vikings, destructive effects of, aggressive or conspicuous paganism of’) and his still stronger image of Alfred as straightforwardly heroic, that is, as much a national English leader as almost everyone else’s Alfred. The coins do not lie; but that is because, to paraphrase Philip Grierson on the archaeologist’s spade, speaking is not their strong suit. What historians need to do with this as with all evidence is ponder something Tim Reuter wrote not long ago:

the constraints on medieval politicians and polities were more extensive [than on modern ones], the expectations lower, and the objectives not shaped by the same calculus of means and end. Their aims and priorities have to be carefully mined from their actions, rather than being projected on to them through the lens of supposedly timeless assumptions about the nature of the state and of politics.<sup>99</sup>

As a small essay in mining, excavate another London episode, this time in 893. It involved Hastein, alias the Northman Alsting documented on the Loire in 882, and thence induced by a Carolingian king to move to the Channel coast and further raiding interspersed with wheeling and dealing.<sup>100</sup> In autumn 892, Hastein was evidently among those Northmen who ‘seeing the whole realm worn down by famine, left Francia and crossed the sea’<sup>101</sup> to England, where as ‘Hæsten’ he appears in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 892 and 893, the only Viking leader named in its 892–6 section.<sup>102</sup> Alfred swiftly came to terms with him, and Hastein’s two sons were christened (had Hastein himself perhaps adopted Christianity in Francia?), with Alfred and Ealdorman Æthelred of the Mercians as respective godfathers; Hastein gave ‘hostages and oaths’; Alfred ‘made him generous gifts of money’.<sup>103</sup> Hastein

<sup>98</sup> Smyth, *King Alfred*, 48–9.

<sup>99</sup> I quote from unpublished work by Tim Reuter, left in draft at his death, which will be seen through to publication in 2004.

<sup>100</sup> *Annales Vedastini* 882, 890, 52, 68–9.

<sup>101</sup> *Annales Vedastini* 892, 72.

<sup>102</sup> *ASC* 892, 893, 55–8, trans. 84–7. See J.L. Nelson, ‘Hastein’, in *The New Dictionary of National Biography* (forthcoming).

<sup>103</sup> When all this occurred is debatable: the obvious reading of *ASC* suggests early 893 (or perhaps late 892), but an earlier occasion is just possible: Æthelweard, well-informed author, c. 980, of a Latin version of the *ASC*, *Chronicon*, ed. A. Campbell (1962), says, 44–5, in a passage missing from all other *ASC* versions, that some Vikings came over to Kent from the Continent late in 884, and made a fort at Benfleet. If Hastein was part



then ‘made a fort’ at Benfleet in Essex, and ‘immediately went harrying in that very province which Æthelred, his son’s godfather, was in charge of’, leaving wife and sons at Benfleet with ‘a great army in occupation’. In Hastein’s absence, a small contingent of West Saxons, augmented by Mercian troops from London, ‘stormed the fortification at Benfleet, captured all that was in it, goods, women and children’, and carried all these off to London, along with some ships. Hastein now met Alfred a second time in the same year, and this second encounter perhaps occurred at London. Alfred, mindful of their spiritual kinship, ‘restored his wife and sons to [Hastein]’.<sup>104</sup> This was an act of royal *mittse* (mercifulness) indeed, acting out a quality to which Alfred consistently attached importance, a blend of personal humility and official power.<sup>105</sup> In summer 896, ‘the army dispersed, some to East Anglia, some to Northumbria, and those that were moneyless (*feohleas*) got themselves ships there and sailed south across the sea to the Seine’.<sup>106</sup> Since Hastein does not reappear in any of the sources, we can imagine him ending his days moneyed and settled in England with his family, resident perhaps within the lordship of one or other of his *compadres*, Alfred or Æthelred. His personal journey from raiding to settlement may have typified one kind of late ninth-century Viking trajectory.

In this essay, after acknowledging the rhetorical effectiveness of images, whether medieval or modern, of the Vikings as Other, I have tried to get behind and around them to consider some of the scattered evidence for the acculturation of Viking individuals and groups in northern Francia and, more briefly, in England in the ninth century. But after some qualifying, even minimising, of Viking Otherness in the perceptions of Franks and English, I want briefly to reflect on how representations of the Vikings as Other were deployed in the formation of ninth-century regnal politics and identities.<sup>107</sup> In the successor-kingdoms of the divided Carolingian Empire, and a divided Francia, Frankishness could no longer make the large contribution to regnal identity that it may have done in the reigns of Pippin, Charlemagne

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of that group, his sons might have been baptised in 885. On the whole, the association of Alfred and Æthelred in that event points to 893 rather than 885.

<sup>104</sup> ASC 893, 57, trans. 86–7.

<sup>105</sup> P. Kershaw, ‘The Alfred–Guthrum Treaty: Scripting Accommodation and Interaction in Viking Age England’, in *Cultures in Contact*, ed. Hadley and Richards, 43–64, at 49–50.

<sup>106</sup> ASC 896, 59, my trans. Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon*, 867 (*recte* 866), 92, mentions ‘Hastings’ as ‘commander of Northmen’ active on the Loire in 867 (*recte* 866) and 874 (*recte* 868). If this is the same Hastein (and not a kinsman), his uniquely well-documented career spanned three decades.

<sup>107</sup> For the very useful term ‘regnal’, see S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communitates* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1997), 254 and ch. 8, *passim*.

and Louis the Pious.<sup>108</sup> From 840, there were plural Frankish kingdoms, as there had been in Merovingian times. Regnal identity, now as then, had to rest on territorial definition and on political coherence, that is, positively, the obligation of faithful men to come to assemblies when summoned, negatively, their obligation not to migrate without royal permission to another royal lord.<sup>109</sup> In the edict he issued from an assembly at Pitres on the Seine not far upstream from Rouen in June 864, Charles the Bald represented himself as successor to the Christian Roman emperors of late Antiquity. He did so, thanks to his adviser Hincmar of Rheims, by stuffing his edict with material from the fifth-century Theodosian Code.<sup>110</sup> After some introductory prescriptions about law and justice, the first main cluster of themes (cc. 8–24) was a revaluation of the coinage, strict penalties for counterfeiters or rejecters of the new coins and regulations of weights and measures: here the stress lay on territoriality, that is, on the obligations of all inhabitants within the kingdom's boundaries, whether 'regions follow Roman Law', or some other customary law. Charles then borrowed fifth-century Roman prohibitions on the export of military matériel (c. 25), replacing the distinction here between 'barbarians' and 'Romans' with one between *gentilitas*, gentiledom and *christianitas*, christendom. A seller of mail-coats, weapons or horses to Northmen was 'a traitor to the fatherland and a betrayer of christianity to paganism and to perdition', and would be condemned to death. In the years just preceding 864, Charles had been recruiting Northmen to his service, into his own military household, even, perhaps, into comital office. For those Vikings, Christianity was the route to assimilation. Charles had also been giving new articulation to ideas of reciprocal obligation binding faithful men to faithful king, that is, a king bound to treat subjects according to law and justice. In the regions, obligations were regularly affirmed in oaths of fidelity sworn by men resident in counties (*pagenses*). At regnal level, assemblies no less regularly both demonstrated, ritually and practically, the existence of a political community, and kept it functioning. Northmen if pagans were excluded: Northmen converted, willing to settle on condition they accepted the obligations and benefits of fidelity, could become insiders. The Vikings in question were of course noble warriors:

<sup>108</sup> For some limits to Frankishness in this sense even in its alleged heyday, see M. Garrison, 'The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an Identity from Pippin to Charlemagne', in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Y. Hen and M. Innes (Cambridge, 2000), 114–61.

<sup>109</sup> T. Reuter, 'Assembly Politics', in *The Medieval World*, ed. P. Linehan and J.L. Nelson (2001), 432–50.

<sup>110</sup> *Edictum Pistense*, ed. A. Boretius, MGH Capitularia regum Francorum II (Hannover, 1897), no. 273, pp. 310–28. See J.L. Nelson, 'Translating Images of Authority: The Christian Roman Emperors in the Carolingian World', in Nelson, *The Frankish World*, 89–98.

traits of status and occupation assured an entrée into equivalent peer-groups among Franks, Burgundians or Aquitanians. The *sodalitas* had much in common with the *comitatus*.

In Alfred's case, Asser's evidence is unequivocal: the royal entourage included men owning more than half-a-dozen ethnic labels, signifying, surely, that ethnicity had little to do with inclusion.<sup>111</sup> Alfred, drawing on a large legacy from Bede, worked hard to recreate what *looked like* an ethnic identity for his men to inhabit: its name was Englishkind. But Alfred's treaty with Guthrum assigned men to distinct territories, divided by a boundary. If English residing in East Anglia were to be categorised as Danes, Danes residing west of the rivers Lea and Ouse, in London, for instance, would be categorically English. The way was open for the assuming, more or less rapidly, of appropriate new identities by individuals on both sides. Alfred's self-appointed task was to construct an effectively new regnal identity on the twin bases of territorial habitation, and, at higher social levels where men shared the king's *familiaritas*, on sworn commitments, practical fidelities and good lordship involving the receipt of *woruldsaelða*, worldly goods, as well. Within the community of those who shared the lord's love, there were *geferscipas*, groups of companions, and shire- or *burh*-based groups of followers or thegns. But there was nothing like racism here (the word 'race' should no longer be used to translate *gens*). How would Hastein, or any of the *pagani* in Alfred's household, have identified himself? And how would such men have identified themselves with others as a group, assimilating themselves into a wider collectivity? Not, certainly, as *wicenga*. Not yet as *Angelcyn*; but as the faithful followers – thegns, or perhaps *fas(s)elli* – of one shared 'guardian of wealth and friendship' (I quote King Alfred, not Seamus Heaney).<sup>112</sup> Whatever rivalrous flytings resounded in it, there was no place in Alfred's hall for Otherness. Perhaps what *did* resound in Alfred's hall were the strains of *Beowulf*, an epic tale in which Danes, not least the wise king Hrothgar, figured largely, and genealogical recitations crediting Alfred with Danish ancestors, on the spear side Scyld and Scef, on the distaff side, Stuf and Wiltgar.<sup>113</sup> Such incorporation of Danes into Alfred's own lineage,

<sup>111</sup> Asser, *De Gestis Ælfredi Regis* c. 76, p. 60, trans. 91.

<sup>112</sup> *King Alfred's Version of Augustine's Soliloquies*, Book I, ed. T. Carnicelli (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 62, trans. S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, Alfred the Great, 141. For *fas(s)elli*, see Asser, *De Gestis Ælfredi Regis* cc. 53, 55, pp. 41, 44.

<sup>113</sup> A.C. Murray, 'Beowulf, the Danish Invasions, and Royal Genealogy', in *The Dating of Beowulf*, ed. C. Chase (Toronto, 1981), 101–11; J.L. Nelson, 'Reconstructing a Royal Family: Reflections on Alfred from Asser Chapter 2', in *People and Places in Northern Europe, 500–1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, ed. I. Wood and N. Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), 47–66, at 51–2.

and into the traditions celebrated at his court, would have accorded with the king's own welcoming of Danes into his entourage and his friendship. The publicising – and where better than in the vernacular *Chronicle* and in *carmina saxonica*? – of Anglo-Danish associations of blood and of culture showed the malleability of identities, including that of Englishkind, and Alfred's personal commitment to an open-door policy.

Finally, to end where I began, reflecting on the Vikings' role as Others in the construction of modern national histories, you might say that if the Vikings had not existed they would have had to be invented. Or you might say that the Vikings *had not* existed before the nineteenth century, but had to be invented then. That is when their history begins. In the historic ninth century, there were indeed Northmen who threatened and damaged the people they encountered in England and on the Continent. But there were also Northmen that opted in. The ties that bound were not age-old inborn solidarities but man-made lordship and fidelity which worked in ways best understood in terms of layers, that is, of differentiated levels of social power and of rank and status, and shares, that is, partnerships of mutual interest. Such layers and shares help explain the particular stories of Roric and Hastein, of Quentovic and London. They help explain, too, the formation, in the ninth century, of new identities in both England and Francia. They explain why Northmen, even some *ex-wicenga*, could be readily assimilated, could feel, as the OE expression had it, *at ham* – 'at home' – in Alfredian *burhs* and palaces. Do the Vikings have a future? Yes, maybe, in terms of harmless cultural props, like horned helmets worn by Scandinavian football fans or IKEA publicity girls. Yes, certainly, as inspirational themes for *scops* past and present. Yes, again, as fit subjects for historians, especially if the histories are comparative. But ready-made, hand-me-down Others, totemic props to chauvinism, we can do without. In that sense, the twenty-first century should see the last of the Vikings.