OLD ENGLISH *WICING*:
A QUESTION OF SEMANTICS

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IN recent decades there have been exhausting and exhaustive studies of the vikings both of their activities and their etymology. Anyone who proposes to add to the number of such studies ought to offer an explanation and an apology.

Most of my work in the last few years has been on historical semantics within the Old English period. While I recognize that this can never be totally divorced from the study of etymology, it is clear that concentration on etymology may obfuscate discussion of meaning and translation. Equally clearly the fact that close cognates are found in related languages may lead us to use too readily meaning in one language to throw light on that in another. In this paper I hope to keep separate Modern English 'viking', Old English *wicing*, and Old Norse *víkingr*. What I wish to examine is not what a 'viking' was, nor what the etymology of *víkingr* may be, but simply what the Anglo-Saxons understood by the term *wicing*. There is good reason for doing this now in the 1980s, since, though the evidence has previously been looked at, it has not been examined in detail in the light of recent scholarship in Old English. It is the misfortune, not the fault, of Askeberg[1] that when he wrote his article in 1944 the Toronto microfiche concordance had not been published, the dating of individual Old English poems had not been subjected to rigorous examination, and the proper ways of assessing gloss evidence had scarcely been thought through at all.

In handling the Old English material with the old crude tools

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[1] Fritz Askeberg, *Norden och Kontinenten i Gammal Tid* (Uppsala, 1944), esp. pp. 114 ff. on *Vikingarna*. Later articles include one by Staffan Hellberg, 'Vikingatidens *vikingar*' in *Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi* (1980), and one forthcoming by Finn Hødnebø, 'Who Were the First Vikings?' to appear in the *Proceedings of the Tenth Viking Congress*.

of research Askeberg inevitably simplified, and no one who sub-
sequently attacked or used his conclusions had adequate expertise
in the Old English field to challenge this particular area of his
work. Thus, though what he says has been quoted and discussed
often enough, the parts of his argument that depend on Old
English evidence have not been satisfactorily re-examined.

It may be that in his discussion of Old Norse he is on surer
ground, but even here I find, for example, his theory of a semantic
shift in the use of the word *víkingr* in skaldic poetry between 1070
and 1100 one that requires more rigorous analysis. The criteria
for dating skaldic poetry may be thought easier to establish than
those for dating Old English poems, simply because so many
skaldic verses are attributable to named poets whose dates we
know, at least approximately. Yet all those who now work with
skaldic poetry are more cautious about accepting a saga-writer's
authorial attribution, and the presence, for example, of the word
víkingr in four poems normally attributed to the first quarter of
the tenth century cannot be taken as firm evidence of typical
early tenth-century usage. Three of these are from *Egils saga
Skallagrímssonar*: Egill is said to have composed at the age of six a
poem containing the line

<div align="center">fara á brott með víkingum</div>

It might of course be asserted that since in the same poem the
youthful Egill appears to believe vikings commonly travelled in
a *knörr* or merchant ship, there was some confusion in his mind.
If, however, the saga-writer is correct in attributing this compo-
sition to Egill, and if Egill indeed composed it at the age of six,
then the implications of the evidence are that he was precociously
starting new fashions in poetic diction. Yet the circumstances of
the composition are typically anecdotal, and we ought at least
to entertain the possibility that some other, later, child's verse
attached itself to the Egill legend and was incorporated by the
thirteenth-century saga-writer. In another poem attributed to
Egill the use of the word *víkingr* is almost certainly a play on the
nickname Askmaðr, and the third occurrence in *Egils saga* is in a
poem which at least two critics have held to be a post-Egill
invention. Thus *Egils saga* which provides three-quarters of the
evidence for early tenth-century skaldic usage does not offer us
much that is reliable, and the fourth occurrence is suspect, or
has, at any rate, been suspected.[1]

[1] See Askeberg, op. cit., p. 130. For the three poems by Egill see Sigurður
Nordal (ed.), *Egils saga Skalla-grímssonar* (Reykjavík, 1933), pp. 100, 121, 127.

It is true that there is also evidence of the words *víkingr* and *víking* in Eddic poetry and on rune-stones, but here too there are such uncertainties of usage, dating, and interpretation that conclusions drawn from it can be at best tentative. In *Helreið Brynhildar*, for example, the abstract noun *víking* occurs in a description of Brynhild's experiences as a valkyrie.[1] In our clumsy attempts to understand 'valkyrie' or 'viking' activities the two do not seem very closely related and the reference by Brynhildr to her past *í víkingo* ought to warn us against jumping to hasty conclusions about the range of either. Where examples are rare and when contexts are open to variable dating and interpretation we can talk about possibility of meaning, not certainty, and we can conclude very little about regional or chronological semantic shift. Our own familiarity with the words in Old Norse is because they occur so frequently in the prose of the sagas, but material from this late date, though it has fashioned our present thinking about meaning and implications, is of little use in establishing the earlier semantic range.

Whereas Modern English 'viking' cannot be considered without a close look at late Old Norse (or Old West Norse) *víkingr*, there is good reason for considering Old English *wicing* in comparative isolation from the overwhelmingly large but largely late body of Old Norse evidence. A more productive approach, I believe, will be to adopt the principle of the non-distribution map, a principle brought to our attention by archaeologists and runologists, but perhaps too little used by philologists. A non-distribution map ensures that the reader knows where the scholar has looked and found nothing, as distinct from where he happens not yet to have looked. In this case we need to examine texts where one might expect the word *wicing* to occur, as well as the actual occurrences. We need to know what the Anglo-Saxons called a Scandinavian invader when they did not call him a *wicing* and then to establish whether there is anything significant or interesting in the variations of usage.

It is common in looking at the Old English material to start with *Widsið*, but I leave this poem on one side for the moment, because of the dating problems, and begin my discussion with the earliest datable evidence. This is the important entry in the Corpus, Épinal, and Erfurt glossaries. We have here three manuscript versions of the same glossary entry. Another manuscript,

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[1] Hans Kuhn (ed.), *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius* (Heidelberg, 1962), i. 219: *þott ec værac i vikingo*.

BL Cotton Cleopatra A. III contains some material derived from Épinal–Erfurt including this item.[1] The forms are as follows:

Épinal:	piraticum	uuicingsceadan
Erfurt:	piraticam	uuicingsceadae
Corpus:	piraticam	wicingsceaðan
CC A. III:	piratici	wicingsceaðan sæsceaðan æscmen

It is clear that the scribe of CC A. III has read his lemma as a reference to the person not the practice and adapted his gloss accordingly.

The glossary underlying the surviving manuscripts dates perhaps to the last quarter of the seventh century. Recent work by Julian Brown and Malcolm Parkes[2] puts the date of the Épinal manuscript towards the end of the seventh century, and if the glossary, as is thought, incorporates some Aldhelm material from *De Virginitate*, then the original cannot be much earlier than the Épinal manuscript itself.

Most scholars who have alluded to this entry in their studies of the word 'viking' have assumed that the correct lemma is *piraticum* and that the gloss *wicingsceaðan* contains the second element *sceaða* 'a criminal', 'one who does harm'.[3] Corpus and Erfurt, however, share the lemma *piraticam* 'piracy' not *piraticum* 'pirate': *wicingsceaðan* is a perfectly proper gloss for the abstract 'piracy', the abstract noun *sceaða* (*sceððu*) 'crime', 'theft' being also recorded. That *piraticam* is likely to be the original reading is substantiated by the fact that it occurs among the important batch of Orosius glosses, as Dr Pheifer has demonstrated: 'The Orosius glosses of Épinal–Erfurt are exceptionally full and thorough . . . and there is ample evidence to show that their Old English interpretations were part of a running gloss on the text and not merely substituted for Latin ones at the *glossae collectae* stage, indicating that Latin texts were being construed in the vernacular.'[4]

This is an extremely important point. The relevant section of Orosius, which describes Philip's siege of Byzantium, says that Philip 'in order to recover by plundering the wealth that he had

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[1] J. D. Pheifer (ed.), *Old English Glosses in the Épinal–Erfurt Glossary* (Oxford, 1974), p. 39, l. 736, and footnote.

[2] I am very grateful to Dr Parkes for allowing me to read his conclusions in advance of publication.

[3] The Bosworth-Toller definition here is as given in my text, but most occurrences of *sceaða* appear to have the more precise sense of 'thief'.

[4] Pheifer, op. cit., p. xlvii.

exhausted in the siege, took to piracy', *piraticam adgressus est.*[1]
Pheifer makes the point in his notes that the gloss *wicingsceaðan*
may contain the abstract noun equivalent to Old Norse feminine
víking 'a viking expedition' rather than the equivalent of mascu-
line *víkingr* 'a viking'. I think he is right, probably because I came
to the same conclusion independently. We do not have any other
evidence in Old English for such an abstract form, and the ninth-
century vernacular Orosius has no direct translation for the word
piraticam. The syntax of the Old English has moved away from
that of the Latin. Philip and company no longer practise piracy,
wicingsceaðan, they become pirates, *wicingas wurdon.*[2]

It is particularly helpful to have a full and clearly defined
context at so early a stage. It is not only that the word occurs
before the eighth century, i.e. well before the 'viking' raids. It is
also that in spite of the fact that the actual occurrence is in
glossarial lists, we are able to identify a context that provides us
with information on both syntax and subject-matter. I am trying
to avoid etymological controversy, but this occurrence makes it
quite clear that to the seventh-century translator *wicingsceaðan*
was the obvious word to use of piracy in the Mediterranean not—
or not only—in the Baltic.

Before going on to look at other occurrences of *wicing* in glosses,
it is worth making one or two general statements about where
the Anglo-Saxons would find the appropriate lemmata. Isidore
of Seville's *Etymologies* are one obvious source. Isidore defines
piratae as *praedones maritimi*. He explains the word as deriving from
the Greek for 'fire' because of the piratical practice of setting
fire to captured ships.[3] Manuscripts of Isidore's *Etymologies* were
known in Anglo-Saxon England, but not, according to Ker, fully
glossed ones. Compilers of Anglo-Saxon glossaries may have
taken their Isidorean material from syntactically glossed manu-
scripts no longer extant, but more probably they relied on batches
of gloss material already excerpted. There is, at any rate, no
evidence that they were familiar with Isidore's etymological ex-
planation, as distinct from his definition.

[1] Henry Sweet (ed.), *King Alfred's Orosius* (Early English Text Society, os, lxxix, 1883), p. 117.

[2] Janet Bately (ed.), *The Old English Orosius* (EETS, ss, vi, 1980), p. 63.

[3] W. M. Lindsay (ed.), *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX* (Oxford, 2 vols., 1911), vol. 1, § 220. N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manu-scripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), no. 366: see also Helmut Gneuss, 'A Preliminary List of Manuscripts Written or Owned in England up to 1100', *Anglo-Saxon England*, ix (1981), nos. 176, 469, 561, 682, 719, 885, 889.

The Anglo-Saxons also knew the compound *archipirata* and, though this occurs in such major Latin authors as Cicero and Livy, it is likely that the average literate person came across it mainly or solely in Aldhelm. Aldhelm in the prose *De Virginitate* describes the persecutor of St Lucy as having been put to death 'ut barbarus praedo vel crudelis archipirata'[1]—in Michael Lapidge's translation 'a barbaric robber or cruel buccaneer'.[2] We are fortunate in having a range of glosses on this word, sometimes *in situ* in Aldhelm manuscripts, and sometimes taken out into glossarial lists. Here, however—in spite of the early date of Aldhelm's work—we are at the opposite end of the Anglo-Saxon period, since most extant glosses to Aldhelm are tenth- or more probably eleventh-century. BL CC A. III gives us, if we accept Ker's dating, a mid-tenth-century gloss on *archipirata*.[3] CC A. III, as is well known, contains several batches of glosses, and *archipirata* (though not with that spelling) occurs twice, once in a clearly defined group of Aldhelm glosses, and once abstracted into an alphabetical list. The gloss both times is *heah sæ ðeof* though the word division is not the same in both occurrences. Nevertheless the element *heah* must be taken as qualifying *ðeof* rather than *sæ*, for, though the sea is occasionally referred to in Old English as *heah*, especially in poetry, the prefix *heah* is also regularly used to translate *arch-* as in *heahengel* for *archangelus*, or *heahhyrde* for Aldhelm's *archimandrita*.[4]

An early eleventh-century manuscript which has not the usual range of Aldhelm glosses is MS BL Royal 5 E. XI (Ker, no. 252). According to the Toronto microfiche concordance its gloss *heahsceaða* on *archipirata* is a unique compound, but it is unlikely to have been invented for the occasion. Napier assigns this manuscript to his 'Salisbury group' of glossed Aldhelm manuscripts.[5] Napier's 'Digby group' has been carefully re-examined by Goos-

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[1] R. Ehwald (ed.), *Aldhelmi Opera Omnia* (Berlin, 1919), p. 294, l. 22. Aldhelm also uses the word in his *De Metris*: Ehwald, p. 185, l. 3.

[2] Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (trans.), *Aldhelm: the Prose Works* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 109.

[3] Thomas Wright and Richard P. Wulcker (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies* (London, 2 vols., 1884), vol. 1, col. 346, l. 26, and col. 506, l. 37. The first entry (in the alphabetical portion) is 'Archipiratta heah sæðeof'; the second one, clearly signalled as the St Lucy part of the Aldhelm text, is 'Archiparatta heahseðeof'. For the date of this manuscript see Ker, no. 143.

[4] Louis Goossens, *The Old English Glosses of MS. Brussels, Royal Library, 1650* ... (Brussels, 1974), p. 211, l. 966.

[5] A. S. Napier, *Old English Glosses* ... (Oxford, 1900), pp. xxv–xxvi.

sens[1] who, following Derolez, argues that the Aldhelm glosses in MS Bodleian Library Digby 146 are directly copied from MS Brussels, Royal Library, 1650. In the main body of the text in both the Digby and Brussels manuscripts *archipirata* has the double Latin and Old English gloss *summus latro vel flotman*.[2] To *flotman* I shall return. But the Brussels entry is of further interest. *Summus latro* is in Hand A, if we accept Goossens's attribution to the different scribes. *Flotman* is in Hand C. But apart from the main text, in the top right-hand corner of folio 39r, *archipirata* is written out again, this time with the double gloss *flotman vel wicing*. The word *wicing* Goossens attributes to CD—'a clumsy square hand using generally brown ink of poor quality'.[3] Here *wicing* is an afterthought, and either the Digby scribe did not think this addition worth noting or it was not in his exemplar at the time of copying.

Several points emerge from this. There must have been a history of Aldhelm glossing between the writing of the text and the extant glossed manuscripts of it. In the three variants referred to above we have an indication of three different glossing traditions on the one word *archipirata*. The elements *sceaða* and *ðeof* must be pejorative, but we have no evidence yet that *wicing* was necessarily so. *Flotman*, whatever overtones it acquired in the period of the viking raids, is etymologically transparent as 'seaman' and can be used in this sense. I take it that when Noah is described in the poem *Genesis* as being *frea flotmanna*[4] he is not thought of as some kind of patron saint of pirates.

One of the most interesting manuscripts here is the eleventh-century Plantin-Moretus 47 + BL Add. 32246 (Ker, no. 2).[5] It contains a glossarial list which, uniquely, puts *pirata* and *archipirata* consecutively, it is unique in adding the lemma *cilex*, and I do not know where the compiler took this from,[6] and it is unique

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[1] Goossens, op. cit., pp. 25–6.

[2] Ibid., p. 404, l. 3926; Napier, op. cit., p. 107, l. 4039.

[3] Goossens (quoting Ker), op. cit., p. 49.

[4] G. P. Krapp (ed.), *The Junius Manuscript* (Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, i, New York and London, 1931), p. 47, l. 1475.

[5] Ker assigns it to the first quarter of the eleventh century. It is edited by L. Kindschi, *The Latin–Old English Glossaries in Plantin-Moretus MS 32 and British Museum MS Additional 32, 246* (Stanford Dissertation, 1955, published University Microfilms International, Michigan, 1986), see esp. p. 56.

[6] The usual Latin spelling is *cilix*. The Cilicians were apparently so well known for piracy that they gave their name to the practice. Lewis and Short's Latin dictionary gives a fair range of references for their use (s.v. *Cilicia*), but it is not immediately apparent which of these furnished the Anglo-Saxon glossator with his lemma.

in glossing *archipirata* as the *yldest wicing*. Kindschi has a charming footnote in his edition of these glosses suggesting that the glossator interpreted *archi-* as 'oldest' rather than 'chief', but 'chief' is a perfectly normal sense of *yldest*. The Old English Orosius offers *yldesta bisceop* for *pontificus maximus*. The long white beard is not essential to the image.

The other interesting thing about this manuscript is that it combines some material from Ælfric's *Grammar* with other sources, for in offering us *wicing vel scegðman* for *pirata vel piraticus vel cilex* it betrays its debt. There is no evidence for the use of the word *wicing* in glossaries between the Corpus–Épinal–Erfurt usage and its occurrence in Ælfric's *Grammar*, and associated *Glossary*,[1] presumably from the last decade of the tenth century. In the *Grammar*, *pirata* is *wicing vel scegðman*, in the *Glossary* it is *wicing vel flotmann*. This looks like the source of additions to eleventh-century Aldhelm manuscripts. In Ælfric's use of the word *sceigðman* we have the first firm gloss evidence of an association between the word *pirata* and the Scandinavian invaders. *Sceigð* is a word for 'ship' borrowed from Old Norse *skeið* and makes no appearance in recorded Old English until the end of the tenth century, though we may assume it passed into colloquial speech somewhat earlier, especially as the compound *sceigðman* is more likely to have been an Anglo-Scandinavian formation than a loan-word.[2]

I had a major problem with the methodology of my approach to this paper which has now caught up with me. The difficulty was in deciding whether to take one word at a time, one century at a time, or one genre (e.g. glosses) at a time. Pursuing the Aldhelm gloss material on arch-pirates has taken me from the glosses of the seventh century to glosses and parallel material in the late tenth and eleventh centuries, and I have not so far looked at other texts in the intervening centuries. Even so some definite conclusions have emerged. In the seventh century the word *piraticam* immediately suggested to a translator the gloss *wicing sceaðan*, with apparently no tribal or ethnic overtones. In the mid-tenth-century CC A. III glosses, which probably reflect one early tradition of Aldhelm glossing, *wicing* does not occur. With the

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[1] J. Zupitza (ed.), *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar* (Berlin, 1880), pp. 24, 302. Spelling variants in the manuscripts are noted in the footnotes to both entries.

[2] Gillian Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Lincolnshire and York-shire* (Copenhagen, 1968), p. 247. The compound does not occur in Old Norse.

appearance of Ælfric's *Grammar* at the end of the tenth century *wicing* comes back into the tradition, and is firmly linked to the concept of Scandinavian piracy by its association with *sceigðman*. However, *wicing* was not so readily comprehensible to all the scribes who copied Ælfric as it is to us. Nineteenth-century scholars have been ridiculed by twentieth-century ones for believing that a *wicing* had any etymological connection with a *wigcyng* or 'war-king'. Nevertheless the spelling *wigcyng* existing in more than one manuscript of *Grammar* and of *Glossary* suggests that if this is folk-etymology it was already present in some eleventh-century thinking.[1]

In the period between seventh- and late tenth-century gloss material *wicing* is used in two prose texts, the translation of Orosius and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Both are important. Normally in discussing the Old English range of the word, Orosius is forgotten and the *Chronicle* references are simply listed. The rarity of occurrence in the *Chronicle* is much more significant than the mere fact of its being there. The simple word *wicing* occurs five times in the entire *Chronicle*, once for the year 879, twice in 885, once in 917, and once in 982. The compound *utwiking* is recorded once only in the whole of Old English, in the *Chronicle* entry for 1098, and falls outside my discussion at present. Considering the non-stop activity of those whom we in Modern English indiscriminately call 'vikings' in this period, and considering how much of the *Chronicle* is taken up in describing those activities in detail, what requires investigation is why the *Chronicle* should restrict itself to using the word in only four annals throughout a century of Scandinavian invasion.

The first occurrence is in the annal for 879 (880, C text):

Her for se here to Cirenceastre of Cippan hamme. 7 sæt þær an gear; 7 þy geare gegadrode on hloþ wicenga, 7 gesæt æt Fullan hamme be Temese;[2]

It is only the Parker A text of the *Chronicle* that uses the spelling *wicenga*. The phrase *hloþ wicenga* has an interesting history of translation. Giles in 1847 offered 'a body of pirates drew together

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[1] Zupitza's C, R, and U. C (Ker, no. 449) has this spelling in the *Glossary*, R and U (Ker, nos. 269 and 17) have respectively *wigcyng* and *wigcing* in the *Grammar*. Ker dates C to the first half of the eleventh century, R and U to the second half.

[2] All citations from the ASC are from the edition by Earle and Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel* (Oxford, 1899, reissued 1952). The dating of the annals follows the convention established by Dorothy Whitelock in her translation, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1961).

and sat down at Fulham'. Benjamin Thorpe in 1861 translated 'a body of vikings assembled and sat down at Fulham' but did not expect us to understand the word 'vikings' without footnote, and adds 'so called from their custom of lurking in creeks'. Garmonsway in 1953 called them 'a band of pirates' and Whitelock in 1961, 'a band of vikings'.[1]

One significant thing about the phrase is the word *hlop*. It is not a common word, and there is only one other occurrence of it in the *Chronicle* where it is said that the Danish *here* in 893 (894, C, D) raided in *hlopum and flocradum*. The seventh-century Laws of Ine are explicit here, as Sawyer drew firmly to our attention long ago when discussing the numbers involved in the Scandinavian invasions:[2]

Ðeofas we hataδ oδ VII men; from VII hloδ oδ XXXV; siδδan biδ here.[3]

The legal implications of the word are reinforced by such compounds as *hloδsliht* 'killing by members of a *hloδ*' and *hloδbot* 'compensation for a killing by members of a *hloδ*', both of which occur in King Alfred's Laws.[4] Since in all the surrounding entries of the *Chronicle* we have repeated references to the activities of the *here* it is quite clear that the *hloδ wicenga* is being singled out for a separate mention as a small band of people engaged in private enterprise. In 885 King Alfred sent a fleet or *sciphere* from Kent to East Anglia and it had the misfortune to encounter two groups of *wicingas*. The first encounter was with a mere sixteen 'viking' ships, the second encounter was with a *micel sciphere wicinga*. This is the only time in the *Chronicle* that the terms *sciphere* and *wicing* are linked. The term *sciphere* is often translated as 'viking fleet' or 'pirate fleet', but the *Chronicle*, though it tends to use the word *here* only of Scandinavian invaders, is quite happy with the term *sciphere* for a fleet of any nationality. In this instance the *micel sciphere wicinga* is identified as Danish in the phrase *þa*

[1] J. A. Giles (ed.), *The Venerable Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England, also the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1847), p. 357; Benjamin Thorpe (ed. and trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Rolls Series, London, 1857), ii. 65; G. N. Garmonsay (trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1953), p. 77; Dorothy Whitelock (trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1961), p. 50.

[2] Peter Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings* (2nd edn., London, 1971), p. 123.

[3] F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (Halle, 1903-6), i. 94. Since Alfred used Ine's Laws in drawing up his own code we may perhaps assume that this definition of the distinctions was still acceptable in his century.

[4] Ibid., p. 64 (Alfred, 29).

Deniscan ahton sige. I think that the distinction here between the usual small groups of *wicingas* and the massed *sciphere* of *wicingas* is explained by Asser.[1] Both the *Chronicle* and Asser tell us that the real *here* had gone away at this time. The fleet that met Alfred's ships is described by Asser as one assembled by the *pagani* living in East Anglia who collected together ships from everywhere—doubtless a motley crew. The implication is that ships 'gathered from everywhere' by the locals, possibly without formal leadership, may be described as a *sciphere wicinga*.

The other two annals in the *Chronicle* are equally informative in context. The 917 one occurs only in the A text of the *Chronicle*, and it contains the only *Chronicle* use of the word *æscmen*. In this annal *æscmen* and *wicingas* are synonyms.

þa æfter þam þa giet þæs ilcan hærfestes gegaderode micel here hine of East Englum ge þæs landheres ge þara wicinga þe hie him to fultume aspanen hæfdon . . . gefliemdon þone here 7 ofslogon hira monig hund, ægþer ge æscmanna ge oþerra.

Here we have a *here* including two elements, one the *landhere* and the other the *wicingas* who have to be 'enticed' to come to their support. The *wicingas* subsequently are the *æscmen*, still carefully distinguished from the rest of the troops.

The last use of the word is the very simple entry for 982 (MS C only):

Her on þys geare comon upp on Dorsætum.iii.scypu wicinga 7 hergo-don on Portlande.

Again this word imples a small force as distinct from the *norð sciphere* which had raided Cheshire in 980 or Olaf's fleet of ninety-three ships which subsequently came to Folkestone in 991.

If the vernacular use in the *Chronicle* itself does not seem suffi-cient evidence for me to assert that the Anglo-Saxons clearly distinguished the *wicingas* from the main thrust of the Scandina-vian invasions, may I turn to the support of the Latin texts and translations? The Latin translation of the *Chronicle* in BL MS Cotton Domitian A. viii[2] does not have entries for all the annals. But it does preserve quite closely the distinctions of the vernacu-lar. The Scandinavians are the *exercitus Danorum* or the *pagani*. Unless I have missed an occurrence (there being no Toronto

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[1] W. H. Stevenson (ed.), *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Oxford, 1959), p. 51, ll. 9 ff.

[2] Francis P. Magoun, Jr., '*Annales Domitiani Latini*: An Edition', *Mediaeval Studies*, ix (1947), 258.

concordance to Anglo-Saxon Latin texts) it uses the word *piratae* only in the annal for 880 where the vernacular had *wicingas*, and in the 882 annal following, where the Old English has a reference to Alfred's encounter with four *sciphlæstas Deniscra monna* '4 ship-loads of Danes'. Tone is always difficult to assess and it is not clear whether or not *sciphlæst* is contemptuous.

Asser's favourite word for the invaders is *pagani*. Æðelweard as R. I. Page has recently pointed out had a wide range of insulting vocabulary but his favourite words are *barbari* and *pagani*. Like the Domitian version of the *Chronicle* he uses the word *piratae* very rarely indeed. I have noted it only where his source, the *Chronicle*, has *wicingas* in the annal for 885—a fine bit of colourful writing, in the Latin though not in the Old English.[1] But what emerges with clarity from both Latin and Old English sources is that Scandinavians are only occasionally *wicingas*, and that when they are *wicingas* this is in no way a distinction by nationality, it is a distinction of a group of *piratae* from an *exercitus*.

This is all completely borne out by the other main prose text that uses the word, the vernacular Orosius. This requires only brief comment. *Wicing* is found three times in Orosius, twice in direct translation of the Latin, once in a chapter heading. One I have already quoted where Philip in Latin *piraticam adgressus est* and in Old English *he scipa gegaderode and wicingas wurdon*. The second offers a particularly interesting occasion of a misunderstanding by the Anglo-Saxon translator. The Latin reads:

Iisdem temporibus Metellus Baleares insulas bello pervagatus edomuit, et piraticam infestationem plurima incolarum caede compressit.[2]

The Old English reads:

On þære tide Metellus se consul for on Belearis þæt land 7 oferwan þa wicingas þe on þæt land hergedon, þeh þara londleoda eac fela forwurde.[3]

To Orosius the inhabitants of these islands were the pirates but the Anglo-Saxon translator assumes that pirates were raiding the Balearic islands and that the inhabitants were the discrete and

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[1] A. Campbell (ed.), *The Chronicle of Æthelweard* (Oxford, 1962), p. 45. See R. I. Page's comments in the forthcoming *Dorothea Coke Memorial Lecture in Northern Studies*.

[2] *Orosius*, ed. Sweet, p. 227.

[3] Ibid., ed. Bately, p. 120.

unfortunate victims of the consul's activities. His mistranslation presumably results from the Anglo-Saxon experience of piracy.

The third occurrence of the word in the Old English Orosius is simply as a chapter heading in the list of contents: Book V, chapter v, is signalled *hu se consul Metellus oferwon þa wicingas*. To the Anglo-Saxon translator the main connotation of the word *wicing* was obviously occupation, not nationality, and it did not jar his sense of proper usage to include it in these contexts. Considering how careful he is to explain foreign customs that he thinks his readers may find difficult we should assume that, if he had thought the word *wicing* had strong enough national overtones to confuse them, he would not have used it.

Another less obvious point about the Old English Orosius relates to the principle that for every distribution map there shall be a non-distribution map. In the interpolated sections on the voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan and the description of northern Europe with its detailed regional geography we have some of the most extensive material in Old English about the Scandinavian homeland, as distinct from the activities of marauding Scandinavians. We have carefully documented names of places and names of peoples. Neither a tribal name *wicingas* nor a place-name *wic* occur. These texts are so well known to all readers of Old English that the point scarcely needs documenting. It is obvious that there are multiple opportunities to use the word if it were thought by the Anglo-Saxon author, or even by the speaker Ohthere, to have the remotest regional relevance. This negative evidence has a particular bearing on the tribal references in *Widsið*.

The semantic evidence provided by Old English poems is, as always, less helpful than that of the prose. The exigencies of an alliterative poetic tradition did not encourage Anglo-Saxon poets to use vocabulary with precision, and modern scholars have to be wary when using poetic material as semantic data. However, one cannot escape entirely from the fact that *wicing* occurs apparently as a common noun for a Scandinavian warrior in *The Battle of Maldon*, apparently as a tribal name in *Widsið*, and, in the compound *sæwicingas*, as a word for one of the tribes of Israel in *Exodus*.[1]

In all three poems we face problems of date. Even with regard to *The Battle of Maldon* which cannot be earlier than 991 we face a controversy over whether it was composed very shortly after

[1] E. B. Irving Jr. (ed.), *The Old English Exodus* (Yale, 1953, repr. 1970), p. 57, l. 333; D. G. Scragg (ed.), *The Battle of Maldon* (Manchester, 1980), *passim*; R. W. Chambers (ed.), *Widsith* (Cambridge, 1912), pp. 205, 208.

the battle, or whether as John McKinnell has, I think rightly, argued there are good grounds for attributing it to the reign of Cnut.[1] The editor of the poem *Exodus* tells us cheerfully:

> We might set the extreme limits within which the poem must fall the year 650 on the one hand . . . and on the other hand as the latest possible date, about the year 1000, roughly the date of the manuscript we possess.[2]

He also tells us that he has a strong impression that 'Exodus should be assigned to the same general period as *Beowulf*', but until we have some clearer conclusions on the date of *Beowulf* this hardly clarifies the situation. I think that its use of the term *sæwicingas* for the Israelites, while in no way decisive, would be more surprising towards the end of the tenth century than in the ninth. It is used in a pattern of variation beside *flota* which can be a neutral word for 'seaman' or can be used of 'pirates'. *Exodus* has the only example of the word which appears to have neither unmistakable connotations of piracy nor possible links with Scandinavia. Inevitably one asks why the sons of Reuben should among the tribes of Israel qualify for the distinction of being *sæwicingas*. It could have been suggested by the biblical description of Reuben as 'unstable as water',[3] but this is taking one into very suspect areas of literary criticism. Another possibility is that Reuben's offence and subsequent loss of his *ealdordom* might have meant that the poet thought of his followers as outcasts or outlaws, and therefore *wicingas*. But these are speculative areas.

In a world where a poet can use the word *wicing* of voyagers across the Red Sea, and the Orosius translator can use it of activity in the Mediterranean it is unexpected to find it so firmly linked with northern tribes in *Widsið*, which has two references, one linking *wicinga cynn* with the tribe of the Heaðobards, the other in one of the standard lists:

> Mid Wenlum ic wæs ond mid Wærnum ond mid Wicingum

Unfortunately, since Ashley Crandell Amos wrote *Linguistic Means of Determining the Dates of Old English Literary Texts* we have virtually no dating tests left, and her conclusions on the dating of *Widsið* are extremely tentative:

> On the balance Langenfelt's evidence certainly tells in favour of a

[1] John McKinnell, 'On the Date of *The Battle of Maldon*', *Medium Ævum*, xliv (1975), 121–36. The controversy continues.

[2] Irving, op. cit., p. 23.

[3] See Irving's discussion in his note to l. 333 on p. 88.

later rather than an earlier date for *Widsið*, but he is far from having proved that the poem is the work of the tenth century or riddled with tenth-century interpolations.[1]

Obviously neither *Exodus* nor *Widsið* can be dated with precision, and in both cases the use of the word *wicing* may not have belonged to the 'original' poem. The prose evidence must be our guideline. In the seventh century *wicing* appeared without national overtones. In the ninth century it could be used of piracy in any context, including the Scandinavian, but in the late tenth century the association with northerners became more pronounced. *Exodus* fits better with the early period, *Widsið* better with the later. But the usage in these poems, perplexed as it is both by problems of dating, and by the problem of a different attitude to lexical precision, cannot itself be employed to give reliable guidelines on semantic shift.

The Battle of Maldon might have seemed the easiest of these three poems to discuss, but is and has been the most misleading. Because this poem is so well known, being one of the first pieces of Old English that most people study, many of us have started our reading of Old English with a work in which the use of *wicing* is particularly close to the modern use of 'viking', i.e. a synonym for a Scandinavian raider. This has coloured our attitude to its connotations elsewhere in Old English. It occurs six times in a text of only 325 lines, a far higher proportion than in any other source. Using again the principle of the non-distribution map we note that in the seventy-three lines of *The Battle of Brunanburh* plus the thirteen lines on *The Capture of the Five Boroughs*[2] it does not occur at all. These two poems—where approximate dating is possible—are on the outside calculation not more than three-quarters of a century earlier than *Maldon*, the dates of the actual battles being Brunanburh 937, Maldon 991.

Arguments about the number of Scandinavian loan-words in Old English vary, including arguments about such loan-words in any given text. Roberta Frank mentioned only two loan-words in *Maldon*, *grið* and *dreng*, and one Nordicism, *eorl* in the sense of *jarl*.[3] Fred C. Robinson detected additional signs of Scandina-

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[1] Amos (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980), p. 146. See also Joyce Hill, '*Widsið* and the Tenth Century', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, lxxxv (1984).

[2] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 106–10. Alistair Campbell (ed.), *The Battle of Brunanburh* (London, 1938).

[3] In her chapter 'Skaldic Verse and the Date of Beowulf' in Colin Chase (ed.), *The Dating of Beowulf* (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1981), p. 124.

vianisms in the direct speech.[1] Ashley Amos accepted a list of seven loan-words and described this as an astoundingly high proportion.[2] But *Brunanburh* also contains interesting examples of loan-words from Old Norse, and the Nordicisms in that poem have recently been subject to stringent re-examination.[3] It is significant that *wicing* does not occur here in a context with every opportunity for it to do so had the word been in common use as a synonym for Scandinavian seamen in the English language (or its cognate in Old Norse) at that date. The enemy at Brunanburh and the enemy at Maldon were not identical, the Brunanburh forces being a much more heterogenous group. The Scandinavian component is designated as *flotan*, *scipflotan*, and *Norðmen*. It is, however, a force of some distinction since it was under the command of Óláfr (Anlaf) and in the course of it five young kings and seven of Óláf's *eorlas* were killed. This poet's avoidance of the word *wicing* therefore fits with the prose usage in the *Chronicle*, in which a *here* is not confusable with a band of *wicingas*. Whitelock's translation of *scipflotan* as 'pirates' is consequently misleading.

There is only one other Old English text where *wicing* is used with the same general sense as in *Maldon* and this is one of very closely comparable date, i.e. Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi*:

Ðeh þræla hwylc hlaforde æthleape 7 of cristendome to wicinge weorþe . . .[4]

The translation of *to wicinge weorþe* as 'to become a viking' is probably reasonable.[5] It must have the general sense of joining the Scandinavian forces and cannot mean 'taking to piracy'. It does, however, imply that there has been a semantic shift between the earlier usage and that of the late tenth century. The group of texts so far noted which date towards the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century are Ælfric's *Grammar* and *Glossary*, Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi* and *The Battle of Maldon*. The principle of the non-distribution map requires us to take into account other texts of a comparable date which we might have expected to use

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[1] 'Some aspects of the Maldon poet's artistry', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, lxxv (1976), 25–40.

[2] Amos, op. cit., p. 144.

[3] J. Harris, 'Brunanburh 12b–13a and some Skaldic passages' in Arthur Groos *et al.* (eds.), *Magister regis: Studies in Honour of Robert Earle Kaske* (Fordham UP, 1986).

[4] D. Whitelock (ed.), *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (rev. edn., London, 1963), p. 58.

[5] D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents* (2nd edn., London, 1979), p. 932.

the word *wicing*. The obvious choice here is Ælfric's *Life of St Edmund*.

In this group of texts *wicing* occurs nine times in all, once in Ælfric's *Grammar*, once in his *Glossary*, once in *Sermo Lupi*, and six times in *Maldon*. As noted earlier it also re-emerges in the glossing tradition of Aldhelm manuscripts in the eleventh century, where Ælfric's influence is clearly discernible. The total is small, and the disproportionate number in *Maldon* particularly noticeable. Against this small total we must look at what else the Anglo-Saxons were calling—not only a pirate, not only a Scandinavian, but specifically a Scandinavian pirate. So far we have noted that Ælfric considered *sceigðman*, *flotman*, and *wicing* to be equally possible as translations of *pirata*, and that in one annal of the *Chronicle* (917), as also in the tenth-century CC A. III glosses, *wicing* and *æscman* occur as synonyms.

Sceigðman, *flotman*, and *æscman* are all obviously compounds based on a noun for 'ship'. The only one of these that is unmistakably a loan-word is *sceigð* from Old Norse *skeið*. A *flotscip* has no pejorative or nationalistic overtones. *Æsc* though sometimes thought to be a loan-word from Old Norse *askr* cannot be so, since *æsc* glosses *cercilus* in the seventh-century Corpus-Épinal-Erfurt glossaries. It presumably moved in the later period to mean a different type of ship, one particularly associated with Scandinavians, as suggested by the 896 (897, CD) *Chronicle* annal, where Alfred orders *lang scipu* to be built against the *æscas*.[1]

It is always a problem for the philologist and the archaeologist to put together the surviving word and the excavated artefact and decide which word among a range of apparent synonyms was used of which object. In all the work that has been done on viking ships we are still not much nearer knowing which Skuldelev or Gokstad type qualified as a *skeið* or an *askr* or a *langskip*. But we have some evidence of what an Anglo-Saxon thought a *skeið* was. In the tenth-century CC A. III glosses based on Aldhelm his use of the difficult word *liburna* is glossed only by the easy Latin word *navis* or the apparently vague vernacular word *flotscip*. However, some readers of Aldhelm in the eleventh century took the passage:

another man surrounded by the naval companies of sailors and encircled by dense throngs of rowers driving his swift galley or skiff through the glassy waters of the ocean with the steersman urgently inciting them . . .

[1] Earle and Plummer, op. cit., p. 90.

to be appropriate enough to the Scandinavian seamen for them
to gloss *liburna* 'swift galley' as *sceigð*.[1]

The *sceigð* was also valuable enough to be specified in two wills.
In the last quarter of the tenth century one testator left a *sceigð*
to Ramsey Abbey and the Bishop of Crediton left to the king a
sceigð of sixty oars.[2] In the ship levy of 1008 each district of 310
hides was required to provide a *sceigð*.[3]

These uses of *sceigð* are helpful in establishing the connotations
of the compound *sceigðman*. When Ælfric uses it, it is a gloss on
pirata, which implies that he associated anyone who travelled in
a *sceigð* with piracy. But, if by 1008 a *sceigð* had been adopted as
a common noun for a particular kind of ship which was to be
constructed for use against the vikings rather than by them,
sceigðman did not, presumably, retain its piratical overtones for
any length of time. At the same time as Ælfric was using it to
translate *pirata* the Laws of Æðelræd were using it somewhat
differently.[4] In the treaty with the Danish army of 991 or 994
there is a formal agreement that English and Danes will link
forces to repel pirates. In most clauses of the treaty the two groups
are defined as English and Danish but, towards the end, the text
slips into different vocabulary. If anyone charges a *landesman* with
cattle-theft or homicide and the charge is brought by men from
both groups, i.e. a *landesman* and a *sceigðman*, the charge must
stand. (I note that Dorothy Whitelock translates *sceigðman* here
as 'viking', and I note also that Old English *wicing* never appears
as a legal term in any of the laws or treaties.)[5] The Latin text of
this particular treaty has its usual bother with the terminology
and settles for the Latinized forms *landmannus* and *sceigdmannus*.
But one can scarcely call the person with whom one is actually
making a treaty, and calling on as a legal witness, a 'pirate'. In
this context *sceigðman* must be intended as descriptive or even
ethnic. The gloss-list in MS Plantin-Moretus 47 + BL Add. 32246
has a section on ships where the glossator bypasses the oppor-
tunity to link the definition *sceigð* with 'a ship of pirates'. He

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[1] Translated by Michael Lapidge, op. cit., p. 60; Napier, op. cit., p. 2,
l. 28, and p. 149, l. 17; Goossens, op. cit., p. 155, l. 120.

[2] D. Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (Cambridge, 1930), p. 32. A. S. Napier
and W. H. Stevenson, *The Crawford Collection of Early Charters and Documents*
(Oxford, 1895), pp. 23–4.

[3] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: the text is corrupt in D. I have accepted Whitelock's
translation.

[4] Liebermann, op. cit., p. 224.

[5] Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 439.

could have used either *sceigð* or *æsc* to gloss *paro* 'pirates' ship' but in fact uses *sceapena scip*, reserving *sceigð* for *trieris* and *æsc* for *dromo*, making it quite clear that for him these words were descriptive of a ship-type not a ship defined by use or users.[1]

I take next the *æsc* group, i.e. the Old English words *æsc*, *æscman* and *æschere*. These have received more attention than *sceigð*, *sceigð-man*, because of the well-known passages in Adam of Bremen. Adam has three instances of Latinized *Ascomanni*, one of which he links explicitly with Latin *piratae* and Norse *víkingar*:

Ipsi vero pyratae quos illis Wichingos appellant nostri Ascomannos.[2]

That the vikings called themselves *wichingos* but not *askmenn* is borne out by the fact that *Askmaðr* occurs in Old Norse but only, apparently as a by-name, not as a common noun, and even then infrequently.[3] The total number of occurrences in Old English is small. *Æschere* occurs only in the *Battle of Maldon* unless we allow the name of Hroðgar's *runwita* and *rædbora* to be significant here. *Æscman* occurs once in the *Chronicle* in the 917 annal, and once in the tenth-century CC A. III glosses. *Æsc* as a word for a ship of

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[1] Kindschi, op. cit., pp. 229 ff.

[2] W. Trillmich and R. Buchner (eds.), *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum. Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrshunderts zur Geschichte der hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches* (Darmstadt, 1961), pp. 92, 93, and most explicitly p. 233. It is a matter of particular interest in this connection that when the Frisian sources refer to 'vikings' they tend to qualify the word by some such adjective as 'northern'. I am deeply grateful to both Professor Nils R. Arhammer and to Dr Rolf H. Bremmer for the very close attention they gave to my queries. The following quotations are from a personal communication by Dr Bremmer:

> 'It seems self-evident that *witsing* means "Viking" and it has always been translated so. It strikes me, however, that the adj. *nord-* and *northesk-* are sometimes preceding it, which seems to imply that the word needed further precision. If this is so, one could opt for a more general meaning "pirate". The "northern pirate" would then be the "Viking" '.

Witsing appears in a number of Frisian legal texts, all dated approximately 1100, and edited by W. J. Buma and W. Ebel in *Altfriesische Rechtsquellen* (Göttingen, 1967–77), vols. 3–6. The manuscripts, however, with many variant spellings, are late, and it is not clear that the word *witsing* remained comprehensible to all scribes. In the first Emsinger redaction of *The Superior Privileges* of approximately 1400 (Buma and Ebel, 3, p. 96) *fon northeska wigandum* 'northern warriors' occurs, where the later Fivelinger manuscript (Buma and Ebel, 5, p. 172) may preserve a 'correct' earlier reading, *fonta norda wising*, 'northern vikings'.

[3] I am particularly grateful to Gillian Fellows Jensen for checking the files of the Arnamagnæan Dictionary and confirming that (*a*) *askmaðr* occurs only as an appellative, and (*b*) *fljótamaðr* occurs only in the sense of 'fugitive', there being no Old Norse equivalent for either *flotman* or *sceigðman*.

the vikings as distinct from a gloss word for a ship-type occurs only in the *Chronicle*, twice in the annal for 896 (897, CD) and in Ælfric, who, interestingly, uses it in his *Life of St Edmund*, where he says that Hinguar and Hubba landed in Northumbria *mid æscum*. There is no close equivalent in Abbo's Latin.[1] Since Ælfric does not offer *æscman* as a gloss on *pirata*, but does offer *sceigðman*, it is possible that he thought of the *æsc* as an archaic or obsolete ship-type suitable for invaders in the 860s. The evidence is not sufficient to allow firm conclusions to be drawn, but the impression I gain is that *æsc* and *æscman* in Old English surfaced in the late ninth/early tenth century to be replaced as practical terminology at the end of the tenth century by *sceigð* and *sceigð-man*. It is also a possibility that we should take Adam of Bremen as our starting-point, and suggest that this use of *æsc* and its compounds in Old English, as well as the nickname *Askmaðr* in Old Norse, are the direct result of the nomenclature used in the Low Countries.

The *flotman* group is a more difficult one. Practically speaking there is no reason why *flotman* or related compounds should have pejorative overtones, and this is neatly demonstrated by glossed manuscripts of Aldhelm, where, as we have seen *flotman* may gloss *archipirata* but, within the same manuscript, may at another place gloss *nauta*.[2] Obviously a word that transparently means 'seaman' need carry no overtones either of Scandinavian nationality or of the occupation of piracy. Yet at the end of the tenth century both Ælfric and Wulfstan use it only of Scandinavians and only pejoratively. Ælfric not only uses it as a gloss on *pirata*, it is his regular word for the forces of Hinguar in his *Life of St Edmund*, and, even more pointedly, he uses it in his homily on the Maccabees where he distinguishes between four types of war—just, unjust, civil, and familial. *Iustum bellum* is

> rihtlic gefeoht wið ða reðan flotmen.[3]

Wulfstan similarly equates *flotmen* with Scandinavians:

7 Engle nu lange eal sigelease 7 to swyþe geyrigde þurh Godes yrre; 7 flotmen swa strange þurh Godes þafunge . . .[4]

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[1] W. W. Skeat (ed.), *Ælfric's Lives of Saints* (EETS, os, 94, 114, Oxford, 1890 and 1900, repr. 1966), p. 316; Michael Winterbottom (ed.), *Three Lives of English Saints* (Toronto, 1972), p. 72.

[2] Goossens, op. cit., p. 154, l. 115; Napier, op. cit., p. 1, l. 22, and p. 149, l. 14.

[3] *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, p. 114.

[4] *Sermo Lupi*, p. 59; cf. *sæmen*, p. 60.

and equally uses even the term *sæmen* without any explicit adjective.

Because we now call all Scandinavian invaders 'vikings' this has blurred for us the pattern of what the Anglo-Saxons called them. Ælfric, for example, may have offered *wicing* as a gloss on *pirata*, but he never uses the word once in his formidable amount of continuous prose, preferring as we have seen the term *flotman*. All four words, *wicing*, *æscman*, *sceigðman*, and *flotman*, turn up as personal names or appellatives, whether in charter-witness lists, in place-names, or as the names of pre-Conquest tenants in Domesday Book.[1] Place-name scholars always have difficulty in deciding when and whether any given occurrence represents a personal name, an appellative, or a common noun, and even if there are some instances that seem more easily determined than others, such uncertainty makes statistical survey virtually impossible. What is significant is that these four words do turn up in such contexts, and whereas we in modern English have narrowed our vocabulary to the one word 'viking', the Anglo-Saxons, as they became more intimate with Scandinavian invaders, pirates, or others, diversified their language. We need to recognize the separate semantic range of modern English 'viking' and Old English *wicing* and not allow ourselves to fall into such semantically naïve attitudes as:

(i) Vikings are Scandinavian invaders
(ii) *wicingas* = *piratae*
(iii) All Scandinavian invaders are pirates.[2]

Nineteenth-century scholars and poets introduced 'viking' into Modern English from Modern Scandinavian, with a range of

[1] I am deeply grateful to John Insley, to Gillian Fellows Jensen, and to Karl Inge Sandred for helping me with my queries on place-names. Dr Bremmer has drawn my attention to the survival of an Old Frisian cognate for *aescman* in the place-name Assendelft, north of Haarlem, in former Frisian territory, and in England *aescman* survives in Ashmanhaugh, Norfolk. On *flotman* the evidence has largely been collected by Jean Adigard des Gautries, *Les Noms de personnes Scandinnaves en Normandie* (Lund, 1954), pp. 97–8 and 392–3. He argues for an Anglo-Scandinavian personal name *Flótamaðr*, but Gillian Fellows Jensen in a personal communication tells me that she will, in a forthcoming paper in *Namn och Bygd*, suggest that the specific is more likely to be the Old English appellative *flotman*. See also s.v. *Skeidmann and *Víkingr* in Gillian Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire* (Copenhagen, 1968), and s.v. *Æscmann*, *Flotmann, *Skiótr, and *Vikingr* in Olaf von Feilitzen, *The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book* (Uppsala, 1937).
[2] *Beran mæg grimhelm se þe grimhelm bereð.*

romantic overtones derived from the sagas.[1] It is, I suppose, impossible to stop using it, and so long as we clear our minds of cant, it may not matter if we do. We merely need to recognize that in spite of the etymological link Modern English 'viking', Old Norse *víkingr*, and Old English *wicing* are different words. I doubt whether Ælfric would have spotted Old English *wicing* in Modern English dress, but if he had he would certainly have written a letter to *The Times* or the *Chronicle* about the sloppiness of twentieth-century usage.[2]

[1] See my forthcoming article on 'Modern English "viking" ' in *Leeds Studies in English* (1987).
[2] See letters to *The Times* 1980, 16 February, 20 February, and especially by John Dodgson, 1 March.