Uncovering the viking ‘Other’

An examination of the narrative discourse on vikings during the second half of the ninth century in the monastic community of Saint-Germain-des-Prés

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Summary

In the early medieval period, the narrative strategy of 'Othering' was used by Frankish authors in their portrayals of pagans. The Frankish narrative discourse that portrayed pagans and Christians as two demarcated uniform groups that were each other's binary opposites flourished during the ninth century. Hence, pagans such as the vikings of the North were described as malevolent, uncivilised, and aggressive. Christian authors describing pagans were not concerned with giving an accurate description of historical reality but functioned as a way to stimulate 'correct' Christian faith and define the parameters of Christian identity itself.

Numerous Frankish sources portrayed vikings in the ninth century. In previous research on the viking 'Other', there has not been much effort to confine the study of the viking 'Other' to a more limited historical and spatial scope. Since little attention has been paid to scrutinising the Carolingian portrayals of the vikings in specific primary sources, numerous details and narrative functions of the viking 'Other' in these texts are often overlooked. This research illuminates what the viking 'Other' specifically entailed according to three understudied Frankish works made during the ninth century by members of the monastic community of Saint-Germain-des-Prés: the *Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis* (ca. 850), the *De Miraculis sancti Germani* (ca. 875), and the *Bella Parisiacae Urbis* (885-896). Innovatively, this research used monster theory to study the viking 'Other', determining in each work the degree of monstrosity this 'Other', measured by the applicability of three theses of Jeffrey Cohen. Moreover, the socio-political contexts in which the three works have been written have been examined in order to determine whether they influenced the portrayals of the vikings. As such, the durability and development of this community's portrayal of the viking 'Other' have been studied. The research question central to this study was: how can the narrative discourse on vikings during the second half of the ninth century in the monastic community of Saint-Germain-des-Prés be explained?

As shown in this study, some aspects of the viking 'Other' remained stable while other aspects changed during the second half of the ninth century in the monastic community of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. In all three sources, the vikings functioned as a quintessential 'Other', whose actions were altered by the writers of Saint-Germain-des-Prés to suit the respective political purposes; the viking 'Other' was a narrative tool that was used as contemporary political propaganda. The viking 'Other' was a monster in each source, and in turn glorified the ruler that was able to repulse them from the realm. In the *Translatio* and *Miraculis*, Charles the Bald was the ruler that could repulse them, and in the *Bella*, it was Odo. Indeed, both rulers were in need of legitimisation during their rule, and the *Translatio* and *Miraculis* provided it for Charles, while the *Bella* provided it for Odo. Interestingly, however, the degree of monstrosity has declined in the *Miraculis*, and even more so in the *Bella*. This study argues that the lowered degree of monstrosity also reflects the contemporary socio-political context; during the course of the second half of the ninth century, Franks became acquainted with the vikings, and came to know that they were not always monstrous.

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Content

Introduction

> 'European culture was able to manage -and even produce- the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period'[1]

The process of 'Othering' or 'Orientalism' was first introduced by Edward Said in postcolonial studies, who discussed the way in which Europeans invented an 'Orient' or 'Other' to demarcate and give meaning to their own presumed 'superior' identity. Subsequently, the 'Other' came to embody everything that the Europeans were not. The European colonial domination heavily relied on the supposed superior identity of the colonisers; it functioned as a justification for the colonisers' violent and exploitative actions. By employing reductive and essentialist representations of the people, cultures, and places they encountered, the Europeans reduced all things non-Western to inferior compared to the 'superior' Western society, thereby realising and justifying the process of colonialism.[2]

In the early Middle Ages, the same narrative strategy of 'Othering' was utilised by Frankish authors in their portrayals of pagans. The Frankish narrative discourse that portrayed pagans and Christians as two demarcated uniform groups that were each other's binary opposites flourished during the ninth century.[3] Hence, pagans such as the vikings of the North were described as malevolent, uncivilised, and aggressive.[4] Although the boundary between Christians and pagans seems to have been ambiguous and easily permeable, the majority of Frankish sources maintain the crude Christian-pagan distinction.[5] James Palmer investigates the categorisation of the pagan 'Other', and concludes that Christian authors describing pagans were not concerned with giving an accurate description of historical reality, but functioned as a way to stimulate 'correct' Christian faith and define the parameters of Christian identity itself.[6] Moreover, 'Frankishness' itself was in constant need of re-evaluation, redefinition, and

[1] E. Said, *Orientalism* (Routledge 1978) 3.
[2] *Ibidem*, 1-28. For an excellent general overview of postcolonial theories building on Said's ideas, see: L. Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York 1998) 1-22.
[3] J. Palmer, 'Defining paganism in the Carolingian world', *Early Medieval Europe* 15 (2007) 402-425, here 403-410.
[4] In this study, the word 'viking' will be lowercased. I do not consider the word to be a cultural or ethnic marker, but an occupational one. Because of this, I will treat it as a common noun, without using a capital letter.
[5] I. Wood, 'The Pagans and the Other: Varying Presentations in the Early Middle Ages', *Networks and Neighbours* 1:1 (2013) 1-22, here 13-18; Palmer, 'Defining paganism', 410.
[6] J. Palmer, 'The Otherness of Non-Christians in the Early Middle Ages', *Studies in Church History* 51:1 (2015) 33-52, here 33, 36-37; Palmer, 'Defining paganism', 407.

reconfirmation, especially during the Carolingian political turmoil later in the ninth century, and the 'Other' could function to show who did and who did not belong to the 'Frankish kingdom' – or the *regnum Francorum.*[7]

Numerous Frankish sources referred to the viking invasions of the ninth century. As Simon Coupland has shown, the progress of viking activity in the Carolingian realm and Anglo-Saxon England can be divided in three distinct 'phases'.[8] The first phase of viking activity, from the first viking raids that occurred in the primary sources in the 790s until around 840, was characterised by small hit-and-run tactics along the coasts.[9] By using the speed of their longships, the vikings could easily plunder poorly protected places such as marketplaces and monasteries and leave them before any defensive action could be taken by the Franks and Anglo-Saxons.[10] From 841 to 875, the second phase, the viking raids started to increase in scope and number.[11] The – '*blitzkrieg* tactic'—to use Coupland's words—which was used in the first phase became gradually less popular in this period as the viking began to attack places further inland, travel farther away, and spend the winter in Francia and Anglo-Saxon rather than returning to Scandinavia.[12] Furthermore, the vikings became increasingly incorporated into the internal Carolingian political milieu; because of the increasing threat of the vikings, the Christian leaders started to form alliances and buy them off with wealth or land.[13] Finally, the third period, from 876 to 911, was characterised by the gradual permanent settling of vikings in the Frankish territories following more alliances between Christian rulers and the vikings.[14]

While it is true that the viking 'Other' has been studied before, it has only been done so either in studies with wide temporal scopes or in studies concerned with the pagan 'Other' in the early medieval period, in which the viking 'Other' only forms a part of the whole. These studies have indeed led to valuable general conclusions about the viking 'Other'. Simon Coupland has, for instance, shown that the Carolingian clerics described the raids in religious terms and set them within a religious framework; the vikings were often portrayed as a divine

[7] H.-W. Goetz, 'Gens, Kings and Kingdoms: The Franks', in H.-W. Goetz, J. Jarnut and W. Pohl eds., *Regna et Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World* (Leiden 2003) 307-344.
[8] S. Coupland, 'The Vikings in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England to 911' in: R. McKitterick ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History, vol. II* (Cambridge 1995) 190-201.
[9] *Ibidem*, 190. This division in phases focuses on the period of 793 until 1066 (the so-called 'Viking-Age'), and therefore does not include the few Merovingian accounts of Scandinavian raids. See: C. Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs: The Conceptual Development of Vikings Activity across the Frankish Realm (c.750-940)* (London 2020) V1.1.
[10] Coupland, 'The Vikings in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England', 190.
[11] *Ibidem*, 193
[12] *Ibidem*, 193-197.
[13] *Ibidem*, 197-199.
[14] *Ibidem*, 199-201.

punishment for the sins of the Franks in fulfilment of biblical prophecy.[15] Moreover, it has been noted that the vikings were often characterised as the pagan enemies of Christianity, as well as an extremely violent and destructive force; both of these characterisations often went hand in hand. In short, the viking 'Other' in the Carolingian sources is mainly characterised by its cruelty, wickedness, and paganism, who mainly expressed this through the use of violence.

Even though these overarching and generalising studies about the viking 'Other' have proven useful, there has not been much effort to confine the study of the viking 'Other' to a more limited historical and spatial scope. Since little attention has been paid to scrutinising the Carolingian portrayals of the viking 'Other' in specific primary sources, numerous details and narrative functions of the viking 'Other' in these texts are often overlooked. This research, then, will illuminate what the viking 'Other' specifically seems to entail according to three understudied Frankish works made during the ninth century by members of the monastic community of Saint-Germain-des-Prés: the *Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis* (ca. 850), the *De Miraculis sancti Germani* (ca. 875), and the *Bella Parisiacae Urbis* (885-896). By close-reading these Frankish works, I aim to study the development or durability of this community's discourse on the vikings: did perceptions remain stable, or did they change over time as contexts changed? Or was there perhaps room for a plurality of perceptions? The research question is: how can the narrative discourse on vikings during the second half of the ninth century in the monastic community of Saint-Germain-des-Prés be explained? As such, this research will test whether the conception of the vikings remained stable during the ninth century in this monastic community or was altered to conform to new socio-political contexts.

Not surprisingly, the first subquestion of this study is: what does the viking 'Other' entail in each of the three works? As this study will also use monster theory to examine the viking 'Other', which will be elaborated on in the next section, the second question is: how 'monstrous' was the viking 'Other' in each of the three works? The third and last subquestion is: in what socio-political context was each of the three works written? The importance of this last subquestion will be explained in the last section of this introduction.

Monster theory

Monster theory is a fairly new theory that was developed only in 1996, when Jeffrey Cohen wrote seven theses in the introduction to *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* in an attempt to create a basis for using monsters as a means to 'read'—e.g. comprehend and interpret—

[15] S. Coupland, 'The Rod of God's Wrath or the People of God's Wrath ? The Carolingian Theology of the Viking Invasions', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42:4 (1991) 535-554, here 535.

cultures.[16] He argues first and foremost that the monster is always a 'cultural body', an embodiment of the fears of a society or culture. As such, a monster can function as a window into the preoccupations of the culture that created it (Thesis I). Moreover, Cohen asserts that the monster always escapes; it is never caught or fully understood, only to return again later (Thesis II). They also function as 'harbingers of category crisis'; they refuse any type of categorisation, thereby challenging the rationality of the categorisations themselves (Thesis III). Specifically important for this study, Cohen notes the monster 'dwells at the gates of difference', meaning the monster can be seen as the ultimate 'Other'; the monster differs from the culture that created it culturally, politically, racially, and sexually (Thesis IV). The monster even stands as a warning against exploring the uncertain, thereby 'policing the borders of the possible'; it lurks beyond the limits of the known world and harms those who dare to cross these limits. (Thesis V). However, the fear of the uncertain and unfamiliar, Cohen argues, also causes a kind of desire, as it represents freedom from restraint and the possibility of exploration (Thesis VI). Finally, the monster 'stands at the threshold of becoming', pertaining to the self-knowledge the monster bears; the monsters require us to re-evaluate our cultural assumptions. They ask why we have created them. (Thesis VII).[17]

Cohen's theses have been regarded as 'a manifesto' as well as the 'inauguration' of monster theory.[18] However, as Asa Mittman and Marcus Hensel rightfully stressed recently, Cohen stood 'on the shoulders of giants' when sketching this theory, drawing from post-structuralism as well as other authors who studied monsters before.[19] Already in 1936, Tolkien wrote ''Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics'', in which he argues that Beowulf should be regarded as a work of art, regardless of whether it is a useful historical source or not. Viewing it as such, he examined the literary meaning of the monsters featured in the poem.[20] After Tolkien, multiple other authors published works about monsters, such as Rudolf Wittkower, Mikhail Bakhtin, Georges Canguilhem, and Michel Foucault.[21] Another author who is

[16] J. Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)' in: J. Cohen ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis 1996) 3-25.
[17] *Ibidem*.
[18] A. Mittman, 'Introduction: The Impact of Monsters and Monster studies' in: A. Mittman and Peter Dendle eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous* (Routledge 2016) 2; A. Mittman and M. Hensel, 'Introduction: ''A Marvel of Monsters''' in: A. Mittman and M. Hensel eds., *Classic Readings on Monster Theory Demonstrare Vol. 1* (Leeds 2018) ix-xv, here xii.
[19] Mittman and Hensel, 'Introduction', x-xii.
[20] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics', *The Proceedings of the British Academy 22* (1936) 245-295; Mittman and Hensel, 'Introduction', xi.
[21] R. Wittkower, 'Marvels of the East: A Study in the Historicism of Monsters', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 5 (1942) 159-97; M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, transl. H. Iswolsky (Bloomington 1984); G. Canguilhem, 'Monstrosity and the Monstrous', *Diogenes* 40 (1962) 27-42; M. Foucault, *Abnormal*, transl. G. Burchell (New York 2004); Mittman and Hensel, 'Introduction', xi.

particularly important to highlight for this study is John Friedman, who published *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* in 1981.[22] In it he studies the portrayals of monstrous peoples from ancient times until the early modern period, identifying imagined cultural differences that are used to 'Other' monsters, such as their diet, speech, clothes, weapons, customs, and social organisation.[23] In his 1990 book *The Philosophy of Horror*, Noël Carroll scrutinises not the apparel and actions of the monsters themselves but rather the way in which characters interact with monsters in stories, concluding that the perceivable qualities of the monster are not what make the monster 'monstrous': the responses of the characters to the monsters do this.[24] As Carroll says, sometimes monsters are not monstrous:

> 'A creature like Chewbacca in the space opera Star Wars is just one of the guys, though a creature made up in the same wolf outfit, in a film like The Howling, would be regarded with utter revulsion by the humans in that film. In examples of horror, it would appear that the monster is an extraordinary character in our ordinary world, whereas in fairy tales and the like the monster is an ordinary character in an extraordinary world.'[25]

Moreover, Carroll, like Cohen in Thesis III, stresses that monsters cannot be classified in standard categories, and therefore have the potential to challenge and break down conceptual schemes of a culture: 'They do not fit the scheme; they violate it. Thus, monsters are not only physically threatening; they are cognitively threatening. They are threats to common knowledge.'[26] Their potential to disrupt established categories was further underlined by Michael Camille in 1996, who dismantles the concept of 'the canon' using monsters, as they challenge the categories of existing canons.[27]

Although Cohen had a profound foundation of studies to build upon, his work for the first time described a cohesive theory of conjoined disparate ideas that transcends historical boundaries.[28] According to Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills, the theses provide a framework that can be utilised to study monsters of any period, including the Middle Ages.[29] Rebecca

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[22] J. Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge 1981).
[23] Friedman, *The Monstrous Races*, 26-36; Mittman and Hensel, 'Introduction', xi.
[24] Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 12-58.
[25] Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 16.
[26] *Ibidem*, 34.
[27] M. Camille, 'Rethinking the Canon: Prophets, Canons, and Promising Monsters.' *Art Bulletin* 78:2 (1996) 198–201.
[28] R. Merckelbach, *Monsters in Society: Alterity, Transgression, and the Use of the Past in Medieval Iceland* (Boston 2019) 10; Mittman and Hensel, 'Introduction', xii.
[29] B. Bildhauer and R. Mills, *The Monstrous Middle Ages* (Toronto 2003) 220.

Merkelbach agrees, saying that '(…) due to the monsters' transhistorical nature and the resonances of modern preoccupations with them, they enable us to find a way into the medieval (…).'[30] As such, Cohen's theses have been an invaluable theoretical foundation to study medieval cultures and societies, resulting in numerous fascinating studies.[31]

Similarly this study will rely on Cohen's framework, using several of his insights as a theoretical foundation to explore whether the authors of the selected works portrayed the vikings as being 'monstrous'. Both Paul Store and Rebecca Merkelbach have recently conducted research in which they only partially utilised Cohen's theses.[32] Paul Store mainly uses theses II, III, and IV as a basis for his study of late-medieval portrayals of vikings by English chroniclers.[33] Rebecca Merkelbach, in her study on monsters in the Icelandic sagas, highlights Cohen's own statement that his monster theory is a 'set of breakable postulates', and breaks down the theses, using its ideas along with other recent works on monsters to construe her own theory, which she calls 'social monstrosity'.[34]

Before formulating what 'social monstrosity' entails, Rebecca Merkelbach, building on the works of other scholars, describes the idea of a 'spectrum of monstrosity', which is essential to her reading of the monstrous, as it will be to this study.[35] It means that monstrosity is not something fixed, but rather operates in a spectrum of fluid continuity. As such, 'degrees of monstrosity' exist; some creatures can be more 'monstrous' than others.[36] In the words of Merkelbach: '(…) it is important to realise that not all monsters are created equal: while they haunt the cultures that created them, they do not do so in the same way, or to the same extent, (…)'.[37]

The theory of social monstrosity relies heavily on previous scholarship on monsters and, more specifically, on what can be defined as a 'monster'.[38] The majority of scholars agree there is not one definition of 'monster', specifically because monsters defy any kind of categorisation,

[30] Merckelbach, *Monsters in Society,* 6, 10.
[31] For instance, see: Merckelbach, *Monsters in Society*; P. Store, 'Viking 'otherness'' in Anglo-Saxon chronicles' PhD Diss. (Winchester 2018); Bildhauer and Mills, *The Monstrous Middle Ages*; K. Olsen and L. Houwen eds., *Monsters and the Monstrous in Medieval Northwest Europe* (Amsterdam 2001).
[32] Store, 'Viking 'otherness''; Merckelbach, *Monsters in Society*.
[33] Store, 'Viking 'otherness'', 77-78.
[34] Merckelbach, *Monsters in Society*, 13-20; Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', 4.
[35] Merckelbach, *Monsters in Society*, 14-16.
[36] *Ibidem*.
[37] *Ibidem*, 15.
[38] B. Bildhauer and R. Mills, 'Introduction: Conceptualising the Monstrous' in: B. Bildhauer and R. Mills eds., *The Monstrous Middle Ages* (Toronto 2003) 1-27; Mittman, 'Introduction: The Impact of Monsters', 7-8; Y. Musharbash, 'Introduction: Monsters, Anthropology, and Monster Studies' in: Y. Musharbash and G. Presterudstuen eds., *Monster Anthropology in Australasia and Beyond* (London 2014) 1-24, here 3-5; Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', 4.

as Cohen remarked in his third thesis.[39] Merkelbach summarises it strikingly:

> 'Nowadays, the term is often not clearly defined, referring indiscriminately and sometimes simultaneously to a variety of figures that range from its original application, to creatures of huge size or deformed exterior, extraordinary or unnatural beings or occurrences, to people that appear inhuman because of their actions.'[40]

The above introduces the discussion as to whether a monster should be defined on the basis of their physicality or on the basis of their actions. Traditionally, scholars of monstrosity have primarily focused on the physical deformities of monsters, considering often 'monstrousness is marked through monstrous bodies'.[41] Such studies specifically examining monstrous bodies are still being conducted.[42] However, in the aforementioned *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, John Friedman argued that monstrosity in ancient Greece and Rome was not entirely based on the identification of physical deformities, but also on the perception of ethical and cultural ones.[43] Following up on this, Robert and Karin Olson conclude that '(…) the notion of what constitutes a monster involved more than just physical appearance ('physical monstrosity'); instead, physical differences were also associated with aberrant ethical behaviour ('moral monstrosity') and exotic ethnical customs.'[44] Rebecca Merkelbach similarly argues that '(…) one needs to consider more than just the corporeality of the monster and its often composite nature. One needs to study the monster's behaviour, how it acts within and interacts with society, what effect it has on the people who encounter it.'[45]

Social monstrosity, then, is closely related to moral monstrosity, in that both are concerned with the ethics and behaviour of the monster rather than its corporeality. Both pertain to the transgression of social boundaries or norms of a society by the actions of creatures; the social and ethical transgressions of a creature is what makes it 'monstrous'.[46] Social monstrosity, however, is specifically concerned with the interactions of a creature with a society

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[39] Merckelbach, *Monsters in Society*, 6.
[40] *Ibidem*.
[41] Musharbash, 'Introduction', here 11; Merckelbach, *Monsters in Society*, 15.
[42] For example, see: A. Wright, *Monstrosity: The Human Monster in Visual culture* (London 2013); M. Shildrick, *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (London 2002).
[43] Friedman, *The Monstrous Races*, 26-36; R. Olsen and K. Olsen, 'Introduction: On the Embodiment of Monstrosity in Northwest Medieval Europe' in: K. Olsen and L. Houwen eds., *Monsters and the Monstrous in Medieval Northwest Europe* (Amsterdam 2001) 1-22, here 7-8.
[44] Olsen and Olsen, 'Introduction', 8.
[45] Merckelbach, *Monsters in Society*, 15-16.
[46] *Ibidem*, 16-19.

and its actions within that society.[47] In other words, a social monster – physically present – interacts with the society, whereas a moral monster does not necessarily have to; a moral monster can exist at the edges of the world, completely cut off physically from the society. Social monstrosity therefore seems to be a subcategory of 'moral monstrosity', specifically concerned with socially and ethically transgressive creatures that interact with a society in person.[48]

If we return to Cohen's theses, and specifically the fourth one, in which Cohen argues that monsters 'dwell at the gate of difference', it becomes apparent that 'moral monstrosity' is already encompassed by this thesis. As Cohen notes in this fourth thesis, 'any kind of alterity can be inscribed across (constructed through) the monstrous body (…)', and aberrant ethics and social norms definitely constitute such a kind of alterity.[49] In short, 'moral monsters', by transgressing ethical and social norms, also 'dwell at the gates of difference', and therefore are also 'monsters' according to Cohen's literary theory.

By utilising three of Cohen's theses, namely thesis III, IV, and V (respectively, 'the monster is the harbinger of category crisis', 'the monster dwells at the gates of difference', and 'the monster polices the borders of the possible'), this study will evaluate whether the authors of the selected works portrayed the vikings as 'monsters'. The applicability of the three theses to the descriptions of the vikings in the works will determine their degree of monstrosity. When establishing to what extent the vikings 'dwelled at the gates of difference', this study will examine – alongside other kinds of alterity – the aberrant ethics of the vikings.[50] This form of alterity was primarily based on their cruelty, wickedness, and paganism, and was mainly expressed through their violence.[51] In short, this study will illuminate what degree of monstrosity has been applied to the viking 'Other' in all three sources.

Vikings and stereotypes

Nowadays, the word 'viking' evokes numerous images in people's minds. Anders Winroth summarises the modern fascination with vikings:

[47] Merckelbach, *Monsters in Society*, 18-19.
[48] *Ibidem*, 16-20, 34.
[49] Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', 7. Note that with 'the monstrous body' Cohen does not refer to the literal corporeality of the monster, but to the figure or 'body' in in a work that fulfils the literary role of the 'monster'. See: Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', 7-12.
[50] From here on out, I will refrain from using the term 'moral monstrosity' or 'social monstrosity', as this could lead to confusion about what in this study is considered a 'monster'; in this study, the applicability of the three theses of Cohen is what makes a creature 'monstrous'. Another kind of alterity of the vikings that will be examined – though less extensively – is their cultural alterity (e.g. their clothes, weapons, residences).
[51] Store, 'Viking 'otherness', 83.

> ‘Ferocious barbarians in horned helmets with gleaming swords and sharp axes, descending on Lindisfarne, Hamburg, Paris, Seville, Nantes—almost everywhere—to slaughter, raid, rape and generally wreak destruction, toppling kingdoms and laying waste to Europe (...). We picture them killing and maiming without regard for age, gender or status in society. We imagine them as super-masculine heroes, practitioners of frenzied violence for its own sake, devotees of strange pagan religions that required bloody sacrifices necessitating horrendous torture. (…) we can scarcely help admiring the strength, courage, and virility of the Vikings.’[52]

Yet, as Winroth asks, ‘(…) do we truly know Vikings? Do we genuinely know who they were, what they did, and what they stood for?’[53] Apart from a few aspects of vikings captured in the modern cultural imagination, the answer to this question is negative; most of our conceptions are skewed, hyperbolic or simply invented.[54]

The majority of modern misconceptions concerning vikings have their origins in the Victorian era.[55] Andrew Wawn states that ‘In many ways, the Victorians invented the Vikings.’[56] Janet Nelson agrees, saying ‘That is when their history begins.’[57] The word *vikingr* was first recorded in modern English in a historical compendium that was published in 1807, and by 1837, only some scholarly subjects of Victoria were acquainted with the Anglo-Saxon texts in which the term had been recorded.[58] Over the course of the nineteenth-century, the term ‘viking’ was popularised, to be found on dozens of title pages.[59] The vikings’ role as ‘Others’ became increasingly important for the construction of the national histories of not only England, but also other European countries, and the vikings were imbued with stereotypes, some of which persist to this day.[60] To give one of many examples, the iconic ‘viking’ horned helmets, ‘a picture that has held us for over a century’,[61] never really existed; it was first used as an attribute of the vikings in Wagner’s Der *Ring des Nibelungen* in 1867 and was quickly accepted as an

[52] A. Winroth, *The Age of the Vikings* (Princeton 2014) 8.
[53] Winroth, *The Age of the Vikings*, 9.
[54] *Ibidem*.
[55] A. Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge 2000).
[56] *Ibidem*, 3.
[57] J. Nelson, ‘England and the Continent in the ninth century: II, The Vikings and Others’, *Transactions of the RHS 13* (2003) 1-28, 28.
[58] Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians*, 3; Nelson, ‘England and the Continent’, 2.
[59] Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians*, 3-4.
[60] Nelson, ‘England and the Continent’, 28.
[61] R. Frank, ‘The Invention of the Viking Horned Helmet’ in: M. Dallapiazza ed., *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber* (Trieste 2000) 199-208, here 199.

historical truth in the decades to follow.[62] In the 1950's, the stereotype was still very much alive in primary school books,[63] and even though the horned helmets are often removed from portrayals of vikings nowadays, the stereotype still lingers in modern cultural imagination.[64]

Numerous primary features associated with vikings stem from the Middle Ages itself, as was touched upon earlier. Christian monks and clerics monopolised early medieval literacy, and understandably, as they were the victims of the attacks, they portrayed the vikings in an extremely negative fashion, arguably even monstrously, as will be explored in this study.[65] Hence, the vikings gained an unfavourable reputation as 'a most vile people' and a 'filthy race', a reputation that resounded uncountable times throughout later history.[66] The late medieval period also saw the emergence of new myths concerning the vikings, primarily found in old Norse literature, most prominently in the Icelandic sagas. Adopting the negative image of the vikings from contemporary writers, the saga writers vividly retold stories of the vikings.[67] In doing so, the late medieval authors used skaldic poetry that was hard to interpret, which led to numerous fabrications to embellish the stories. For example, the 'blood-eagle', a supposed elaborate and bloody execution method that involved breaking the ribs of the victim and the withdrawal of the lungs from the chest cavity, originates from a misinterpretation of a kenning used to describe someone being killed on the battlefield.[68] Similarly, 'berserks', fantastic elite viking warriors, stem from a misinterpretation of old poetry in the late medieval period.[69]

Well into the twentieth century, numerous of the discussed misconceptions were widespread in academic circles as well, as a rather uncritical approach to the primary sources was employed to study vikings. Scholars had the tendency to accept the content of primary sources as historical facts.[70] A breakthrough in modern viking historiography occurred during the 1960's, when authors like Peter Sawyer and Albert d'Haenens started to plead for a more nuanced view of the overall destructiveness of the vikings, arguing that the Christian sources

[62] Frank, 'The Invention', 199.
[63] Nelson, 'England and the Continent', 4.
[64] To name some examples: the logo of the Minnesota Vikings, a NFL team, or the Dutch children's series 'Wickie de Viking'.
[65] Winroth, *The Age of the Vikings*, 12; Palmer, 'Defining paganism', 403-410.
[66] R. Page, *''A Most Vile People?'': Early English Historians on the Vikings* (London 1987).
[67] Winroth, *The Age of the Vikings*, 34-35.
[68] *Ibidem*. Recently an anatomical study has shown that if the elaborate execution method, as described in the sagas, would be performed, the victim would die in the early proceedings of it. See: L. Murphy, H. Fuller, P. Willan and M. Gates, 'An Anatomy of the Blood Eagle: The Practicalities of Viking Torture', *Speculum 97:1* (2022) 1-39.
[69] *Ibidem*, 34-39. Apart from the Old Norse sagas, berserkers also occur in Old Irish and Anglo-Saxon literature. See: A. Van Zanten, 'Going Berserk: in Old Norse, Old Irish and Anglo-Saxon Literature', *Amsterdamer Beiträge Zur Älteren Germanistik* 63 (2007) 43-64.
[70] See for instance: W. Vogel, *Die Normannen und das fränkische Reich bis zur Gründung der Normandie (799–911)* (Heidelberg 1906). See also: P. Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings* (London 1971) 8-11.

heavily demonised the vikings.[71] As such, Sawyer wrote in 1962 that the viking raids can be seen as 'an extension of normal Dark Age activity'.[72] Archaeologists in particular sided with the revisionists, as most of their finds proved the existence of settlement and trade, but rarely showed any real signs of violence.[73] Simon Coupland pointed out a comment by a Swedish archaeologist that illustrates this nicely:

> 'The foremost task of the fleets of armed traders was not to raid and to plunder. It was the very opposite. Their task was to establish and maintain the peaceful exchange of trade. It was the era of the peaceful Viking. That they came to bloody blows now and again is scarcely to be wondered at. Such things still happen today.'[74]

However, some historians challenged the revisionist approach, such as J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, who argued that vikings are described by the revisionists as 'little more than groups of long-haired tourists who occasionally roughed up the natives'.[75] Following this, the challengers of the revisionist approach argued that the contemporary authors nuanced the destructiveness of the vikings rather than exaggerating it. In recent decades, as historians started to study the societal and political influences of vikings rather than their individual attacks, a more balanced view emerged; the truth seems to be somewhere between the two extremes.[76]

The majority of these authors, however, use contemporary texts, despite their troublesome nature, as sources of information on 'the vikings'; the texts are auxiliary to their studies rather than the objects of their study. Contrarily, this study will focus on the contemporary texts, and will not attempt to illuminate 'what vikings were like' but only on how they were portrayed. As such, this study will examine the Carolingian descriptions of the vikings, without assessing if, and if so to what degree, these were based on historical reality.[77] In doing so, however, I do not argue that the portrayals are in no way related to historical reality.

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[71] Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, 28–32; A. d'Haenens, *Les invasions normandes, une catastrophe?* (Paris 1970) 95–106; C. Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs: The Conceptual Development of Viking Activity across the Frankish Realm (c.750-940)* (Routledge 2020) I.1.

[72] Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, 203. 'Dark Age' has been regarded as a pejorative term in itself. As such, scholars have stopped using the term to refer to the early medieval period. See: J. Blair, S. Rippon and C. Smart, *Planning in the Early Medieval Landscape* (Liverpool 2020).

[73] S. Coupland, 'The Vikings on the Continent in Myth and History', *History* 88:2 (2003) 187.

[74] W. Holmqvist, *Swedish Vikings on Helgö and Birka* (Stockholm, 1979) 70; Coupland, 'The Vikings on the Continent', 187.

[75] J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Vikings in Francia* (Reading 1975) 5.

[76] Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs*, I.1; Coupland, 'The Vikings on the Continent', 187.

[77] A similar approach to the Saxons is used by Robert Flierman in his study on the Saxons: R. Flierman, *Saxon Identities, AD 150-900* (London 2017) esp. 1-23.

First of all, as has been said before, the process of 'Othering' the vikings and pagans in general mainly functioned as a way to define the parameters of Carolingian identity itself, meaning that these portrayals can be used to decipher what was believed to be 'Carolingian' and 'Christian', and in turn what 'paganism' entailed. Secondly, as Gabrielle Spiegel has shown, medieval texts are 'products of the social worlds of authors', but the texts also 'defined, contested and transformed their social surroundings'.[78] As such, textual representations of vikings were impacted by and had an impact on historical reality. In short, the Carolingian socio-political context influenced the representations of vikings, and in turn, these representations could in a way influence the socio-political context.

Acknowledging these connections between the portrayals of vikings and historical reality, this study will not only attempt to illuminate *how* the vikings were portrayed in the three selected sources but also in what way the socio-political context influenced these portrayals. In order to do this effectively, a thorough examination of the respective socio-political context of each individual source will be necessary, as well as the personal deliberations and agendas of the respective author. The following three chapters will each start with such an examination.

[78] G. Spiegel, 'History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages', *Speculum* 65:1 (1990) 59-86, here 77.

Chapter 1: *Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis*

This chapter will analyse the viking 'Other' in the *Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis* and determine to what extent it is a monster by applying the three selected theses of Cohen.[79] As explained in the introduction, first the historical context in which the *Translatio* was written will be elaborated on. Secondly, more information will be given on the *Translatio*, before analysing the viking 'Other' itself. The degree to which the contemporary socio-political context influenced the portrayals of the vikings will also be explored.

Historical context

In 840, the Carolingian realm was inherited by more than one royal son.[80] By 839, Louis the Pious had promulgated no fewer than five different imperial division plans after the original one, the *Ordinatio Imperii*, which he had already made in 817.[81] When Louis the Pious died in 840 at Ingelheim, these plans opened the way to conflict between his three sons: Lothar, Louis the German, and Charles the Bald.[82]

As the 839 succession-plan was too contentious and recent to provide a guide for action after Louis the Pious's death, each of the sons used different division plans of Louis the Pious to claim their portion of the inheritance and justify their use of violence to acquire and maintain it.[83] Lothar returned from Italy and took up arms against his other two brothers, abrogating the 839 agreement and reasserting his claims to the Frankish heartlands based on the *Ordinatio Imperii* of 817, which gave him a superior status.[84] When the majority of Louis the Pious's entourage and Frankish elite committed their support to Lothar, he decided to claim the whole empire instead.[85] In 841, Louis the German, as his interests proved more closely aligned with Charles's after the death of Louis the Pious, joined the army of Charles the Bald for a decisive battle against Lothar. On his turn, Lothar was joined by Pippin II, a cousin of the three brothers who was able to take advantage of the chaos and was able to gain influence in parts of

[79] From here on out, '*Translatio'* will be used as an abbreviation of *Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis*.
[80] M. Costambeys, M. Innes and S. MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge 2011) 382.
[81] Costambeys, *The Carolingian World*, 382; M. De Jong, *The penitential state: Authority and atonement in the age of Louis the Pious*, 814-840 (Cambridge 2009) 25-27.
[82] Costambeys, *The Carolingian World*, 382. For a detailed overview of Louis the Pious's reign, see: De Jong, *The penitential state*, esp. 14-52 and C. M. Booker, *Past Convictions: The Penance of Louis the Pious and the Decline of the Carolingians* (Philadelphia 2009). For an excellent overview of Louis the German's life, see: E. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict under Louis the German, 817–876* (Ithaca 2006).
[83] J. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London 1992) 105; Costambeys, *The Carolingian World*, 382.
[84] R. McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987* (London 1995) 172; Costambeys, *The Carolingian World*, 382.
[85] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 105.

Aquitaine.[86] The resulting battle of Fontenoy resulted in victory for Charles the Bald and Louis the German, but did not result in the death of one of the royal contenders, which would have simplified matters.[87] Nevertheless, this victory allowed the two younger brothers to force permanent concessions out of Lothar; the Treaty of Verdun in 843, a trade-off between the interests of the three brothers and their following, divided the realm in three autonomous kingdoms, and proved to be one of the most successful settlements during the entirety of the Carolingian era.[88] Louis was to rule all territories east of the Rhine as well as the districts of Worms, Mainz, and Speyer; Lothar would oversee an area that extended from the Low Countries to Italy; and Charles the Bald received the western kingdom, which included Aquitaine and Neustria.[89] This is not to say that the Treaty of Verdun was a permanent settlement, and the brothers certainly did not believe it to be. It did, however, offer a widely accepted structure within which the brothers continued to manoeuvre, clash, and occasionally even work together in the years to follow.[90]

Indeed, in the years after the treaty, all three brothers worked hard to consolidate their rule in their allotted *regna*.[91] Charles was many years younger than his brothers and virtually a stranger in the territories he gained after Verdun.[92] In Aquitaine, Pippin II, who fought alongside Lothar at Fontenoy, continued to oppose Charles's rule through regional rebellion, fuelled by the support of Lothar, who apparently had not given up on his wish to acquire superiority over his brothers.[93] In 844, Charles set out to quelch this rebellion, but his army was ambushed and defeated by Pippin's army at Angoumois, forcing Charles to come to terms with Pippin. The following year, Charles met with Pippin at the abbey of Fleury (St. Benoît-sur-Loire), and granted Pippin lordship over nearly the whole of Aquitaine.[94] It did not take long for Pippin to profile himself as *rex Aquitaniorum* on his own coins and charters.[95] Similarly, Breton leader Nominoë, also backed by Lothar, was able to obtain the title of *dux* in 846 after continued aggression.[96] The hostilities between Lothar and Charles heightened in 846, as

[86] Costambeys, *The Carolingian World*, 382; Nelson, *Charles the Bald,* 106.
[87] Costambeys, *The Carolingian World*, 381.
[88] *Ibidem,* 381, 388; J. Nelson, 'The Frankish Kingdoms, 814-898: The West' in: R. McKitterick ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History Vol II: c.700-900* (Cambridge 1995) 110-141, here 121.
[89] McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms,* 172-173; Nelson, 'The Frankish Kingdoms', 121; Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs*, III.1.1.
[90] Nelson, *Charles the Bald,* 132-133.
[91] Costambeys, *The Carolingian World,* 391. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire,* 119-146.
[92] McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms*, 173-174; Nelson, *Charles the Bald,* 135.
[93] Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs*, III.1.1; Costambeys, *The Carolingian World,* 390-391.
[94] Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs*, III.1.1.
[95] *Ibidem*; Nelson, 'The Frankish Kingdoms', 124.
[96] Nelson, *Charles the Bald,* 147.

Giselbert, a vassal of Charles, married the daughter of Lothar. Because this marriage worried both Lothar and Charles, as it could result in even more Carolingian contenders to the throne, they met at Meerssen in February 847 to resolve the matter, with Louis as the conciliator.[97] The Meerssen agreement that ensued was an attempt to make the Treaty of Verdun permanent, but once again it was in vain; hostilities fuelled by the support of Lothar continued in Charles's realm.[98]

The vikings complicated matters even further for Charles in Neustria after the Treaty of Verdun; their attacks steadily escalated in these years of struggle.[99] In doing so, the vikings took advantage of the continuous political turmoil in Charles's realm, which in turn limited their ability to resist invaders.[100] Already from 834-838, viking raids on Quentovic occurred annually, Rouen was sacked in 841 by the viking leader Oskar, and Nantes was attacked in 843.[101] In 845, a viking fleet under the leadership of Ragnar attacked Rouen and Paris.[102] The only detailed source for this event is the *Translatio*, which will be elaborated on further later.[103]

Nevertheless, the presence of the vikings in the territories of Charles the Bald's enemies in turn spelled good news for him. Sometimes it offered Charles some breathing space and the opportunity to lay his focus elsewhere in his vast realm; in 847, for instance, Nominoë was preoccupied with viking incursions in his realm, and therefore the Bretons did not attack Neustria that year.[104] Furthermore, it helped to realise the aspiration of Charles to reclaim Aquitaine and rid it of the influence of Pippin II entirely; Pippin was unable to defend his realm effectively against the vikings, and Aquitanian nobles and clergy previously supporting him turned to Charles instead in 848, as Charles, at Pippin's expense, was able to defeat the vikings in Bordeaux earlier that year.[105] Pippin was not only seen as 'inactive and incompetent' in his response to the vikings, but also had to deal with his new enemies at the Spanish frontier, who were allied with Charles.[106] Consequently, Pippin's support collapsed; he was deprived of his authority. Charles, on the other hand, showed his royal credentials to the Aquitanians by defeating the vikings, and was consecrated in the same year as *rex Aquitaniorum*.[107] The last

[97] *Ibidem*, 148-149; Costambeys, *The Carolingian World*, 390-391
[98] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 149-150; Costambeys, *The Carolingian World*, 390-391.
[99] Costambeys, *The Carolingian World*, 390-391; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 137, 151-153.
[100] *Ibidem*.
[101] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 137.
[102] S. Coupland, 'Charles the Bald and the Defence of the West Frankish Kingdom against the Viking Invasions 840-877' PhD Diss. (Cambridge 1987) 20; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 151-154.
[103] *Ibidem*.
[104] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 154.
[105] *Ibidem*; McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms*, 174; Costambeys, *The Carolingian World*, 390-391.
[106] Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs*, III.1.1; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 150-151.
[107] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 154-155.

supporters of Pippin were mopped up the next year and Pippin was eventually tonsured in 852.[108]

After 848, things looked somewhat brighter for Charles; the removal of Pippin from Aquitaine meant that Lothar lost his best chance to undermine Charles's rule in Aquitaine, and in 849, Lothar acknowledged Charles as king of Aquitaine.[109] Challenges remained in Brittany, however; Nominoë renewed his attacks in 849 and offered an invitation to the dissatisfied in Neustria to defect together. When Nominoë suddenly died, Charles attacked the Bretons, but was defeated by Nominoë's son Erispoë, who afterwards was granted the same power his father possessed by Charles.[110]

The work itself

As previously mentioned, the most detailed description of the viking attack on Paris in 845 can be found in the *Translatio*, a work that will be analysed further in the rest of this chapter.[111] It consists of 36 chapters and was written by a monk from the abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris.[112] Unfortunately, the identity of this monk remains unknown, which prevents us from mapping the personal circumstances and connections of the author.[113] Nevertheless, by scrutinising the primary source text, it can be deduced that the author was definitely a supporter of Charles the Bald; the author describes Charles exclusively in a positive manner and calls him *nobilissimus rex* or *praecellentissimus rex* on multiple occasions.[114]

The dating of this work has led to some discussion among scholars over the years. In 1987, Coupland dated the work somewhere between 849 and 856, echoing an earlier dating by Lot and Halphen from 1909.[115] According to Lot and Halphen, the *terminus post quem* is 849,

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[108] Costambeys, *The Carolingian World*, 390-391.
[109] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 158-159.
[110] *Ibidem*, 165.
[111] Coupland, 'Charles the Bald and the Defence', 20.
[112] *Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis*, ed. C. De Smedt, J. Van Hooff and G. De Backer, *Analecta Bollandiana* 2 (Brussels 1883) 69-98. This edition has been chosen rather than the edition of G. Waitz, as Waitz's edition is incomplete, and based his edition primarily on the edition in the *Analecta Bollandiana.* See: *Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis*, ed. G. Waitz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica SS* 15.1 (Hannover 1887) 5, 10-16.
[113] Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs*, VI.1.1; Coupland, 'Charles the Bald and the Defence', 20.
[114] *Translatio*, c. 12 (p. 79). The fact that the author sometimes glorifies Charles has also been noted by Simon Coupland. See: Coupland, 'Charles the Bald and the Defence', 20.
[115] Coupland, 'Charles the Bald and the Defence', 20; Ferdinand Lot and Louis Halphen, *Le Règne de Charles Le Chauve (840-877)* (Paris 1909) 131 n. 3. One year after Coupland's dating, Gillmor argued for a different dating, strangely enough while basing himself on the same passage of Lot and Halphen. See: C. Gillmor, 'War on the Rivers: Viking Numbers and Mobility on the Seine and Loire, 841-886', *Viator* 19 (1988) 79-109, here 102 n. 71. He uses this interpretation and dating thirteen years later again in: C. Gillmor, 'Aimoin's Miracula Sancti Germani and the Viking Raids on St. Denis and St. Germain-des-Prés' in: R. Abels and B. Bachrach eds., *The Normans and their adversaries at war: essays in memory of C. Warren Hollister* (Woodridge 2001) 103-127, here 112 n. 39. He argues that the *Translatio* consists of not one, but two accounts, one of which was

as in chapter 17, the author explicitly mentions that four years after the viking attack, they heard details about how the vikings fared after leaving Paris from Count Cobbo, an envoy of Louis the German who apparently was present at the court of Danish king Horic when Ragnar and his retinue returned from Paris.[116] Cobbo made a pilgrimage in 849 to Tours and stopped *en route* at the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.[117] Even if the usage of Cobbo as a source is simply invented to enhance the story's credibility, the explicit mention of the brothers hearing something four years later is a convincing argument to place the *terminus post quem* somewhere in 849; it would not have made sense for the author to mention this if it was written before 849, as four years had not yet elapsed by then. The *terminus ante quem*, according to Lot and Halphen, must be when Ebroin, the commissioner of the work, died, somewhere around 854-856.[118]

In 1992, Nelson argued the work was written within five years after the viking attack in 845.[119] Cooijmans underlines this dating, writing that it was indeed written before 851.[120] Although both authors do not provide an explicit explanation for this new *terminus ante quem*, it seems plausible that they deduced it from the fact that the viking attack on the Seine region in 851 is not at all mentioned in the *Translatio*.[121] As it seems highly unlikely that the anonymous author would have left this unmentioned, it can convincingly be argued that the work must have been produced before then. Taking into account the *terminus post quem* of Lot and Halphen, it seems highly plausible that the work is produced somewhere in 849 or 850.

The work is an account of a relic translation, a *translatio*; it is concerned with the transfer of the relics of Saint Germain away from the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. *Translationes* form but one part of the early medieval hagiographical literature and are mainly characterised by the occurrence of miracles caused by the elevation and translation of relics.[122]

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written between 846 and 849, and the other between 854 and 856. When taking a look at the original dating by Lot and Halphen, it becomes clear why discrepancies between Coupland and Gillmore emerged: *'L'auteur anonyme a rédigé son travail après le retour du corps de saint Germain, donc après le 25 juillet 846 (c. 27), quatre ans pour le moins après l'arrivée des païens (c. 17), donc après mars-avril 849; d'autre part, il écrit à l'instigation de l'abbé Evrouin, donc avant 854-856, date approximative de la mort de ce dernier*.' While Coupland's dating corresponds to this, Gillmore seemingly has translated this passage incorrectly, perhaps translating 'd'autre part' as 'the other part' instead of 'on the other hand', which would explain his argument that the work was composed of two parts, rather than one, and 'donc après mars-avril 849' as 'thus before March-April 849' instead of 'thus after March-April 849', which would in turn explain his dating of the first part to 846-849.

[116] Lot and Halphen, *Le Règne de Charles*, 131 n. 3; *Translatio*, c. 15 (p. 82).

[117] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 152-153.

[118] Lot and Halphen, *Le Règne de Charles*, 131 n. 3.

[119] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 151.

[120] Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs*, VI.1.1.

[121] Coupland, 'Charles the Bald and the Defence', 34-36.

[122] D. DeSelm, 'Unwilling Pilgrimage: Vikings, Relics, and the Politics of Exile During the Carolingian Era (c. 830-940)' PhD Diss. (Michigan 2009) 25-26; M. Heinzelmann, *Translationsberichte und andere Quellen des*

In general, the miracles in a *translatio* take place in close proximity to the relics themselves, and the relics are transferred from point A to point B.[123] The *Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis* is a rather atypical *translatio* in that sense, as the majority of miracles described in the story occur at the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés itself while the relics themselves were absent, and the relics were only temporarily stored at Combs-la-Ville, before they were returned to the monastery again.[124] As there are similar *translationes* set in the context of forced flight from danger, Daniel DeSelm points out that these 'forced' *translationes* 'form a distinct subgroup within the *translatio* genre, complete with their own history and forms'.[125]

The spatial confines of the miracles in the *Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis* are best explained by the contemporary sacralisation of the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. The relics of Saint Germain had long been tied to the physical space of the monastery and imbued the place with sacredness.[126] By portraying the monastery as the main stage of the miracles performed by the merits of Saint Germain, as well as the ultimate destination of the relics, the anonymous author seems to reinforce the idea that the monastery is the indisputable 'home' of the holy relics. Considering that one of the main goals of the text seems to have been to reinforce the cult of Saint Germain and in turn contribute to the political, economic, and religious standing of the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, it is not surprising that the anonymous author did this; for monastic communities, relics functioned 'almost like deeds to property', and were therefore a requisite not only to maintain and increase power and influence but also to justify it.[127]

The anonymous monk of the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés apparently was tasked to write this work by the abbot of the monastery, Ebroin, as he explicitly explains in the first chapter.[128] Ebroin was a powerful Aquitanian noble who had been one of Louis the Pious's closest supporters until Louis's death in 840.[129] When the inheritance quarrels began to occur

Reliquienkultes (Turnhout 1979) 52-77.
[123] J. Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles, and Relics in Brittany, c. 850-1250', *Speculum* 65:2 (1990) 309-343, here 334; DeSelm, 'Unwilling Pilgrimage', 25-32.
[124] M. B. Gillis, 'Dreaming of Saint Germain: Violence, Visions, and Holy Vengeance in the Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis' in: C. Booker and A. Latowksy eds., *In This Modern Age: Medieval Studies in Honor of Paul Edward Dutton* (Budapest 2023) 143-169, here 144-145; Coupland, 'Charles the Bald and the Defence', 21.
[125] DeSelm, 'Unwilling Pilgrimage', 26.
[126] DeSelm, 'Unwilling Pilgrimage', 58-62; J. Howe, 'Creating Symbolic Landscapes: Medieval Development of Sacred Space' in: J. Howe and M. Wolfe eds., *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe* (Gainsville 2002) 208-23.
[127] DeSelm, 'Unwilling Pilgrimage', 59.
[128] *Translatio*, c. 1 (p. 70).
[129] O. Oexle, 'Bischof Ebroin von Poitiers und seine Verwandten', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien 3* (1967) 138-210, here 161-165; L. Levillain, 'L'archichapelain Ebroin, évêque de Poitiers', *Le Moyen Âge* 34 (1923) 177-222, here 179-186.

between Louis's sons in 839, it is evident that Ebroin, now bishop of Poitiers, was on the side of Charles the Bald; Ebroin got rid of Charles's opponents in Poitiers, making the city an important centre from where Charles could expand and consolidate his rule in Aquitaine.[130] It was around 840 when Charles appointed Ebroin as his archchaplain, making Ebroin one of the most important political figures in the entire realm; he had direct influence on nearly all decisions made.[131] Apart from numerous other gifts, Ebroin received the abbacy of Saint-Germain-des-Prés somewhere between 840 and 845.[132] As the author of the *Translatio* makes clear, Ebroin was absent during the viking attack on Paris in 845, as he was in Aquitaine to negotiate and establish peace between Charles and Peppin.[133]

After Peppin was dethroned in 848, it seems likely that Ebroin, being one of the most powerful and influential Aquitanians, played a considerable role in convincing the other Aquitanian nobles to turn to Charles instead. Even though Charles did become the *rex Aquitaniorum* in the same year, support for him seems not to have been unanimous; Aquitanians nobles discontent with Charles as their king remained.[134] In other words, when the *Translatio* was commissioned to be written in 849, Charles rule in Aquitaine was anything but secure, and Ebroin was still attempting to strengthen Charles's position as the new king. As can be deduced from the disposal of Peppin as king because of his military failures against the vikings, the Aquitanian elite wanted a king who was able to defend the kingdom against the viking invaders. The *Translatio*, then, eminently portrayed Charles as being that desired king, and it seems that the work was commissioned to further justify Charles's newly acquired kingship in Aquitaine. In fact, the *De Miraculis sancti Germani*, which will be examined in the next chapter, claims it was Charles himself who ordered the *Translatio* to be written.[135] Considering the close relationship between Charles and Ebroin, especially during this turbulent period in Aquitaine, it is likely that both were behind the commission of the work.

Summary of content

A considerable amount of the content of the work specifically describes vikings and their supposed activity in 845.[136] As these passages that pertain to vikings will be scrutinised further

[130] Oexle, 'Bischof Ebroin', 166-167; Levillain, 'L'archichapelain Ebroin', 188-189.
[131] Oexle, 'Bischof Ebroin', 166; Levillain, 'L'archichapelain Ebroin', 191.
[132] Levillain, 'L'archichapelain Ebroin', 193, 200.
[133] *Translatio*, c. 5 (p. 73).
[134] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 154-155, 171-173.
[135] Aimoin of St-Germain, *De Miraculis sancti Germani*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 126 (Paris 1852), cols. 1027-50, here 1027.
[136] *Translatio*, c. 2-4, 12-15, 17, 30-31 (p. 69-98).

in this chapter, the content of them will be briefly discussed here.[137]

The story starts off with plundering vikings reaching the river Seine, after which they continued to Rouen unopposed.[138] They stayed there for a long time, wreaking havoc in the surrounding area. Eventually, the vikings decided to go to Paris, where they met with the army that Charles the Bald mustered to oppose them.[139] The vikings are said to have hanged 111 captives in front of Charles's army to taunt them. Afterwards, the vikings attempted to attack a part of the army that was on the bank of the Seine, where Charles was absent. As this part of the army fled, Charles was forced to retreat as well.[140] This victory allowed the vikings to enter Paris; they first went to the monastery of Saint-Germain but were unable to set it on fire 'through the merits of the holy Germain'. Therefore, they decided to set fire to a barn next to the monastery. Still, the monastery was protected by Germain; the wind caused the fire of the barn to stay away from the monastery.[141] Later, the vikings once again entered the monastery and began to destroy its interior, resulting in miracles of Germain: three men were struck down and another's hand was mutilated.[142] When the vikings returned in Denmark, Ragnar, the leader of the fleet, came before Horic, the king of the Northmen, to tell him about his exploits in Paris, but was quickly struck down by Germain. Ragnar was brought to his estate by his comrades, where he perished miserably, despite creating a golden statue for Germain and promising to convert to Christianity.[143] The rest of the vikings who entered the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés likewise perished; they were struck by dysentery - again by the merits of Germain - and 'died day after day'. Horic ordered these ill people to be executed out of fear for a further spread of the disease, and ordered that all Christian captives should be returned safely to where they had been taken captive.[144]

The remainder of this chapter will analyse the descriptions of vikings in these passages and consequently determine what constitutes the viking 'Other' in this text.

[137] For a good overview of the attack on Paris in 845, see: Coupland, 'Charles the Bald and the Defence', 19-27.
[138] *Translatio*, c. 3 (p. 71-72).
[139] *Ibidem*, c. 3 (p. 72), c. 12 (p. 78-79).
[140] *Ibidem*, c. 12 (p. 78-79).
[141] *Ibidem*, c. 13 (p. 79-80).
[142] *Ibidem*, c. 14-15 (p. 80-83).
[143] *Ibidem*, c.30 (p. 91-93).
[144] *Ibidem*, c. 31 (p. 93).

The viking 'Other'

Vikings as a punishment of God

The author of the *Translatio* decides, like numerous other contemporaries, to portray the vikings prominently as the 'rod of God's wrath', the tools God uses to punish the sinful in the Frankish realm.[145] This is already stressed early on in the work:

> 'To us, however, because we have offended God and disregarded to maintain his laws and precepts, he has likewise roused up the hearts of certain peoples, namely the aforementioned Northmen, in order that they may afflict us for the innumerable weight of our sins (…).'[146]

In this passage, the Franks are compared with the Israelite people, who were also punished by God in the scripture, illuminating that the Carolingian author placed the attacks of the vikings in a religious framework.[147] The activity of the vikings is therefore instigated by God because of Frankish sins, and on numerous occasions, after describing the evil acts of the vikings, the author likes to remind the reader of this fact.[148] The passage that arguably symbolises this narrative trope best is: 'But because this happened with the permission of God, we must blame our sins. Which would not have happened at all, if we had not been greatly insulting before the eyes of God.'[149]

According to the author, the vikings should not, however, be seen as an unending punishment but as rectifiers. As such, he wrote the vikings afflict them 'for our retribution and correction, and not for perpetual condemnation, if we want to return to him with all our heart.'[150] This important nuance illuminates an important aim of the author, namely to urge his readers to renew their devotion to God and follow his precepts, as this is the only way for the vikings to stop wreaking major havoc in the Frankish realm.

Similarly to the Israelites, who 'were still not abandoned completely by the pious and

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[145] Coupland, 'The Rod of God's Wrath', 537.
[146] *Translatio*, c. 2 (p. 71): 'Nos autem quoniam Deum offensum habuimus et ejus jura atque praecepta servare contempsimus, excitavit idem velut pius pater quorumdam corda gentilium, supradictorum scilicet Normannorum, ut nos pro innumerabili delictorum nostrorum pondere (…)'.
[147] Coupland, 'The Rod of God's Wrath', 537.
[148] *Translatio*, c. 3 (p. 72), c. 14 (p. 80), c. 15 (p. 81).
[149] *Ibidem*, c. 3 (p. 72): 'Sed quia hoc permissu Dei ita factum est, nostris debemus imputare peccatis. Quod omnino agi nequisset, nisi coram Deo graviter offensi fuissemus.'
[150] *Ibidem*, c. 2 (p. 71): '(…) ad correptionem atque emendationem nostram affligerent, et non ad perpetuam, si ad illum toto corde reverti volumus, condemnationem.'

most merciful God when calling out to him in distress'[151], the Franks too were not completely abandoned by God and could make things right.

When considering the role of vikings as the punishment of God, it must be noted that the fifth thesis of Cohen can be applied effectively here; the vikings in the story definitely fulfil the narrative role of creatures that 'police the borders of the possible'. They were warnings for the Franks, in that they harmed those who dared to live a sinful life and, by doing so, transgressed the limits set by God. Franks who would continue to live in this way, rather than to follow God's precepts, could expect the vikings to pay them a visit. The viking 'Other' was employed by the anonymous author to stand as a warning; it is not possible to live a sinful life without being punished by God accordingly.

Throughout the text, the author often stresses the fact that the vikings were not opposed in any way by the Franks and therefore could do as they pleased. The author writes that 'all leaders of the warriors who inhabited the earth itself (which we cannot express without great groaning and breaking of heart), too disheartened by fear, were preparing themselves more to flee than to resist.'[152] This unwillingness also resulted from the sinfulness of the Franks, the author argues:

> 'Nor is it surprising that the people, sinning against God and not fulfilling the duties of Christianity, were forced to flee before the eyes of their enemies. For as long as any one has strength to resist the enemies of the Christian name, the king of heaven and inhabitant of the earth will exist in mind and body. For he himself says in a certain passage of the sacred Gospel: without me, you can do nothing. But since he scorned to follow his instructions, he could not stand before his enemies.'[153]

In short, Franks who followed the precepts of God devoutly would be able to resist the vikings, and Franks who did not would flee. If the Franks would therefore 'return to God with all their heart', they would be able to resist their enemies, just like God by the merits of Saint Germain.

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[151] *Translatio*, c. 2 (p. 71): '(…) tamen a pio ac clementissimo Deo ad ipsum in tribulatione clamantem non omnimodis derelictum.'

[152] *Translatio*, c. 3 (p. 72): 'Omnes enim principes bellatorum qui ipsam incolebant terram (quod absque ingenti gemitu ac contritione cordis effari nequimus), magis se ad fugiendum quam resistendum, nimia perculsi formidine, praeparabant.'

[153] *Translatio*, c. 3 (p. 72): 'Nec mirum si populus erga Deum peccans operaque christianitatis non servans, ante suos fugere compulsus est hostes. Tamdiu enim quis inimicis christiani valebit resistere nominis, quamdiu coelorum rex atque terrarum ejus mentis ac corporis inhabitator extiterit. Ipse namque in quodam sacri Evangelii loco ait : Sine me nihil potestis facere. Sed quoniam ejus monita servare contempsit, ante suos hostes stare non potuit.'

By unveiling that the sins were the cause of the weakness of the Franks, the anonymous author drew a parallel between moral cleanliness and the ability to defend the realm from threats and utilised this to further glorify Charles the Bald. In this line of thought, Christians that were effectively defending the realm were, per definition, devout Christians that refrained from indulging in sin. By establishing this parallel, the anonymous author allowed himself to either criticise or applaud any given person in the story by exclusively describing their ability to defend the realm against the viking invaders. Considering he wished to praise Charles in this work, it is not surprising that Charles is described as 'the most noble king, who was ready to die for the defence of the holy church of God'; he was more than anyone else willing to fight the vikings, and in turn, he was a devout Christian who did not indulge in sin.[154] With this portrayal, the author contrasts Charles with the Frankish elite, who rather fled than fought, implying they were sinful, unlike Charles.

The author continues to portray Charles as a strong leader during the final visit of the vikings to the young king.[155] Charles was the person who, in the end, allowed the vikings to leave his realm after they were struck with dysentery. As such, Charles is portrayed as a strong leader who could have inflicted a lot of damage on the leaving vikings, had they not paid him a visit and promised him to never return to his realm. Interestingly, the author chooses to leave out the tribute payment that Charles paid to the vikings completely. This, I would argue, is a deliberate choice made by the author, as the inclusion of this would damage the fabricated image of Charles as a strong ruler; tribute payments in particular were considered to be a sign of weak leadership at the time.[156] By excluding the payment entirely, the author shifts the narrative in favour of Charles, in line with his portrayal as a strong king; now it was not Charles who tried to convince the vikings to leave his realm, but the vikings who desperately visited Charles and asked for a peaceful leave.

Moreover, the author makes sure to not blame Charles for the ineffectivity of his endeavours against the vikings. As already mentioned, Charles's army was disbanded without having achieved anything of significance against the vikings. It were the followers of Charles in his army, however, who caused this fiasco; they were not fully loyal to Charles, and fled when they needed to fight, which again implies these followers were sinful. The author conveys that Charles was a strong and moral king, but could not defend the realm if his followers were

[154] *Translatio,* c. 12 (p. 79): '(…) nobilissimus rex, cernens quod gestum erat, qui pro defensione sanctae Dei Ecclesiae mori paratus erat, (…)'.
[155] *Translatio,* c. 20 (p. 84-85).
[156] S. Coupland, 'The Frankish Tribute Payments to the Vikings and their Consequences', *Francia* 26:1 (1999) 57-75, here 57; Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs,* VI.3.3.1.

not fully loyal to him. This portrayal seems to reflect the contemporary political situation in the realm of Charles; in the West Frankish realm, and especially in Aquitaine, there were still nobles who doubted Charles as their king and were therefore not fully loyal to him. The *Translatio*, then, can be seen as an attempt to not only convince these nobles of the capabilities of Charles the Bald but also show that their full support was a prerequisite for a successful defence of the realm. As we have seen before, the Aquitanians greatly valued the military effectiveness of a ruler against the vikings; Peppin was dethroned because of his failures against the vikings, and Charles was crowned only after he defeated them at Bordeaux in 848. Hence, the *Translatio* seems to have been commissioned to be used as political propaganda by Ebroin and Charles in Aquitaine, as well as in other parts of the realm where Charles's rule needed to be legitimised further.

Vikings as monsters

In this section, it will be further argued that the vikings in the *Translatio* definitely were monsters according to the three theses of Cohen. As already established in the previous section, the vikings 'policed the borders of the possible' in this work. As will be illuminated here, the vikings in the *Translatio* are also 'harbingers of category crisis'. However, the thesis of Cohen that can be applied best to the vikings in the *Translatio* is the fourth one, which holds that 'monsters dwell at the gates of difference', as will be substantiated shortly.

Vikings as pagans

As previously mentioned, the viking 'Other' in Carolingian sources in the ninth century is often characterised by its paganism, and the *Translatio* is not an exception to this. When they are first mentioned, this is already implied: '(…) the abundant army of Northmen, (…) touched and entered the borders of Christianity (…).'[157] It reflects the Frankish author's own self-consciousness of seeing the *regnum Francorum* as a Christian Empire, elected as the people of God, and subsequently also that exterior peoples, in this case the vikings, were not; they were not encompassed by the 'borders of Christianity', and therefore pagan.[158] Additionally, the author implicitly stresses the fact that the vikings were idol-worshippers; Ragnar ordered his followers to create a 'golden statue', a clear reference to the biblical story of the golden calf.[159]

[157] *Translatio*, c. 2 (p. 71): '(…) copiosus exercitus Normannorum, (…) christianorum fines contingerent atque intrarent.'
[158] Coupland, 'The Rod of God's Wrath', 541.
[159] *Translatio*, c. 30 (p. 92).

This golden statue, though created by Ragnar to be brought to the Frankish realm and atone for his sins, was eventually taken by the followers of Ragnar. By this, the author seems to imply that the vikings would start to worship the golden statue, just like the Isrealites did with the golden calf in the Bible. The paganness of the vikings is underlined more bluntly when the author writes that the vikings 'performed many and innumerable evils against the Christian people' while invoking and praising their gods and blaspheming the God of the Christians.[160] In the rest of the text, this narrative trope occurs multiple times; the Franks are profiled as the *populus Christianus, populus Dei,* or simply *christiani*[161] living within in the *fines christianorum, regnum christianorum,* or *terra christianorum*[162], while the vikings are described as *blasphematores Dei*, *inimicis christiani nominis,* and *increduli Normannorum populi*[163]. It is clear that the viking 'Other' in this text is not just a pagan but also fiercely anti-Christian. The religious alterity of the vikings makes them 'dwell at the gates of difference' in this text and therefore monstrous.

This is not to say that the viking 'Other' was not at all interested in becoming Christian; Ragnar wished to stop worshipping his pagan gods and become a Christian after he was miraculously struck down by Saint Germain.[164] The character of viking leader Ragnar embodies the role of a 'harbinger of category crisis' in the *Translatio*. By including this wish of Ragnar to become Christian, the anonymous author seems to have asked his audience: can every single pagan, even if he or she committed horrible acts against the Franks like Ragnar, become a Christian? The figure of Ragnar therefore seems to challenge the rationality of the category of 'pagan', asking if perhaps a further distinction must be made between pagans who can convert and pagans who cannot. This may very well reflect a discussion that was being held around this time in the Frankish realm: after all the damage that the vikings inflicted upon the Franks, should they still be accepted into the Christian fold if they wanted to join it? Quickly following this, the author provides an answer: 'But since he was not of God's flock and not predestined to life, for that reason he did not deserve to get what he asked for.'[165] Interestingly, Ragnar was not considered suitable to convert to Christianity, as he was not of 'God's flock'. As such, the

[160] *Translatio*, c. 3 (p. 71-72): 'Ubi non invento populo, ut antiquitus moris erat, qui eis bellando resisteret, deos suos invocantes atque laudantes, christianorum vero Deum blasphemantes, hinc inde e navibus exeuntes, multa innumeraque ob ingentia iniquitatum nostrarum facinora in populo christiano peregerunt mala (…)'.
[161] *Ibidem*, c. 4 (p. 72).
[162] *Ibidem*, c. 12 (p. 78-79), c. 4 (p. 72), c. 2 (70-71), c. 14 (p. 80-81), c. 30 (p. 91-93).
[163] *Ibidem*, c. 12 (p. 78-79), c. 30 (p. 91-93), c. 3 (p. 71-72), c. 14 (p. 80-81).
[164] *Ibidem*, c. 30 (p. 92).
[165] *Ibidem*, c. 30 (p. 92): 'Sed quoniam non erat ex ovibus Christi neque praedestinatus ad vitam, idcirco quod petebat, obtinere non meruit.'

author seems to have clarified to his audience that indeed a distinction must be made between pagans that could convert to Christianity, and those that could not, such as Ragnar. The viking 'Other' in the *Translatio* , embodied in this case by the figure of Ragnar, was a 'harbinger of category crisis', and therefore more monstrous.

It seems the viking 'Other' will forever remain a pagan, even when it wishes to convert. The ultimate destination of the vikings, therefore, was hell, according to the author; when the three vikings in the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés were struck down, they 'were lying feeble and broken, and exhaling their unbelieving and hateful souls to God, they have ascended to the shadows forever, where their worm will not die and the fire will not go out.'[166] The author quotes a biblical reference to hell and its eternal torment. The vikings, to the author of the *Translatio,* were unquestionably 'non-Franks' and would remain so; they did not belong in the *regnum Francorum* as they never could convert to Christianity, and should therefore be repulsed from the realm.

Vikings as violent characters

The vikings in the text are also characterised by their use of extreme violence, highlighting their aberrant ethical behaviour. After having plundered the British Isles, the vikings already 'performed many and innumerable evils against the Christian people' and 'made many massacres from the people of God' in the Seine region.[167] The next passage offers one of the best examples that illustrates their violent nature:

> 'The aforesaid Northmen also, having stayed in the *civitas* [=Rouen] for a long time, thinking that the Christian people would be reluctant and too weak to fight, went out of their own ships, and having spread far and wide, while no one resisted, began to capture and slaughter the people of both sexes, to devastate monasteries, to depopulate and burn down churches or villages that they could reach, to plunder the cattle, and with all cruelty to rage without control against the people of God for a time, and to exercise their desire upon them because of the magnitude of their sins.'[168]

[166] *Translatio,* c. 14 (p. 80): '(…) invalidi confractique jacentes atque incredulas ac Deo odibiles animas exhalantes, perpetuas descenderunt ad umbras, ubi vermis eorum non morietur et ignis non extinguetur.'
[167] *Ibidem,* c. 3 (p. 71-72): '(…) multa innumeraque ob ingentia iniquitatum nostrarum facinora in populo christiano peregerunt mala (…)', c. 4 (p. 72): '(…) plurimas strages, ut supradictum est, ex Dei populo circumquaque faciendo (…)'.
[168] *Ibidem,* c. 4 (p. 72): 'Praedicti etiam Normanni diu in eadem civitate morantes, christianum populum ad

Needless to say, the vikings in this text transgressed the ethical and social norms of the Frankish society; apart from capturing and killing individuals and cattle, they also destroyed the cultural apparatuses around which the Frankish society was constituted, such as the monasteries and churches. They transgress the norms of society by doing so, even excessively so. Because of this ethical difference, the viking 'Other' here certainly 'dwells at the gates of difference', and therefore is a monster, if ever there was one. The epitome of the cruelty and violent nature of the vikings in the work is to be found in chapter 12, after Charles the Bald had mustered an army to oppose the vikings:

> '(…) the most impious and cruel Northmen themselves, blasphemers of God, to the taunting and mockery of the king and his chiefs or of all the Christians standing there, hanged 111 captives before their eyes. And they slaughtered some in the houses and streets, hanged some on trees, none resisting out of such a multitude.'[169]

Nevertheless, though the vikings are portrayed as extremely violent and cruel, some hints are given that the vikings did not do this just for the sake of being violent; the vikings in fact benefited from their actions. This is best illustrated by the part of the story where Ragnar came before Horic to talk about his exploits. Ragnar showed Horic 'a lot of silver and gold, which he had carried away out of the land of the Christians'[170], which implies that the vikings, not surprisingly, attacked the Frankish realm to gain something from it. Moreover, the scene shows that it was not only moveable wealth the vikings were after but also increased respect and a higher social standing. This is illustrated by the fact that the vikings brought a 'beam' of the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés and a cross-bar of the gate of Paris as evidence to prove their story; the validity of their story seems to have been as valuable as the wealth acquired.[171] Therefore, the viking 'Other' in the story was violent, but not just for the sake of spilling blood. The degree to which the vikings transgressed social norms is reduced somewhat

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bellandum pigrum atque inertem fore putantes, e propriis navibus exierunt, et longe lateque diffusi, nemine resistente, coeperunt utriusque sexus populum captivare ac trucidare, monasteria devastare, ecclesias seu villas quas attingere poterant, depopulari sive concremare, pecora depreedari, et cum omni crudelitate in populo quondam Dei debacchari, suamque in eum ob enormitatem peccatorum exercere libidinem.'

[169] *Translatio,* c. 12 (p. 78): 'ipsi impiissimi ac crudelissimi Normanni, blasphematores Dei, ad opprobrium et derisionem regis principumque ejus seu omnium christia- norum illic adstantium, centum et XI captivos coram eorum oculis suspenderunt.'

[170] *Ibidem,*c. 30 (p. 91): '(…), ostenditque ei aurum argentumque multum, quod ex christianorum asportaverat terra (…)'.

[171] *Ibidem,*c. 30 (p. 91-92): 'Rex autem talia narranti non credens, jussit ei jam dictus Ragenarius trabem ex monasterio domni Germani et seram porte Parisiace urbis in testimonium afferri.'

because of the rationalisation of their actions, in turn meaning that they 'dwelled at the gates of difference' a little less. Hence, the vikings in the *Translatio* appear a little less monstrous in these instances. It seems like after decades of interactions with the vikings the author was aware of the fact that the vikings did not just destroy for the sake of it but aimed for wealth.

The scene where the vikings are arguably most clearly 'Othered' is their face-off with the part of the Frankish army on the bank where Charles the Bald was absent:

> 'For when the Christian people saw this, helmed and clothed in mail, covered with a defence of shields and lances, some by the ridges of the mountain, others by the hollows of the valley, some by the flatness of the plain, some through the darkness of the woods, before naked and almost unarmed and very few men (which we cannot say without a great outpouring of tears), separating him from the Lord for his sins, they went to flight.'[172]

The military equipment and force of the vikings and Franks are described as the binary opposite, underscoring the shamefulness of the ensuing Frankish retreat. The author's description of the vikings as almost naked and unarmed highlights their uncivilised nature, compared to the 'civilised' Franks, who are fully clothed in armour and armed with weapons. Interestingly, as Friedman observed, everyday cultural differences such as clothes and weapons could truly set apart an alien race from their observers and increase the overall monstrosity of the race in question.[173] Indeed, 'monstrous' races were frequently depicted as naked or only wearing animal skins, since their uncivilised culture lacked textile arts.[174] As Friedman says: '[…] nakedness was a sign of wildness and hostility of the animal nature thought to characterise those who lived beyond the limits of the Christian world.'[175] Consequently, because of this transgression of social norms concerning clothing, the vikings in the *Translatio* appear even more monstrous. Additionally, the fact that the vikings are almost naked and unarmed underlines that the vikings were ignorant of the military customs of the 'civilised' Franks; militarily speaking, they did not conform to the norm. Even though it is not exactly clear what weapons were used by the vikings in the passage, it seems as if they barely used weapons at all, further stressing their uncivilised nature; weapons were often made with forethought and art,

[172] *Translatio*, c. 12 (p. 79): 'Videns enim hoc christianus populus, galeatus ac loricatus, scutorum ac lancearum munimine tectus, alii per juga montium, alii per concava vallium, quidam per planitiem camporum, quidam vero per opaca silvarum, ante nudos ac pene inermes atque paucissimos homines (quod sine ingenti effusione lacrimarum dicere nequimus), Domino eum pro peccatis suis deserente, in fugam versus est.'
[173] Friedman, *The Monstrous Races*, 26.
[174] *Ibidem*, 31.
[175] *Ibidem*, 31-32.

and a lack of them implies an absence of the skills to construe such weapons.[176] The only explicit mention of a weapon used by the vikings in the story is the sword that was used to strike the marble column in the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.[177] Admittedly, the sword was considered to be a noble weapon, and definitely required skill to be produced. Nevertheless, the vikings transgress the Frankish norms concerning clothing and military equipment and are therefore more monstrous.

It is likely the anonymous author portrayed the vikings as monsters to further justify Charles the Bald's newly acquired kingship in Aquitaine. As previously established, the legitimisation of kingship in Aquitaine mainly rested on the ability of the king to repulse the vikings from the kingdom. This was definitely also the case for Charles the Bald; he was only accepted by the majority of Aquitanian nobles after he had proven himself by defeating the vikings at Bordeaux in 848.[178] By highlighting the monstrosity of the vikings, the author seems to attempt to convince his readers even more about the fact that the vikings should be repulsed; because of their religious, ethical, and cultural alterity, they could never be incorporated into the *regnum Francorum*. The monstrosity of the vikings in turn also glorifies Charles, who is portrayed as a strong king who could oppose these monsters if he is fully supported by his subordinates. The viking 'Other' is therefore employed as a narrative tool to legitimise Charles rule in Aquitaine, but also to stimulate the hesitating Aquitanian nobles to fully support Charles, as that is the only way the realm could be effectively protected from the vikings.

[176] Friedman, *The Monstrous Races*, 32-33.
[177] *Translatio*, c. 15 (p. 81).
[178] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 154.

Chapter 2: *De Miraculis sancti Germani*

This chapter will scrutinise the viking 'Other' in the *De Miraculis sancti Germani* and explore whether it differed from the 'Other' in the *Translatio*.[179] First of all, the historical context in which the work has been written will be discussed. Next, the work itself will be elaborated on. Finally, this chapter will determine what the viking 'Other' in this work entailed, to what extent it can be labelled as 'monstrous', and see whether explanations for the portrayal of vikings can be found when looking at the context in which they were produced.

Historical context

After Pippin II's tonsure in 852, which took place with the agreement of Lothar, Lothar and Charles's relationship improved; together they took up arms against the vikings that came up to the Seine in that same year, spending weeks together, celebrating Christmas together. At Quierzy, they sealed their new alliance; Lothar was godfather to the daughter of Charles.[180] The relationship between Charles and Louis cooled, however, when Charles decided not to include his brother in the negotiations concerning Peppin II's fate, realigning the Carolingian diplomatic landscape entirely.[181] When Aquitanian nobles hostile to Charles invited Louis to come and take the kingship in Charles's stead, Louis encouraged his son, called Louis the Younger, to march to Aquitaine. Louis the Younger abandoned the mission, however, after receiving scant support for his cause apart from his own retinue.[182]

Lothar died in 855, leaving his realm to his sons and causing the balance of power in the empire to be destabilised once again. Intergenerational rivalries quickly emerged over his inheritance, but eventually peace was brokered after a few years of warfare. When Lothar II, son of Lothar, eventually died in 869, Charles took hold of Lotharingia, but eventually the territory was divided between Charles and his brother Louis the German, codified in the treaty of Meerssen in 870. Louis II, another son of Lothar, still held sway over Provence and Northern Italy.[183]

When Louis II died at Brescia on August 12, 875, Charles reacted extremely quickly and moved south to Rome after hearing the news.[184] Charles absence in the Frankish heartlands,

[179] From here on out, '*Miraculis'* will be used as an abbreviation of *De Miraculis sancti Germani*.
[180] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 169-170.
[181] *Ibidem*.
[182] Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs*, III.1.1.
[183] *Ibidem*.
[184] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 239.

not surprisingly, was noticed by Louis the German, who marched on his brother's realm together with his second son, Louis the Younger. It is not clear whether Louis, as in 858, meant to expand his power beyond his realm by marching on that of his brother.[185] According to the *Annals of Fulda*, Louis the German did so 'to compel him [Charles] to come out of Italy', implying he was not there to take over control but to thwart Charles's plan to grab power in Italy.[186] For the lay magnates and bishops in the area, however, it was not clear whether Louis or Charles would be their king in the future.[187] This insecurity was voiced by Hincmar, who circulated a letter to the bishops and lay magnates of Rheims in which he alternated between criticisms of Charles and lukewarm counsels of loyalty, warning his colleagues, for instance, not to make choices out of greed.[188] Moreover, he criticised local magnates, who, according to him, ravaged the kingdom of Charles on their own account, despite their oaths of loyalty to Charles's wife Richildis, who was still in Francia. One of Hincmar's criticisms of Charles was that he had neglected the kingdom's protection and, by his absence, invited vikings to attack Francia.[189] All in all, he seems to be making the case to yield to Louis, and indeed, the criticism of John VIII in 876 against bishops 'who wavered in Charles's hour of need' makes it seem highly plausible that some colleagues of Hincmar, and maybe even himself, yielded for Charles's brother.[190] Early in 876, however, Louis and his son returned to the East Frankish realm, as the support that they got was insufficient.[191]

The work itself

Some twenty years after the *Translatio*, Aimoin, another monk of the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, wrote the *Miraculis* at the instigation of Gauzlin, then abbot of the monastery.[192] Aimoin was tasked with conflating the *Translatio* with another contemporary account of the events of 845 that, unfortunately, has been lost.[193] Moreover, he received permission to excise material that he deemed irrelevant.[194] The stated aim of the work is to

[185] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 239.
[186] *The Annals of Fulda*, transl. Timothy Reuter (Manchester 1992) 77.
[187] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 239.
[188] Hincmar, *De Fide Servanda*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 126 (Paris 1852), cols. 961-984; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 239.
[189] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 240-242.
[190] *Ibidem*, 239-240.
[191] Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs*, III.1.1.
[192] M. B. Gillis, *Religious Horror and Holy War in Viking Age Francia* (Budapest 2021) 29. Edition that will be used in this chapter: Aimoin of St-Germain, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 126 (Paris 1852) cols. 1027-1050.
[193] Gillmor, 'Aimoin's Miracula Sancti Germani', 112-113.
[194] *Ibidem*.

preserve the miracle stories for future generations.[195]

The integration of the two accounts into a new work seems to have been a difficult task for Aimoin, resulting in some idiosyncratic features of his work compared to other contemporary accounts of the attack on Paris in 845: the vikings, according to the work, were the ones that suggested a tribute payment to Charles, the magnates of Charles's realm were bribed by the vikings to accept this, and viking-leader Ragnar claimed to have subjected the entire Frankish kingdom by means of tribute.[196] It seems highly likely that the lost account described the tribute payment, considering the author of the *Translatio* drew a veil over this.[197] However, it is impossible to say whether the new information in the narrative of Aimoin came from the lost account or whether Aimoin interpolated this himself.

Furthermore, the second book of Aimoin's work allegedly describes the viking attack on Paris in 858. The historical credibility of this account, however, has been widely questioned. [198] Aimoin seemingly mixed up the attacks of 845 and 858, and consequently, it is hard to say whether the information in the second book refers to the events of 858, or whether it actually refers to the events of 845.[199] Following this, it is equally hard to say whether the descriptions of the vikings in the second book were construed by Aimoin himself, or whether he based them on descriptions from the abovementioned lost work or another work. Yet, even if Aimoin did not come up with the portrayals of the vikings, he was still in charge of the selection and adjustment of them, meaning that the descriptions in the *Miraculis* still reflect the view of Aimoin on vikings during the time of production.

The exact time of production of the work, however, unfortunately remains hard to decipher. A few scholars do provide a *terminus ante quem* and *terminus post quem*. Lot and Halphen argue the work must have been written at least after 867, as Gauzlin, the instigator of the work, became the abbot of Saint-Germain-des-Prés during that year.[200] Moreover, it was written during the reign of Charles the Bald, meaning it must have been written before Charles's death in 877.[201] Krah provides another convincing *terminus post quem*, which narrows the scope further; at the end of the second book of Aimoin, the visit of Charles the Bald and his wife Richildis to the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés is described, and Ingelwinus, bishop

[195] Aimoin of St-Germain, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, col. 1027C.
[196] Coupland, 'Charles the Bald and the Defence', 145.
[197] *Ibidem*.
[198] Coupland, 'Charles the Bald and the Defence', 20, 48; Gillmor, 'Aimoin's Miracula Sancti Germani', 113.
[199] *Ibidem*.
[200] Lot and Halphen, *Le Règne de Charles*, 131 n. 3.
[201] *Ibidem*.

of Paris, was present.[202] Not only did Charles and Richildis marry in 870, but Ingelwinus became bishop of Paris after Aeneas, who previously held the office, died on December 27, 870.[203] The first explicit mention of Ingelwinus as bishop of Paris comes from the council of Douzy in August 871.[204] Moreover, it seems the first time Charles and Richildis visited the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés was after their visit to the monastery of Saint-Denis in 872.[205] It is evident, therefore, that Aimoin wrote his *Miraculis* not before 872, so in the later years of Charles the Bald's reign. According to Wattenbach, Levison, and Löwe, Aimoin wrote his work before 876, but they do not provide any arguments for this statement.[206]

Some strong arguments can be given for the dating of the work to 875. First of all, Charles was crowned emperor in December of this year, and was presented with many works that glorified him, such as the San Paolo Bible, famous for its portrayal of Charles the Bald as well as Richildis, the first full-length portrait of a Carolingian queen.[207] As Nelson observes, 'he wanted fine books'.[208] The *Miraculis* is particularly conciliatory towards Charles, and may well have been issued by Gauzlin to further glorify Charles at the time of his coronation.[209] Secondly, the support for Charles in the Frankish heartlands was patchy among the local magnates and bishops, which is best illustrated by the abovementioned letter by Hincmar, in which he made the accusation that Charles departure to Italy left the realm open for viking attacks and made the case to yield to Louis instead.[210] Gauzlin may well have felt the need to commission a work during this time of questionable loyalty in the northern part of Charles's realm. In fact, Charles may very well have issued the work himself; Aimoin notes that Charles himself issued the *Translatio*, and not Ebroin, as stated by the anonymous author. Hence, it seems highly plausible that Charles was also an instigator of this work, considering the political circumstances he found himself in.

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[202] A. Krah, 'Zeitgeschichtliche Aussagen in den Miracula Sancti Germani des Aimoin von Saint-Germain-des-Prés', *Münchener Historische Studien* 5 (1993) 111-132, here 121-122. *Ibidem,* 121.
[203] *Ibidem,* 121.
[204] *Ibidem,* 121 n. 47. Krah concludes this by looking at Charles's royal charters. See: Krah, 'Zeitgeschichtliche Aussagen', 122.
[205] Krah concludes this by looking at Charles's royal charters. See: Krah, 'Zeitgeschichtliche Aussagen', 122.
[206] W. Wattenbach, W. Levison, and H. Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter. Vorzeit und Karolinger* 5 (Weimar 1952) 579. Perhaps they based this on the fact that 876 was an extremely turbulent year in the Frankish realm, during which Abbot Gauzlin was taken captive and a huge force of vikings appeared on the Seine once again. It seems unlikely that Aimoin has written the work during this time of upheaval and while Gauzlin was held as a captive. See: Coupland, 'Charles the Bald and the Defence', 79-80; *The annals of St-Bertin,* transl. J. Nelson (Manchester 1991) 197.
[207] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 234-235.
[208] *Ibidem*.
[209] A. Christys, 'St-Germain des-Prés, St Vincent and the martyrs of Cordoba', *Early Medieval Europe* 7:2 (1998) 199-216, here 215.
[210] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 239-242.

Summary of content

The content pertaining to vikings of the *Miraculis* in general lines overlaps with the *Translatio*. Aimoin, however, has chosen to alter the original in some instances by abbreviating or changing the sentence constructions.[211] The three main differences between the first book of Aimoin and the *Translatio* have already been mentioned above. Other discrepancies that are of importance to the study of the viking 'Other' in the text will be discussed later in this chapter.

The second book of Aimoin's work, which is not based on the *Translatio*, discusses some events pertaining to vikings that have not been discussed yet, and a brief summary will be given here.[212] The vikings resided on an island in the Seine, and often came to the area of Paris whenever they agreed to do so.[213] The monasteries in the region were ransomed, however, and the vikings desired horses to capture some of the nobles for the sake of wealth.[214] In order to do this, they also went to the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where about twenty brothers were still present, not believing the imminent danger of the vikings' presence in the area.[215] The brothers hid themselves from the vikings, and did so successfully, allegedly by the merits of Saint Germain; the vikings killed but one of them.[216] The vikings did, however, kill others while plundering the church and set fire to the provisions of the brothers before leaving.[217] In the end, the vikings were led out of the kingdom by a friendly treaty of peace, allowing the body of Saint Germain to return to the monastery.[218] The following part will analyse if, and if so, how the *Miraculis* alters the viking 'Other' compared to the *Translatio*.

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[211] Krah, 'Zeitgeschichtliche Aussagen', 121.
[212] Aimoin of St-Germain, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, cols. 1039B-1050A.
[213] *Ibidem*, c. 10 (cols. 1044D-1045A): 'Nortmanni vero apud eumdem locum qui dicitur Oscellus, in quadam Sequanae insula residentes, Parisius saepedum prorsus placebat, navali excursu veniebant.'
[214] *Ibidem*, c. 10 (col. 1045A): 'Redimebantur ergo omnia in circuitu vicina monasteria, ne illorum saevitia impositis ignibus cremarentur; studebantque praeterea vicissim equis, quatenus aliquos nobelium gratie pecuniae capere possent.'
[215] *Ibidem*, c. 10 (col. 1045A): 'Proinde decreverant mutua silentique consideratione Parisius sive ad nostrum aliquando percurre locum; omnesque ibidem sub malefida securitate commorantes inspirate decipere. Restiterant siquidem in eodem monasterio qui ipsum custodirent fratres fere viginti.'
[216] *Ibidem*: 'Tunc, quod magnum fuit declinandi subsidium, clausis in eorum oculis ecclesiae portis, omnes sese in quaeque latibula vel puteos immergentes absconderunt; quo non ex omnibus nisi unum equo fidentem, tanti praesulis suffragantibus meritis interficerent.'
[217] *Ibidem*: 'Quibus ita angelica administratione salvatis, interfectis praenuntiis atque aliis in circuitu et in medio monasterii ex famillia plurimis, omnie veluti spurcissimi invasores quaeque in ecclesia vel extra invenerant diripientes; cum proventus exsultatione cellario fratrum igne supposito, reversi sunt.'
[218] *Ibidem*, c. 10 (col. 1045A): 'Quibus ita angelica administratione salvatis, interfectis praenuntiis atque aliis in circuitu et in medio monasterii ex famillia plurimis, omnie veluti spurcissimi invasores quaeque in ecclesia vel extra invenerant diripientes; cum proventus exsultatione cellario fratrum igne supposito, reversi sunt.', c. 13 (col. 1047A): '(…) Nortmannis jam amico pacis foedere regno eductis, iter reversionis laeti suscipiunt (…)'.

The viking 'Other'

Vikings as a punishment of God

As already mentioned, Aimoin followed the *Translatio* rather closely, meaning that in the *Miraculis* too, the viking are portrayed as a punishment sent by God to punish the sins of the Carolingians. Additionally, however, Aimoin specifies why the sins had increased: '(…) when the kingdom of the Franks after the death of emperor Louis was divided into various parts, and the sins of the people increased, and blood touched blood (…)'.[219] The death of Louis the Pious was the moment that sins increased in the realm, according to Aimoin, illuminating the prominent place that the violent years after the death of Louis held in cultural memory. Aimoin underlines this by writing that the fact that the vikings came to the Frankish realm with God's permission was 'certainly done when our shameful acts were performed'.[220]

Just as in the author of the *Translatio*, Aimoin stresses that the vikings did not come to perpetually condemn the Franks, but to let them return to their former ways:

> 'But the pious, just Father, always the corrector of the offenders, gentle receiver of the correct ones, did not bring this about upon us in order to condemn us cruelly for the innumerable weight of our transgressions, but in order to rectify the wretched through the immeasurable favour of his generosity.'[221]

Here too, the vikings are portrayed as characters that – in the words of Cohen – 'police the borders of the possible'. They stand as a warning to the Franks; living a sinful life will likely be punished.

Aimoin chooses to include some of the descriptions of the vikings not being opposed in any way by the Franks and elaborates that this happened because 'the *principes* of the region (which we were not able to mention without great breaking of heart) would turn reluctant and afraid to wage war'.[222] The Franks were bereft of any divine help in fighting the vikings because of their sins, as is further highlighted by Aimoin in his description of the confrontation between

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[219] Aimoin of St-Germain, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 1 (col. 1029B): '(…) cum regnum Francorum post obitum domni Ludovici imperatoris varias divisum esset in partes, et peccata populi crescerent, sanguisque sanguinem tangeret (…)'.
[220] *Ibidem*: '(…) flagitiis quidem exigentibus actum est nostris (…)'.
[221] *Ibidem*, c. 1 (col. 1030B): 'At pius Pater justus, deliquentium semper corrector, correctorumque clemens susceptor, non hoc intulit ut nos ob innumera delictorum nostrorum pondera crudelis damnaret, sed ut per immensam suae largitatis benignitatem afflictos emendaret.'
[222] *Ibidem*, c. 1 (col. 1029B): '(…) regionis principes (quod absque ingenti contritione cordis effari nequivimus) ad bellandum pigros timidosque adverterent; (…)'.

the vikings and Charles's army:

> 'Since indeed fear and dread had invaded all men so that they were stripped of divine help by the merit of injustice and, for that reason, robbed of the consolation of the defence of the world. Who, I ask, feels no pain when, before the war was committed, the army was put to flight; when before it was pierced by an arrow, it was brought low; when before the collision of the shield, it was shamefully broken?'[223]

Just like the anonymous author of the *Translatio*, Aimoin underlines that the sins of the Franks were the cause of the inability to defend the realm against the vikings, thereby also drawing a parallel between moral cleanliness and the ability to fight off the vikings. Aimoin utilises this parallel throughout his work to commend Charles further. Already early on in the *Miraculis*, Charles was applauded for his march to defend his realm against the vikings, even more so than in the *Translatio*:

[223] Aimoin of St-Germain, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 1 (col. 1030B): 'Timor siquidem et metus universos invaserat, ut puta merito iniquitatis divino enudatos auxilio atque ideo mundanae defensionis destitutos solatio. Quis, rogo, non doleret, antequam bellam committeretur, fugatum exercitum; antequam jaceretur sagitta, confossum ; ante scuti collisionem, ignominiose subactum?'.

Translatio:

‘Against whom the most excellent king Charles, arriving, ordered that all of the army of his kingdom, would come together there. (…) For Charles, the most noble king, who was ready to die for the defense of the holy church of God, (…).'[224]

Miraculis:

‘Then the glorious *princeps* king Charles, having summoned some part of his army, unable to summon all of it, because on account of their [=vikings] sudden approach, he came first to the monastery of the blessed Denis, so that, supported by his prayers, he could march fearlessly against the enemies of God and his own. Then, as he was vigorous in spirit and warlike command like a young man, he came to the above-mentioned place to fight; ready not only to fight, but also to die for the faith and for the defence of the holy Church of God.’[225]

Aimoin provides justification for Charles’s inability to summon all of his army by underscoring the swiftness of the vikings’ approach to the area of Paris. This also implies the swiftness of Charles’s own reaction to the incursion. Moreover, Charles is contrasted with the regional elite, who ‘turned reluctant and afraid to wage war’[226]; Charles, supported by God, was ready to die defending his realm against the vikings. Noticeably, Aimoin writes way less often about the vikings acting ‘without opposition’ compared to the author of the *Translatio,* which may have been done to underline that it was Charles who quickly opposed the vikings.[227]

[224] *Translatio,* c. 12 (p. 78-79): ‘Contra quos praecellentissimus rex Karolus adveniens, jussit ut omnis exercitus regni sui ad bellandum eductus illuc conflueret. Karolus namque, nobilissimus rex, cernens quod gestum erat, qui pro defensione sanctae Dei Ecclesiae mori paratus erat, (…)’.
[225] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani,* c. 1 (cols. 1029B-1030B): ‘Tunc gloriosus princeps rex Carolus, quia propter subitaneum eorum ascensum ex toto non poterat, convocata aliqua sui exercitus parte, venit primum ad monasterium Macharii Dionysii, ut ejus orationibus fultus, securius contra Dei suosque pergeret inimicos. Deinde ut erat, uti adolescens, animo armisque strenuus, ad supra dictum locum pugnaturus accessit ; paratus non solum dimicare, sed etiam pro fide, proque defensione sanctae Dei Ecclesiae laudabiliter mori.’
[226] *Ibidem,* c. 1 (col. 1029B): ‘(…) regionis principes (quod absque ingenti contritione cordis effari nequivimus) ad bellandum pigros timidosque adverterent (…)’.
[227] Also observed by Delvaux. See: M. Delvaux, ‘Transregional Slave Networks of the Northern Arc, 700–900 C.E.’ PhD Diss. (Boston 2019) 141.

Interestingly, the viking 'Other' in the *Miraculis* even seems to acknowledge the strength of Charles the Bald. Aimoin writes at Charles's appearance that the vikings 'diverted to the other bank of the aforesaid river', where they encountered the other part of the army.[228] The vikings do not want to confront Charles in battle, highlighting his military skill. Subsequently, Aimoin also seems to not explicitly mention that Charles retreated after the army on the other side of the river shamefully fled in order to prevent his audience from perceiving Charles as a weak leader.

Aimoin's portrayal of the vikings in the dealings concerning the tribute payment to them, which is left out in the *Translatio*, is also conciliatory towards Charles and portrays him as a strong leader who wished to defend the realm by force. As has been previously established, the *Miraculis* is the only source that notes that vikings were the ones coming to a Carolingian ruler to suggest a tribute payment:

> 'Meanwhile, pretending to be sick, they directed a pretext of an envoy to the most excellent king Charles, so that, receiving them faithfully in peace, he would allow them to return to their own kingdom by paying tribute.'[229]

As such, it seems that the tribute payment, which was regarded as a cowardly solution for the viking incursions during the ninth century, was brought about by the vikings themselves and not by Charles the Bald.[230] Hence, Aimoin weakened Charles's connection to the payment, profiling him further as a strong leader who wished to fight for the defence of his realm rather than buy off those that afflict it, using the wealth of his subjects. Moreover, the fact that the vikings apparently first need the permission of Charles to leave his realm further stresses his authority.

Charles is distanced more explicitly from the tribute payment in the passage that follows:

> 'In this way, while the king did not wish this assembly, Ragnar, however, their leader, and all *principes* [of the vikings], were brought to the king, who then resided in the monastery of the blessed Denis, by certain principes [of Charles]

[228] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 1 (col. 1030B): 'Cujus adversarii cognoscentes adventum, deverterunt ad alteram praedicti fluminis ripam (…)'. Also noted by Christys. See: Christys, 'St-Germain des-Prés', 215.
[229] *Ibidem*, c. 10 (col. 1034C): 'Interea simulato languor, legationis causa dirigunt ad praecellentissimum regem carolum, ut eos cum pace fideles suscipiens, ad propriam dato regni tribute redire permitteret patriam.'
[230] Coupland, 'The Frankish Tribute Payments', 57.

(so he was told) harmed by bribes (…)'.[231]

Aimoin underlines that Charles did not want this meeting to take place at all and that the regional elite were the ones to blame for this, bribed by the vikings. Charles, therefore, is not in any way responsible for the tribute payment that results from this meeting in this portrayal, and therefore his image as a strong king who wished to fight is maintained. Consequently, Aimoin also implies Charles is a paragon of virtue.

The local elite, then, are responsible for bringing about the tribute payment, and as such, their dealings with the vikings are again criticised. Earlier in his work, the local elite and their response to the viking attacks were already condemned. The fact that they were willing to accept money to bring about a tribute payment illustrates their crumbling sense of loyalty towards Charles, who, according to the story, heavily opposed this meeting. Hence, the regional nobles are portrayed as not only weak but also greedy, selfish, and disloyal to Charles. However, they worked together not just with anyone, but with the vikings, the pagans that ravaged the Christian realm. They helped the vikings to achieve their goals and put their own interests above those of all Christians. The elites do not only seem to have no sense of loyalty to Charles, siding with pagans rather than with the divinely elected king. They are contrasted with Charles in their way of dealing with the vikings, being too afraid to fight and instead forming alliances with them, and in turn, they are amoral Franks.

The viking 'Other' is therefore used in the *Miraculis* as a narrative tool not only to glorify Charles the Bald but also to criticise the local elites. Considering the political circumstances of the Carolingian realm in which Aimoin wrote this work, it seems evident that the work was issued, among other reasons, to reflect upon and influence the contemporary political situation. As has been illustrated by the letter of Hincmar in 875, the support of local magnates and bishops in the Frankish heartland was anything but secure; in Charles's absence, yielding to Louis if that meant holding onto their power was a small sacrifice to pay, or so they seem to have thought.[232] Gauzlin may well have felt the need to commission a work during this time of questionable loyalty in the northern part of Charles's realm that portrayed Charles as the capable defender of the Frankish heartlands, while condemning those who were not loyal to him in order to counterbalance the negative portrayals of Charles that were circulating.[233]

[231] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 10 (col. 1034C): 'His ita placitis, rege quidem nolente, principibus tamen quibusdam (ut fatebatur) muneribus laesis, Ragenarius dux eorum, cunctique principes ad regem, qui tunc in monasterio Macharii Dionysii residebat, adducuntur (…)'.
[232] Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 239-242.
[233] Other negative portrayal of Charles around this time can be found in: Hildegar of Meaux, *Vita Faronis*

Vikings as monsters

The applicability of the three theses of Cohen will again be used to argue that the vikings also fulfil the role of 'monsters' in the *Miraculis*. As already elaborated on, the vikings in this work, just as in the *Translatio*, were characters that 'policed the borders of the possible'. Moreover, they are 'harbingers of category crisis' and 'dwellers at the gates of difference' in this work, as will be illuminated in this section.

Vikings as pagans

As was the case in the *Translatio*, the viking 'Other' in his work is prominently characterised by its paganism. Again, the vikings are being described as the *inimicis Dei*, entering the *fines Christianorum*, and killing and capturing the *populum Dei*.[234] This is further underlined by Aimoin's inclusion of the story of the golden statue that was made by Ragnar, wishing to become a Christian and atone for his sins, after he was cast down by Saint Germain in front of Horic. The golden statue was meant for 'sacred offerings'[235], and therefore seems to be, as previously established when analysing the *Translatio*, a reference to the molten golden calf in the Bible, an idol made by the Israelites to be praised as a God. Hence, it is not surprising that the statue 'remained rejected by the purest inspector of hearts [=Christian God]'.[236] The viking 'Other' is religiously alien, and hence 'dwells at the gates of difference' like a monster.

Aimoin, however, decides to add a detail of the golden statue that cannot be found in the *Translatio*:

episcopi Meldensis, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica SS rer. Merov. 5* (Hannover 1890) 184-203, here 199-200; *Annales Xantenses*, ed. B. Von Simson, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica SS rer. Germ. 12* (Hannover 1909), here 14.

[234] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 1 (col. 1029B): '(…) securius contra Dei suosque pergeret inimicos.' and '(…) et superbo tumentique corde cum valido navium apparatu Christianorum fines intrarunt (…)' and '(…) exeuntes, a navibus, longe lateque diffusi, coeperunt utriusque sexus mullitudinem trucidare, captivare, villas, monasteria, ecclesiasque depopulando cremare, tolamque suae libidinis immensitatem cum omni crudelitate in populum Dei debachando exercere (…)'.

[235] *Ibidem*, c. 13 (col. 1036B): 'Statua vero sacris oblationibus indigna, (…)'.

[236] *Ibidem*: '(…) veluti immundissima a mundissimo cordium inspectore refutata remansit.'

Translatio:	*Miraculis*:
'He, who was afflicted and tortured for three days with the greatest pain, ordered a golden statue to be made, and to be brought to Germain by the messenger of king Louis, (…)'[237]	'After he was shamefully casted down by pain for three days, he finally ordered a golden statue **of his likeness [=Ragnar]** to be made and to be brought by the same Cobbo to the old Germain, (…)'[238]

In addition to the *Translatio*, which mentions that Ragnar orders a golden statue to be made, Aimoin specifies that this statue is one that resembles Ragnar. In other words, the statue was not even one that resembled Germain, but of the viking that afflicted him. Considering the statue was meant for 'sacred offerings', it seems that Aimoin also wanted to ridicule pagan faith by implying they worshipped human beings rather than God.[239] By this addition, Aimoin underlines the paganism of the viking 'Other' and its ignorance of Christianity. However, this addition also seems to have served another function; it condemns self-aggrandising, and shows the audience they should remain humble.

Moreover, as in the *Translatio*, the everlasting paganness of the vikings is underlined by the passage in which Ragnar, struck down by Saint Germain, wishes to become a Christian in the future. Ragnar could not become a Christian as he was a pagan and therefore not a part of 'Christ's flock'.[240] Even the donation that Ragnar was willing to make – in the form of a golden statue – had no effect, by which Aimoin conveyed to his audience that forgiveness and the way into heaven was not something that could be bought. As in the *Translatio*, Ragnar embodies the function of the viking 'Other' as 'harbingers of category crisis' in the *Miraculis*; his wish to become Christian opened up the discussion as to whether all pagans should be converted to Christianity or whether a distinction must be made between pagans that were able to convert and those that could not. By being a 'harbinger of category crisis', the character of Ragnar makes the viking 'Other' in the *Miraculis* more monstrous. By writing that Ragnar was

[237] *Translatio*, c. 30 (p. 92): 'Qui maximis per triduum tormentis afflictus atque cruciatus, preecepit unam statuam fieri auream, et per missum Ludowici regis Germano deferri, (…)'.
[238] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 12 (col. 1035B): 'Qui maximis per triduum tormentis ignominiose afflictus, praecepit tandem unam auream suae similitudinis statuam fieri, atque per eundem Kobbonem Germano seni deferri,(…)'. Bold font added.
[239] Interestingly, the narrative trope of humans being worshipped by vikings also occurs in another contemporary text, the *Vita Anskarii*. A former king was worshipped as a god. See: Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, transl. C. Robinson (London 1921) 25-136, here 89-90.
[240] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 12 (col. 1035B): '(…) spondes se, si evaderet, Christianum deinceps futurum, Deumque Christianorum indubitanter crediturum; sed quia non erat ex ovibus Christi, idcirco quod petebat obtinere non meruit.'

not able to join the Christian fold, Aimoin illuminates that indeed the category of 'pagans' was not uniform; some pagans could convert, whereas others, such as Ragnar, were unable to do so. As such, Aimoin, like the anonymous author of the *Translatio*, clarifies that the vikings could not be incorporated into the *regnum Francorum*, as the Christian faith was a requisite for membership. As the vikings could not convert to Christianity, the ultimate destination for them was hell, as illustrated by Aimoin's choice to include the passage of the three vikings that were struck down and sent to hell. Aimoin stresses that this was the ultimate destination of the vikings when writing about the viking whose hand was malformed because he struck a marble pillar 'thirty times, as if cutting an enemy'[241] in the church:

> 'He was tormented for a very long time, suffering with a shaking body, until he ended his miserable life, full of indignation and anger, and was carried down by the hands of demons to the seats of hell (…).'[242]

It is clear that for Aimoin the vikings after their deaths went to hell, the place 'where their devouring worm will not die, and their excessive fire will not go out.'[243]

Vikings as violent characters

The viking 'Other' in the *Miraculis* is, just like in the *Translatio*, an extremely violent character. Aimoin again follows the *Translatio* rather closely, mentioning that the vikings were 'raging hither and tither and turning everything around with great pride'.[244] After having left Rouen, their violent nature is further highlighted:

> '(…) coming out of their ships, after they scattered far and wide, they started to kill and capture a multitude of both sexes and to burn down the villages, monasteries, and churches by plundering, and to exercise the vast immensity of their lust with all cruelty on the people of God by raging without control (…)'[245]

Even though this passage might imply that the vikings also raped the Franks during their raids,

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[241] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 8 (col. 1034A): '(…) tredecies totiusque corporis adnisu veluti capulans hostem percuteret.'
[242] *Ibidem*: 'Qui tamdiu nimia vexatione compatientis corporis cruciatus est, donec miserrimam finiret vitam, plenus indignationis et irae, manibus daemoniorum devectus ad tartareas sedes cocyti foetidumque lacum averni.'
[243] *Ibidem*, c. 7 (col. 1033B): '(…) ubi edax vermis eorum non morietur, et nimius eorum ignis non exstinguetur.'
[244] *Ibidem*, c.1 (col 1029B): '(…) qui huc illucque furentes, atque cum magna superbia cuncta gyrantes (…)'.
[245] *Ibidem*: '(…) exeuntes, a navibus, longe lateque diffusi, coeperunt utriusque sexus mullitudinem trucidare, captivare, villas, monasteria, ecclesiasque depopulando cremare, tolamque suae libidinis immensitatem cum omni crudelitate in populum Dei debachando exercere (…)'.

'exercising their lust' seems to refer to the fact that they could do whatever they wanted.[246] Aimoin further highlights the violent nature of the vikings in the second book, when the vikings killed one of the monks and other people present at the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.[247] Furthermore, they 'all were plundering everything they found inside or outside the church, like the most impure invaders; when they succeeded with excessive rejoicing, after they set fire to the provisions of the brothers, they went away.'[248] It seems once again evident that the vikings heavily transgressed the social norms and boundaries of the Carolingian realm through their extreme use of violence and 'dwelled at the gates of difference'. As such, they were monsters in this text.

The vikings are monsters in the *Miraculis* and are most likely portrayed as such to further condemn members of the regional elite in the Frankish heartlands, such as Hincmar, that were not loyal to Charles around the time Aimoin wrote this work. By illuminating the monstrosity of the viking 'Other' in this work, Aimoin simultaneously shows his audience that the vikings could not be incorporated into the *regnum Francorum* and should therefore be repulsed from it. The key of this work, then, is that it clarifies that the one to blame for the unsuccessful defence of the realm is not Charles but rather the regional elite. The monstrosity of the vikings is even somewhat radiated onto the elite, as they decide to work together with them instead of Charles. By portraying the viking 'Other' as a monster, Aimoin allowed himself to indirectly criticise the regional elite that were not fully loyal to Charles when he went to Italy in 875.

Vikings being less monstrous

Interestingly, however, the degree of monstrosity of the viking 'Other' in the *Miraculis* is lower than the degree in the *Translatio,* even if it is so by a small degree. First of all, the vikings are more clearly described as intruders that were not just killing and wreaking havoc just for the sake of violence, but for the sake of gaining wealth compared to the *Translatio*. Aimoin writes that 'all the neighbouring monasteries around were therefore redeemed, so that they would not be burned by the savageness of them [=vikings], when they start fires (…)';[249] tribute was paid

[246] As stated by Coupland before. See: S. Coupland, 'The Vikings on the Continent in Myth and History', *History* 88:2 (2003) 186-203, here 195-197.
[247] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 10 (col. 1045A): '(…) quo non ex omnibus nisi unum equo fidentem, tanti praesulis suffragantibus meritis interficerent.'
[248] *Ibidem*: '(…) omnie veluti spurcissimi invasores quaeque in ecclesia vel extra invenerant diripientes; cum proventus exsultatione cellario fratrum igne supposito, reversi sunt.'
[249] *Ibidem*: 'Redimebantur ergo omnia in circuitu vicina monasteria, ne illorum saevitia impositis ignibus cremarentur (…)'.

to the vikings as a ransom for the monasteries in the area, meaning that the vikings were not transfixed on destroying and killing. Aimoin further highlights this, when he writes that:

> '(…) they [=vikings] desired horses, so they could capture some of the nobles for the sake of wealth. From which place, for example, from the redemption of the abbot Louis, a most gentle man, they acquired no small and incomparable business of profit.'[250]

Again, the vikings are portrayed as characters mainly interested in wealth. Capturing nobles, like abbot Louis, by using the speed of horses allowed them to achieve this goal. Indeed, this was also the reason why they decided to go to the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in the first place, as Aimoin explains in the next passage; twenty brothers had remained at the monastery that the vikings could capture and ransom:

> 'Therefore they decided by mutual consideration, and having remained silent, whether they would run through [the area around] Paris all the way towards our place; and whether they would catch all in that very place, dwelling there with a false sense of security. Since indeed about twenty brothers had remained in the same monastery, who would protect themselves.'[251]

Furthermore, the vikings are portrayed as having human agency in the *Miraculis*:

> 'In fact, the Northmen, residing on a certain island in the Seine, near that same place which is called Oscellus, often came to [the area around] Paris on a naval excursion when it was altogether agreeable [to them].'[252]

The vikings decided together to go to Paris themselves, highlighting their human agency. Later on, the vikings decided by 'mutual consideration' to go to the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.[253] As such, the vikings in the *Miraculis* appear as less morally transgressive figures compared to the vikings in the *Translatio*; they seem to be rationally operating actors that

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[250] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 10 (col. 1045A): '(…) studebantque praeterea vicissim equis, quatenus aliquos nobelium gratie pecuniae capere possent. Unde veluti ex mitissimi viri domni Luduwici abbatis redemptione, non modicum et incomparabile acquirebant lucre negotium.'
[251] *Ibidem*: 'Proinde decreverant mutua silentique consideratione Parisius sive ad nostrum aliquando percurre locum; omnesque ibidem sub malefida ecuritate commorantes inspirate decipere. Restiterant siquidem in eodem monasterio qui ipsum custodirent fratres fere viginti.'
[252] *Ibidem*, c. 10 (cols. 1044D-1045A): 'Nortmanni vero apud eumdem locum qui dicitur Oscellus, in quadam Sequanae insula residentes, Parisius saepedum prorsus placebat, navali excursu veniebant.'
[253] *Ibidem*, c. 10 (col. 1045): 'Proinde decreverant mutua silentique consideratione Parisius sive ad nostrum aliquando percurre locum (…)'.

wished to gain wealth. Aimoin's vikings were still 'dwellers at the gates of difference', but less so, as their moral alterity is decreased to an extent.

Aimoin further lowers the degree of monstrosity by altering one of the most famous passages of the *Translatio:*

Translatio:	*Miraculis*:
'(…) the most impious and cruel Northmen themselves, blasphemers of God, to the taunting and mockery of the king and his chiefs or of all the Christians standing there, hanged 111 captives before their eyes.'[254]	'(…) whereupon they, immediately driven to flight, on an island in the same river, to the reproach of the Christians, **hanged more or less eleven subdued captives**, and pierced through many others in the houses and woods, and killed some in the farms and plains, slaughtering them in wretched pursuit (…)'[255]

Only eleven captives are hanged in this account, instead of the 111 captives in the *Translatio*.[256] This significant change can be explained by the fact that a large number of captives subdued by the enemy signified that the Carolingian king had failed to protect his subjects; in the years before the production of the *Miraculis*, Charles the Bald had been heavily criticised because numerous Carolingians were taken captive by the enemy.[257] By deflating the sacrifice of 111 captives to only eleven, Aimoin casts Charles in a better light while still portraying the vikings as savages that sacrificed innocent Christians, a scene that must have captured the imagination of his audience. As such, the magnitude of the vikings' monstrosity is also alleviated to an extent; killing eleven subdued captives is less ethically transgressive than killing 111. It is possible that Aimoin wanted to improve the portrayal of Charles, and was therefore necessitated to deflate the use of violence by the vikings in this scene.

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[254] *Translatio*, c. 12 (p. 78): '(…) ipsi impiissimi ac crudelissimi Normanni, blasphematores Dei, ad opprobrium et derisionem regis principumque ejus seu omnium christia- norum illic adstantium, centum et XI captivos coram eorum oculis suspenderunt.'

[255] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c.1 (col. 1030): '(…) quibus confestim in fugam versis, in insula quadam ejusdem fluvii ad opprobrium Christianorum plus minus indecim captivos subdibus suspenderunt, multosque alios per domos et arbores confixerunt, atque uonnullos per villas camposque miserabili insecutione trucidantes peremerunt (…)'. Bold font added.

[256] Also noted by Delvaux. See: Delvaux, 'Transregional Slave Networks', 140-142.

[257] Delvaux, 'Transregional Slave Networks', 138-140.

Moreover, Aimoin alters the degree of monstrosity of the vikings to an extent by adding information that cannot be found in the *Translatio*. When the vikings entered the church in the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and still before the three vikings were struck down, Aimoin notes the following:

Translatio:	*Miraculis*:
'For when the faithless and wretched people were cutting into the beam of the church itself, (…)'[258]	'For, when this wretched people had tried to cut into the beams of the church, **because they were made of wood, and for that reason suitable for a ship**; (…)'[259]

Interestingly, in contrast to the *Translatio*, Aimoin chooses to further explain the actions and intent of the vikings in this scene; they could use the wooden beams for the production of ships. This description illustrates that the vikings in Aimoin's story were not destroying the church just to destroy it but were primarily focused on stealing things of value, seemingly alleviating the moral monstrosity of the viking 'Other' further. It is possible that the author of the *Translatio* assumed his audience knew the vikings were cutting the beams because of their value to the building of ships, and that Aimoin thought elaboration was needed in order for people to properly understand it during his time. This seems unlikely, however, as Aimoin's decided to leave out multiple scenes and descriptive clauses from the work for the sake of brevity, and therefore it would be strange that he would elaborate here. It seems more likely, I would argue, that Aimoin gained this knowledge in the 25 years between the two works, and decided to spread this knowledge in this scene, providing his audience with an answer as to why the vikings started cutting the beams of the church. The vikings were definitely violent, but they were violent for a reason.

Furthermore, Aimoin writes in the scene where the vikings met up with Charles to discuss the terms of their departure:

[258] *Translatio*, c. 14 (p. 80): 'Nam cum trabem ipsius ecclesiae perfidus atque miserrimus incideret populus, (…)'.
[259] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 7 (col. 1033B): 'Nam cum trabes ecclesiae miserrimus ille populus, quia errant abiegnae, et idcirco habiles navigio, incendere tentavissent (…)'. Bold font added.

Translatio:	*Miraculis*:
'(…) while they pledged, by their Gods and by those by whom they thought they were most protected or preserved by, that if he would let them leave peacefully, they by no means would enter or touch the distant borders of his empire.'[260]	'(…) while they [=vikings] pledged, with divine attributes or weapons, by their Gods or by those by whom they thought they were most protected or preserved by, that they by no means would enter or touch the most distant borders of his empire **unless perhaps as helpers**.'[261]

Interestingly, Aimoin chooses to add, compared to the *Translatio*, that the vikings might return to the Carolingian realm in order to help the Frankish cause, which further nuances their 'Otherness'; instead of the 'Othered' enemy, they may become allies in the future. It seems likely that Aimoin chose to add this information, considering that alliances between vikings and Carolingians were becoming more commonplace in the second half of the ninth century.[262] The vikings' degree of monstrosity is lowered because of this description; they 'dwelled at the gate of difference' to a lesser degree, and had the potential to become allies in the future.

Aimoin also changes the portrayal of the viking 'Other' by leaving out passages that can be found in the *Translatio*. The scene of the stare-down between the Franks and the vikings, in which the vikings are described as naked and barely armed for combat, whereas the Franks were fully armed, is completely left out of Aimoin's narrative.[263] As such, the vikings in his story are not culturally 'Othered' in this manner; they are not portrayed as naked or without any weapons, which would underline their 'uncivilised' nature, meaning that the vikings come across as less socially transgressive characters.

Additionally, Aimoin chooses to leave out the abundant mentions in the *Translatio* of the Carolingian sins as the cause of the actions of the vikings. It seems to indicate an altered view of the vikings, who are increasingly viewed not as divine punishers but as humans that

[260] *Translatio*, c. 20 (p. 85): 'Per deos suos et per ea in quibus maxime se protegi ac salvari putabant, testantes ut, si eos illaesos abire permitteret, nequaquam ulterius fines ipsius regni contingerent neque intrarent.'
[261] Aimoin, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, c. 10 (col. 1034C): '(…) per deos, perque ea quibus maxime se protegi ac salvari putabant testantes numina vel arma, quatenus nequaquam ulterius vel fines sui regni nisi fortasse auxiliatores intrarent aut contingerent.' Bold font added.
[262] S. Coupland, 'From poachers to gamekeepers: Scandinavian warlords and Carolingian kings', *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1998) 85-114.
[263] *Translatio*, c. 12 (p. 79).

could be discussed with. As such, the vikings in this text also lose their function as characters that 'police the borders of the possible' to an extent, further decreasing their monstrosity; because of their ability to discuss and even cooperate with the Franks, punishment for sins in the form of violence could be omitted. A sinful life did not *have* to lead to divine punishment delivered by vikings.

The question arises why the viking 'Other' in the *Miraculis* is a little less monstrous than in the *Translatio*. The best explanation for this can be found when examining the altered circumstances in which Aimoin wrote this work. It seems that the lowered degree of monstrosity is a result of the continued interaction with the vikings in the twenty-five years after the *Translatio*: Franks gradually started to become somewhat acquainted with the vikings, as they started to interact with them more and more. Viking presence in the *regnum Francorum* was more common; vikings started to spend winters in Francia, and were gradually incorporated into the Frankish political system. The lowered degree of monstrosity in the *Miraculis* therefore seems to be a reflection of this process of acculturation. Aimoin's work had to be plausible in the minds of his audience in order to be effective, meaning that the portrayal of the vikings had to be 'updated' by Aimoin; the vikings – as the audience of Aimoin also came throughout the years – were not just monstrous punishers out for blood, but could also act less monstrously.

Additionally, the decreased degree of monstrosity may be yet another way for Aimoin to be conciliatory towards Charles. In the decades after the *Translatio* was written, Charles is known to have had amicable connections with several viking leaders, in some cases even granting them some political influence in his realm or allowing them to join their entourage.[264] Moreover, on some occasions, Charles even worked together with vikings in his military endeavours.[265] By lowering the degree of monstrosity of the vikings in the *Miraculis*, Aimoin might have wanted to show his readers that, sporadically, collaboration between Franks and vikings was possible. Certainly the kind of collaboration between the regional nobility and the vikings in the story was to be condemned, but Aimoin illuminates that the vikings might return to the realm of Charles as 'helpers' in the future. Considering the contemporary critique on Charles and his dealings with vikings, it seems as if Aimoin decreased the degree of monstrosity a little, to convince his readers that Charles's sporadic alliances with vikings were justified, even beneficial.

[264] Coupland, 'From poachers to gamekeepers', 99-108.
[265] *Ibidem*, 104.

Chapter 3: *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*

This chapter will study the viking 'Other' in the *Bella Parisiacae Urbis* and compare it to the ones in the *Translatio* and the *Miraculis*.[266] Again, the historical context in which the work has been written will be discussed first. Secondly, more information will be given on the *Bella* itself. Lastly, this chapter will scrutinise the viking 'Other' in the work, and determine its degree of monstrosity. Explanations for the portrayals of the vikings will be given by looking at the contemporary socio-political context in the Frankish realm.

Historical context

The lengthy rule of Charles the Bald came to an end in 877. However, it was the passing in 879 of his short-lived son, Louis the Stammerer, that led to more turmoil within the realm.[267] Out of this turmoil emerged two aristocratic factions that tried to monitor the young sons of Louis the Stammerer; one trying to make Louis III, the eldest of the two, the sole ruler of the West Frankish realm, and the other preferring a division of the realm between Louis III and his younger brother Carloman II. Months of negotiation were further complicated by East Frankish pressure, resulting in the end in a division between Louis III and Carloman II; Louis ruled Francia and Neustria only for two years due to his untimely death in 882 and left Carloman, who already held sway in Aquitaine and Burgundy, with the power over the entire realm.[268] Carloman himself, however, also died unexpectedly during a hunting accident in December 884. This meant that the one adult male Carolingian that remained, who happened to be the ruler in East Francia, Charles the Fat, was invited by 'the Franks' to take over in the West.[269]

Odo, along with other magnates, such as the previous abbot of Saint-Germain-des-Prés Gauzlin, were most likely referred to by the annalist of Sint Vaast when writing 'Franks'.[270] Odo was the son of Robert the Strong, the progenitor of the famous Capetian dynasty, which ruled until the French Revolution.[271] Odo became the Count of Paris in 882 and distinguished himself as an effective military leader during the viking siege of Paris in 885-886. For his efforts, Charles the Fat granted him the *honores* that his father previously held, allowing him to defend the realm against the vikings even more effectively. As such, Odo became the most

[266] From here on out, '*Bella'* will be used as an abbreviation of *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*.
[267] S. Maclean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the end of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge 2003) 102.
[268] *Ibidem*.
[269] *Ibidem*.
[270] *Ibidem*, 102-115, 108.
[271] *Ibidem*, 49-50.

powerful magnate in Neustria.[272] It has been argued that Odo's power came at the expense of Charles's and that they were therefore political rivals in the years after Charles was invited to rule the West Franks.[273] As Simon MacLean has shown, however, there is little reason to believe this is a likely scenario; Charles the Fat's relationship with Odo was not out of the ordinary during the early Middle Ages.[274] While it is true that Odo was an extremely powerful figure, he was so because of the favours of Charles the Fat, and was more like a chief royal representative than an autonomous territorial aristocrat.[275]

In any case, when Charles the Fat died in 888, Odo was one of the powerful magnates who used the vacuum to seize the crown; he claimed the entire West Frankish realm for himself.[276] The West Frankish Kingdom now had – in the person of Odo – a magnate who was able to dominate the other nobles and legitimise himself through his successful military endeavours as king.[277] However, the emergence of multiple rival kings vying for dominance and support after Charles's death divided the loyalties of the magnates and compelled them to make decisions that inexorably set them against one another.[278] In Francia, there was initially not much support for Odo; he did manage to bring the resisting Frankish nobles over to his side through threats and promises, but their loyalty to Odo was frail.[279] In fact, soon after, some of the nobles, such as Archbishop Fulk, invited Arnulf, the king of the East Frankish Kingdom, to take over.[280] Arnulf refused this offer on hearing of the decisive victory of Odo against the vikings at Montfaucon, highlighting the renown gained by defeating the vikings.[281] Even though Odo indeed managed to consolidate his rule in the North after this initial opposition, he was only moderately successful in doing so outside Francia proper.[282]

It is not a surprise that Charles the Simple, Louis the Stammerer's son and the last available Carolingian male heir, reappears in the sources around this time.[283] Earlier Charles

[272] Maclean, *Kingship and Politics*, 50.
[273] See for instance: O. Guillot, 'Les étapes de l'accession d'Eudes au pouvoir royal', in: G. Duby ed., *Media in Francia…: Recueil de mélanges offert à Karl Ferdinand Werner à l'occasion de son 65e anniversaire par ses amis et collègues français* (Maulévrier 1989) 199-223, here 203-204.
[274] Maclean, *Kingship and Politics*, 50-55.
[275] *Ibidem*, 64-74.
[276] H. Lösslein, *Royal Power in the Late Carolingian Age: Charles III the Simple and His Predecessors* (Cologne 2019) 32-33.
[277] *Ibidem*, 33.
[278] Maclean, *Kingship and Politics*, 120.
[279] Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 35.
[280] *Ibidem*.
[281] T. Scharff, 'Gott gnädig stimmen und den Adel im Auge behalten. Die Rolle karolingischer Herrscher im Krieg' in: M. Clauss, A. Stieldorf and T. Weller eds., *Der König als Krieger. Zum Verhältnis von Königtum und Krieg im Mittelalter* (Bamberg 2015) 265-298, here 265-276.
[282] Maclean, *Kingship and Politics*, 119-120.
[283] Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 34.

was passed over when successors were sought; in 879, Charles, being only a baby, was passed over as there was no real need for a third candidate; in 882 and 884, he was not seriously considered a potential ruler due to the need for a strong ruler in the face of the viking threat; and in 888 too, Charles could not function as a rallying point for discontented nobles, as he did not have many of his own connections and did not have a power base to take on Odo.[284] This is not to say that Carolingian descent had lost all its importance, and Odo definitely saw Charles as a threat to his rule.[285] In fact, Odo, despite his lack of Carolingian blood, attempted to profile himself no differently than the Carolingian rulers before him in order to manufacture the impression of uninterrupted continuity; his diplomas were resembling those of his Carolingian predecessors, and he was crowned at Compiègne, one of the most important palaces of Charles the Bald. Carolingian blood still held some weight in the late ninth century political discourse concerning kingship.[286]

It was the blood of Charles the Simple, as well as the absence of another Carolingian male, that significantly improved his position during the reign of Odo. His blood made him the ideal rallying point for any discontented magnates who wished to oppose the Robertian rule.[287] The rebellious faction around Archbishop Fulk, who again proved disloyal to Odo, crowned Charles king in 893.[288] In a letter to Arnulf, Fulk defended himself against the accusation that this was an unjust rebellion, presenting Odo as 'a stranger to the royal family [who] had tyrannically abused the royal power'.[289] Odo's non-Carolingian blood was therefore used not only to deny Odo's legitimacy as a ruler but also to emphasise the claim of Charles.[290] It is therefore not surprising that Odo's following attempted to invalidate Louis the Stammerer's paternity to Charles, since this was the pillar on which Charles's claim rested.[291]

After Charles was made king, the rebellious faction marched with an army against Odo, but both parties withdrew. In the autumn of 893, however, Odo managed to force his enemies out of the realm by means of a surprise attack. Nevertheless, this did not allow Odo to consolidate his power definitively again; a few months later, Charles's supporters returned to the realm, and an armistice was concluded.[292] After the armistice, Charles met Arnulf and secured his support. The following endeavours of Arnulf's troops, however, proved unfruitful,

[284] Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 28-37.
[285] *Ibidem*, 37-38, 34.
[286] *Ibidem*, 38.
[287] *Ibidem*.
[288] *Ibidem*, 52-53.
[289] *Ibidem*, 29, 34-35, 38.
[290] *Ibidem*, 35.
[291] *Ibidem*, 37-39.
[292] *Ibidem*, 53.

and caused Charles to seek refuge in Burgundy. In 895, Zwentibold, the son of Arnulf, became the ruler of Lotharingia, and also confirmed an alliance with Charles. Together, they managed to force Odo to withdraw beyond the Seine, and Charles's supporters now started negotiating with Odo. Soon after, Zwentibold's forces were pushed back to Lotharingia.[293] The negotiations continued until 896, when Odo was willing to accept the terms of Charles's entourage, leaving Charles to rule a part of the realm. Eventually, the negotiations led to the desired result: peace was restored, Charles got a part of the realm, and he was 'promised more', referring to the right to succeed Odo.[294] Why was Odo, militarily dominant at the end of the struggle, so willing to accept the terms of his enemies? It seems that Odo's position in Neustria was far less stable than believed, and the return of the great viking army to his realm in 896 required his full attention, also considering his legitimisation as king rested on his ability to defend the realm against the vikings.[295] In any case, Odo died in January 898, leaving the West Frankish realm to Charles the Simple.[296]

Robertians and vikings

Odo's family, and later Robertian descendants, solidified their ties to their predecessors by profiling themselves as victors in battles against the vikings.[297] The common action against the vikings and the blood shed provided the Robertian family with a stable identity-marker that already emerged during the time of Robert the Strong, who was known to have strongly disagreed with Charles the Bald's dealings with the Bretons and the vikings; whereas Charles seems to have been more in favour of appeasement, Robert the Strong, clearly mistrusting the vikings and Bretons, wanted to oppose them using violence.[298]

It can hardly be seen as a coincidence that Odo and his brother Robert were similarly portrayed as successful military leaders fighting against the vikings.[299] Odo, for one, consolidated his rule in the West Frankish realm by his victory against the vikings at Montfaucon, and was known for his efforts during the siege of Paris by the vikings a few years earlier.[300] Indeed, Odo's legitimisation as a king primarily rested on the fact that he was a brave

[293] Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 54.
[294] *Ibidem*, 54.
[295] *Ibidem*, 72-75.
[296] Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 75; N. Dass, 'Introduction' in: Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, transl. N. Dass (Paris 2007) 1-10, here 3.
[297] G. Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas, The West Frankish Kingdom (840-987)* (Turnhout 2012) 429-433; Maclean, *Kingship and Politics*, 54.
[298] *Ibidem*, 429-431.
[299] *Ibidem*, 431.
[300] Koziol, *The Politics*, 431; Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 35, 51.

and strong military leader that was able to protect the realm against the vikings by forcing them out with violence.[301] With these portrayals, Odo was contrasted with the previous king, Charles the Fat, who, leaving most of the responsibility to deal with the vikings in the hands of local elites, was perceived as a rather weak king.[302] It must be said, however, that Odo, especially near the end of his reign as king, also chose diplomatic solutions and appeased the vikings given the limitations of his resources.[303]

Similarly, Robert, the brother and right hand of Odo, seems to have also been in favour of aggressively repulsing the vikings, rather than making alliances and paying tribute. Charles the Simple, on the other hand, seems to have been a proponent of appeasing the vikings.[304] Koziol summarises the approaches to the vikings of these two figures strikingly:

> '(…) it may not be too much of an oversimplification to describe Robert as a hawk who mistrusted the Northmen and believed one had to fight in order to negotiate from a position of strength. In contrast, Charles was a dove, who preferred to negotiate in order to establish a position of stability that gave him more freedom for other goals that were more important to him.'[305]

Thus, it seems that the Robertians heavily mistrusted the vikings, or at least profiled themselves in that way, and were therefore against any form of appeasement. The vikings were to be repelled by sword.

The work itself

The 'Battles of the City of Paris', or the *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*, is the 'first major historical narrative poem since Ermoldus Nigellus' (*fl*. 824–830) and also the longest Carolingian poem describing a military event.[306] It is written at the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés during the reign of Odo.[307] It is written by Abbo, who remains an obscure figure; most information we have about him effectively comes from the *Bella Parisiacae Urbis* itself.[308] It covers not only the viking attacks on Paris in the years 885 and 886, of which Abbo was an eyewitness, but also, to a lesser extent, the ten years after that, during which Odo became king and ruled the

[301] Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 33, 37; Koziol, *The Politics*, 431.
[302] Koziol, *The Politics*, 431-434; Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 271.
[303] Koziol, *The Politics*, 431; Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 52-53, 276-277.
[304] Koziol, *The Politics*, 433-439.
[305] *Ibidem*, 438-439.
[306] P. Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance* (Norman 1985), 63; T. Scharff, *Die Kämpfe der Herrscher und der Heiligen. Krieg und historische Erinnerung in der Karolingerzeit* (2002 Darmstadt) 77; Gillis, *Religious Horror*, 69-70.
[307] Dass, 'Introduction', 1.
[308] *Ibidem*.

West Frankish realm.[309] The work describes Abbo as a young monk at Saint-Germain-des-Prés and a native of Neustria.[310] As MacLean observes, the *Bella* shows that Abbo's identity was very much layered: 'he was a man of St Germanus, a Parisian, a Neustrian and a Frank'. As we have seen before, 'Frank' could not only refer to an inhabitant of the region of Francia but also to the subjects of the entire Frankish empire. Despite the territorial subdivisions of the Carolingian realm during the ninth century, for Abbo the 'Francigeni' or 'Franks' still referred to the people of the entire *regnum Francorum*, both East- and West Franks, and he clearly saw himself as a member of it. 'Frankishness' was still an extremely important identity marker that transcended the territorial boundaries in the *regnum Francorum*. Interestingly, Aimoin, the author of the *Sancti Germani Parisiensis*, was Abbo's teacher, as is stated in the dactylic verse that accompanies the work: 'Aimoin, O splendid master, bright with worth/ And goodness, worthy of heavenly light,/ Your student, the humble Abbo (…)'.[311] Aimoin clearly did not approve of the work of Abbo, however, as Abbo makes clear in a letter to Gauzlin, another monk of the monastery, not to be confused with the previous abbot of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.[312] It is not clear whether stylistic mistakes or the content of the work led to Aimoin's disapproval. It is generally assumed Abbo died after 922, as Fulrad, the bishop of Paris from 921 until 927, insisted Abbo to publish some of his sermons, which he did.[313]

The work consists of three books; the first book has 660 lines of dactylic hexameter, the second has 618, and the third has just 115. Even though he likely knew the metre well, numerous literary mistakes can be found in the poem.[314] Whereas the first two books deal with the viking attacks on Paris, the third book gives advice on how sins are to be repelled.[315] Abbo himself writes the following in his letter to Gauzlin:

> 'As for the third book, which completes the trinity, it is manifestly different from the story of the siege. Therefore, it takes up very little room, and it seeks to provide clerics with methods of effective literary adornment. It will be suitable

[309] Dass, 'Introduction', 6-10.
[310] *Ibidem*, 1.
[311] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Versiculi ad magistrum dactilici*, transl. N. Dass (Paris 2007) 26-27, here 27.
[312] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Scedula singularis cernui Abbonis dilecto fratri Gozlino*, transl. N. Dass (Paris 2007) 22-25, here 25.
[313] Dass, 'Introduction', 1.
[314] *Ibidem*, 3.
[315] P. Lendinara, 'The third book of the Bella Parisiacae Urbis by Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés and its Old English gloss', *Anglo-Saxon England* 15 (1986), 73-89, here 74-77; N. Dass, 'Temporary Otherness and Homiletic History in the Late Carolingian Age: A Reading of the Bella Parisiacae Urbis of Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés' in: M. Cohen ed., *Difference and Identity in Francia and Medieval France* (Farnham 2010) 99-114, here 99.

> for students who search for terms of their compositions. Allegory will also very briefly shine forth for those who admire such things.'[316]

In the past, the third book has been viewed as an awkward and spurious attempt by Abbo to mirror the Trinity, and is therefore of little literary worth and seen as a sort of afterthought.[317] Recently, however, Dass has shown that book three should not be neglected at all, as it 'binds the first two books within the salvific schema that is continually being enacted in the mundane world'.[318] Following this, Dass argues that for Abbo, the struggle of repelling the vikings and the salvation of the soul are one and the same.[319] While its theological value certainly should not be overlooked, considering the quote above, it still seems as if the main purpose of the third book for Abbo was to function as inspiration for readers that wished to adorn their own work with an exotic word or two. Compared to the first two books, the third book indeed contained way more arcane words, both in Latin and in Greek. [320] In fact, Dass defines the structure of the *Bella* as 'macaronic', that is, a mixture of both Greek and Latin, which is most prevalent in the third book.[321] The third book was far more popular than the first two; it circulated and delighted the learned men not only of his time but also in later times.[322] It is therefore also not surprising that the first two books only remain in the single manuscript from Saint-Germain-des-Prés, whereas thirteen versions of book three exist.[323]

The precise date of the composition of the *Bella* is hard to determine. It seems evident, however, that Abbo wrote his work between 888 and 898. This *terminus post quem* and *terminus ante quem* can be established by internal evidence; Abbo mentions that Odo will become king in his work, which indicates he wrote it after his coronation on February 29 in 888, and does not mention Odo's death, which happened on January 1 in 898, meaning it was written before this time.[324] As Abbo writes about events up until the year 896, it is generally

[316] Abbo, *Scedula*, 25.
[317] Dass, 'Introduction', 2-3, 10-13.
[318] *Ibidem*, 13.
[319] Dass, 'Introduction', 10; Dass, 'Temporary Otherness', 100-101.
[320] Dass, 'Introduction', 2; A. Adams and A.G. Rigg, 'A Verse Translation of Abbo of St. Germain's *Bella parisiacae urbis*', *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 14 (2004) 1-68, here 3.
[321] Dass, 'Introduction', 3-5; P. Lendinara, 'Glossing Abbo in Latin and the Vernacular' in: P. Lendinara, L. Lazzari and C. Di Scacia eds., *Rethinking and Recontextualizing Glosses: New Perspectives in the Study of Late Anglo-Saxon Glossography* (Porto 2011) 475-508, here 477-478.
[322] M. Lapidge, 'The Hermeneutic Style in Tenth-Century Anglo-Latin Literature', *Anglo-Saxon England 4* (1975), 67-111, here 72, 75-76; Lendinara, 'Glossing Abbo', 475-476; Adams and Rigg, 'A Verse Translation', 2-3.
[323] Ledinara, 'The Third Book', 73-89; Adams and Rigg, 'A Verse Translation', 2-3. For a list of the manuscripts containing the third book see: Adams and Rigg, 'A Verse Translation', 3 n. 6.
[324] Dass, 'Introduction', 3; Lendinara, 'Glossing Abbo', 475 n. 1.

assumed he completed the poem by 897.[325] Furthermore, it has been argued that Abbo composed the work in two phases; the first draft seems to have been completed around 890, but brief additions that covered later political developments were added in the mid-890's, completing the work in 897.[326] This seems to be an extremely likely scenario; not only does the work skip covering the years of 890 and 891, but the small part on the period of 892-896 contrasts heavily in its portrayal of Odo compared to the rest of the work; here, Odo is described in a rather negative fashion, whereas earlier he was lauded for his actions.[327]

Even though Abbo does not explicitly state who commissioned this work, it is plausible that it was king Odo himself, as has been noted by MacLean, who bases this hypothesis on the observation that works that concerned Odo's elevation to kingship and writings of the cult of Saint Germain have close manuscript links.[328] As we have seen in the case of the *Translatio* and likely the *Miraculis*, royal influence on the production of works at the monastery Saint-Germain-des-Prés was seemingly not uncommon, and similarly, the *Bella* could well have been commissioned directly by Odo. Alternatively, Ebolus, the contemporary abbot of the monastery, could have commissioned the work, perhaps charged to do so by Odo. Ebolus was the nephew of Gauzlin, who gave the abbacy to the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés to his nephew around 883, when he became bishop of Paris.[329] Moreover, Ebolus was one of Odo's brothers-in-arms during the defence of Paris in 885-886.[330] He seems to have been a close supporter of Odo, especially from 889 onwards, as he was chosen to be Odo's archchancellor.[331] In any case, Odo was in need of legitimisation after his elevation to kingship in 888, and this work definitely attempted to portray him as the rightful king that ruled after the death of Charles the Fat.[332]

When Abbo wrote the small additions around 897, however, it was Robert, the brother of Odo, who was the abbot of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.[333] Earlier, in 892, Ebolus and his brother Gauzbert rebelled against Odo because of a grant that was unfavourable for them.[334] After Abbot Ebolus was killed in October 892, Robert received the abbacy of the monastery, treating

[325] Dass, 'Introduction', 3.
[326] Maclean, *Kingship and Politics*, 55; Wattenbach, Levison, Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, 581.
[327] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 93-99; Dass, 'Temporary Otherness', 110; Gillis, *Religious Horror*, 102.
[328] Maclean, *Kingship and Politics*, 57-58.
[329] Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 98, 102.
[330] *Ibidem*, 113.
[331] *Ibidem*, 113-114.
[332] Maclean, *Kingship and Politics*, 57.
[333] R. Berkhofer, *Day of Reckoning: Power and Accountability in Medieval France* (Philadelphia 2004) 29.
[334] Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 52.

it as a 'lucrative benefice' and exploiting its land in return for protection against the vikings.[335] In fact, Odo had passed on most of his *honores* to Robert after becoming king in 888, such as the countship of Paris, making Robert one of the most powerful figures in the realm, occupying a key role in his brother's early rule.[336] In 892, because of the rebellion of some of Odo's closest supporters, the weight of influence in Odo's innermost circle shifted even more in favour of the brother of Odo, confirming his role as Odo's right hand.[337] It is impossible to say whether Robert had any influence on the additions of Abbo or even commissioned him to write this. One is tempted to say that Robert did not know about Abbo's additions, considering they were noticeably anti-Odo. That said, if Robert *was* somehow involved, it might perhaps point to discord between the brothers near the end of Odo's rule. Robert may indeed have had some reason to quarrel with his brother; he appointed Charles the Simple as his heir rather than him.[338] Moreover, it is possible that Robert disagreed with Odo's handling of the vikings during this time. Odo, during these later years of his reign, mainly chose defensive methods of appeasing the vikings, which heavily contrasted with the aggressive and violent repulsions that the Robertians were known for, and Robert might have wanted to criticise Odo for this.[339]

Summary of content

Before analysing the *Bella*, a brief overview of the events described in books 1 and 2 of the *Bella* should be given.[340] The story starts, as expected, with the vikings coming up the Seine, wishing to pass the city of Paris to plunder further inland. After Gauzlin tells Siegfried, the viking leader, that they are not allowed to pass through, Siegfried announces they will assault the city instead.[341] The following morning, the vikings start attacking one of the towers of Paris but are heroically repelled by the defenders of the city, among whom are Odo, Ebolus, Gauzlin, and Robert, brother of Odo. The second day, the viking again do not manage to destroy the tower; many of them are killed, and the defenders repair the tower during the night.[342] Abbo then describes the attacks in the surrounding areas by the vikings before returning to Paris. The

[335] Berkhofer, *Day of Reckoning*, 29.
[336] Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 111, 154.
[337] *Ibidem*, 118.
[338] Robert may have had a claim to the throne too, and his initial silence before accepting Charles the Simple as Odo's heir might indicate that he considered attempting to seize the throne himself and rebel. See: Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 74, 150.
[339] For Robert's preference to repel the vikings by using violence, see: Lösslein, *Royal Power*, 278; Koziol, *The Politics*, 433-439.
[340] Another great overview of the events described in book one and two of the *Bella* can be found in: Adams and Rigg, 'A Verse Translation', 7-10.
[341] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 28-31.
[342] *Ibidem*, 31-36.

vikings again attack the towers for a while and start filling the trenches surrounding it with Christian captives and dirt before departing east for a time, killing Robert 'The Quiver'. Attempts to desecrate the tomb of Saint Germain fail because of divine miracles, which underline the power of God as well as the holiness of Germanus.[343]

Next, the southern bridge collapses because of the rising water of the Seine, and twelve men defending the southern tower are trapped and killed by the vikings. Odo is nearly killed while talking with Siegfried, who quickly withdrew from Paris and went to the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. He receives a tribute from the Franks and consequently wishes to leave. The rest of the vikings, however, launch another attack, as they did not receive anything, but in the end they retreat again.[344] The siege of Paris continues, and after Gauzlin died, Odo decides to seek out the help of Charles the Fat in person, leaving Ebolus in charge. Odo returns to the city, and Charles follows a little while later with an army. Charles makes camp at Montmartre and subsequently makes peace with the vikings, promising them to pay 700 pounds of silver and giving them permission to continue to Sens. Soon after Charles departs, the vikings break the agreement, attacking Paris once again, and once again suing for peace afterwards. This new pact is once again broken, and the vikings continue to besiege Meaux.[345]

Charles the Fat then dies, and Odo becomes king. In the remainder of the story, Odo tries to consolidate his power in the realm and suppress rebellions. The vikings return to Odo's realm, pillage it, and take captives, but Odo did not care much, to Abbo's consternation.[346] The following part will analyse if, and if so, how Abbo's viking 'Other' is different compared to the *Translatio* and *Miraculis*.

[343] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 36-55.
[344] *Ibidem*, 55-67.
[345] *Ibidem*, 67-89.
[346] *Ibidem*, 89-99.

The viking 'Other'

Vikings as a punishment of God

Abbo refers noticeably little to the vikings as divine punishers of Frankish sins.[347] Perhaps Abbo felt that the explicit references to the vikings as a divine punishment were superfluous, assuming his audience knew that this was the case after decades of similar descriptions of the vikings. However, I would argue that it reveals a shift in the perception of the vikings and their place in the Frankish religious framework. After decades of continued interaction with the vikings, it might indeed be that the vikings were less and less viewed by clerics as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy - the beginning of the Apocalypse.[348] This could also be an explanation for the shift of the almost exclusive focus on the weakness of the Frankish nobility that resulted from their sins, rather than the vikings being sent by God because of these sins.

Abbo specifies that the sins of the Franks caused the Frankish leaders to become weak and unable to defend the realm. Abbo elaborates on this near the end of the second book:

> 'O France, tell me, I pray you, what became of your strength and might,/ With which you once could overcome and subdue kingdoms that were / Often far stronger than you? Your weakness has come from three sins: (…)/ These three sins you must forsake, or lose the land of your fathers./ They indeed are the source of all vice, (…)'[349]

According to Abbo, the Frankish nobility had become weak because of three sins, namely sexual lust, greed, and pride, and therefore they could not defend the realm against the vikings. In the third book, Abbo further elaborates on these three sins and how they are to be avoided in the future.[350]

By underlining that the sins were the cause of the weakness of the Franks, Abbo draws the parallel between moral cleanliness and the ability to defend the realm from threats, as we have seen before in the *Translatio* and the *Miraculis*. In this line of thought, a ruler who is effectively defending the realm is a devout Christian who refrains from indulging in sin. By

[347] The only passage that might implicitly refer to the vikings as such is: Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 67: 'And took to the field of the Saint, where I myself have life./ All across this field they set up their camps, and made ramparts./ Thus, they hemmed in my blessed Master, like a thief in prison,/ He who was without sin. They made a wall that encircled his/ High church—indeed, such is the penalty for our great sins.'
[348] Coupland, 'The Rod of God's Wrath', 535-538.
[349] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 97.
[350] *Ibidem*, 121 n. 228.

establishing this parallel, Abbo allows himself to either criticise or applaud any given person in the story by exclusively describing their ability to defend the realm against the viking invaders. As such, the heroic defenders of Paris are implicitly portrayed as Franks not indulging in any of the three sins, which consequently allowed them to defend the realm. Considering that one of the main goals of Abbo seems to have been to praise Odo and, as such, legitimise his newly acquired kingship, it is not surprising that Odo is portrayed as the ultimate defender of the realm and therefore indirectly as the ultimate paragon of virtue. In contrast, Abbo portrays Charles the Fat as unsuccessful in his attempt to rid the realm of the vikings; he is rather unsuccessful in his attempt to defend the realm by paying the vikings a tribute, and with this, Abbo conveys that he is also a morally flawed ruler. Abbo points to this contrast between Odo and Charles in their ability to defend the realm to convey to his readers that Odo was the rightful heir to the West Frankish realm; he was – unlike Charles – virtuous, and it is therefore a good thing that he had become king in Charles's stead.

Vikings as monsters

The three theses of Cohen will again be used to argue that the vikings also fulfil the role of 'monsters' in the *Bella*. As discussed before, the vikings seem to have lost their function as characters that are punishers sent because of Frankish sins to a degree, and thereby also that way of 'policing the borders of the possible'. Nevertheless, as will be illuminated later on in this chapter, the vikings 'police the borders of the possible' in another way in the *Bella*. In this section, however, it will be clarified how the vikings function as 'dwellers at the gates of difference' and 'harbingers of category crisis' in this work.

Vikings as pagans

Throughout the entire *Bella*, just as in the *Translatio* and *Miraculis*, the paganism of the vikings is one of their main characteristics, showing their religious alterity. This is best illustrated by the following description of Abbo: 'These Danes are/ Headless men, indeed, for they know not Christ, the Head of us all.'[351] They are unaware of the existence of the Christian God and therefore, are pagans. Following this, Abbo calls the vikings 'the enemies of God', while calling the Franks the 'faithful' or simply 'Christians'.[352]

Noticeably, the vikings are portrayed as the exact opposite of the Franks, who are described as the flock of God. Accordingly, the viking 'Other' is associated with the devil:

[351] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 87.
[352] *Ibidem*, 57, 53, 33.

‘Towards which surged that race of Satan from their encampment,/ And with frightful fury discharged murderous arrows at us.’[353] On other occasions in the poem, Abbo calls the vikings ‘friends of Pluto’ and ‘sons of the Devil’, and their souls ‘born of evil’.[354] The vikings are the antithesis of the Christian Franks and are associated with hell itself.[355] As such, the vikings are portrayed not just as any pagan but as the most evil one imaginable, and almost otherworldly.

Not surprisingly, just like in the *Translatio* and *Miraculis*, the ultimate destination for the vikings in the work of Abbo is hell, as can be seen in the following passage:

> ‘But the Danes held back, gripped by an insurmountable horror./ Suddenly, a huge wheel was thrown from the top of the tower/ Right upon the Danes, laying low six, whose souls were sent to Hell;/ They were dragged off by their feet and joined the throngs of the dead.’[356]

In several other instances, Abbo points to hell as the destination for the vikings, for instance by writing that they would ‘nibble the dismal feast served up in Hell’, or that ‘they all went down to eat from Pluto’s bitter cauldron’.[357]

The devilishness of the vikings is further stressed by the fact that the viking ‘Other’ is unable or unwilling to distinguish between profane and sacred spaces. Near the end of the first book, Abbo relates how the vikings ‘turned the sacred hall of Saint Germain into a stable,/ And filled it full of countless bulls, young sows, and short-headed sheep’.[358] They treated the churches and abbeys as pens, fully ignoring the holiness of these spaces in the eyes of the Christians; the vikings see these buildings merely as pens in which they can keep their livestock.[359] Later on, when they returned to the church of Saint Germain, they are said to have ‘rendered the same rough homage’ to it, implying it was again used as a stable.[360] The vikings were the ultimate religious ‘Other’, and hence ‘dwelled at the gates of difference’.

Moreover, it is important to consider that Abbo does not give any reason to assume that the vikings would be able to convert to Christianity; no mention is made of vikings converting or showing any interest in the Christian god. As such, Abbo profiles the vikings as characters who are pagan and will remain so without any hope of ever joining the Christian fold. As

[353] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 41.
[354] *Ibidem*, 29, 35, 45.
[355] Also observed in: Dass, ‘Temporary Otherness’, 107.
[356] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 110.
[357] *Ibidem*, 55, 57, 67.
[358] *Ibidem*, 63.
[359] As also noted by Dass: Dass, ‘Temporary Otherness’, 107.
[360] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 83.

previously established, Abbo, despite his clear identification with Neustria, still believed to be belonging to the wider *regnum Francorum*. From the first Carolingian rulers onwards, the Christian religion became one of the core identity markers of the members of the *regnum Francorum*, more so than during the reign of their Merovingian predecessors, and still was when Abbo wrote the *Bella*. For Abbo, Christianity was a prerequisite to membership of the *regnum Francorum*, and by implying the inability of the vikings to become Christians, Abbo precludes them from ever being able to enter the *regnum Francorum*. Subsequently, Abbo shows his readers that the vikings should be repelled from the *regnum Francorum* as they will never have a place in it, and hence glorifies those who manage to do so.

Why would Abbo have wished to convey this to his readers? It seems plausible that Abbo attempted to further legitimise the kingship of Odo in this way. As already mentioned, the Robertians were known for their aversion to appeasement with the vikings and their aggressive way of repulsing the vikings from the realm. The portrayal of the vikings complements this defence tactic that Odo was famous for; Abbo stresses that the vikings could not belong to the *regnum Francorum* and should therefore be repelled entirely from the realm, something that Odo is particularly successful at. In short, the everlasting paganism of the vikings in the *Bella* seems to be a deliberate narrative choice made by Abbo to laud Odo and his way of opposing the vikings by force.

Vikings as violent characters

Another main characteristic of the viking 'Other' in this work and interrelated with its paganism is, like the *Translatio* and *Miraculis*, the extreme usage of violence, underlining their cruelness. Throughout the entire work, this aspect of the viking 'Other' is underlined; they are 'cruel', 'wicked', 'wretched', and 'blood-smeared', and kill numerous Franks.[361] The following passage arguably reflects this aspect the best:

> 'All infants, boys and girls, youths, and even those hoary with age,/ The father and sons and even mothers – they killed them all./ They slaughtered the husband before the very eyes of his wife;/ Before the eyes of the husband, the wife fell prey to carnage./ The children perished right before the eyes of their parents./ (…)/ Alas! A rich land stripped of its treasures, left with bloody wounds,/ Fully robbed, filled with grim murder – a frenzy beyond compare./ The Danes

[361] For the descriptions, see: Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 37, 41, 43, 45, 57, 65, 69, 75, 79, 81, 89. For the killings, see: Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 31, 33, 37, 41, 45, 51, 59, 61, 63, 75, 75, 91.

> ransacked and despoiled, massacred, and burned and ravaged;/ They were an evil cohort, a deadly phalanx, a grim horde.'[362]

According to Abbo's story, they were characters that transgressed the social and ethical norms of Frankish society to an almost unimaginable degree, killing and plundering wherever they went.

Not only did the vikings use violence against the Christians inhabiting the realm, but they also acted brutally against the Christians that they took captive. While the vikings were trying to destroy the tower of Paris during the siege, they noticed after a while that their efforts so far were to no avail, they attempted to fill the ditches that surrounded the tower. Abbo writes that:

> 'They threw in clods of earth, and leaves torn from well-wooded forests,/ And stalks that they had taken and stripped utterly of all grain./ Also, they flung in hay from meadows, scrub, and vines, grapes torn off;/ Then they pushed in old oxen, and even lovely cows and calves;/ And lastly, alas, they slaughtered the luckless captives they held;/ All this they took and piled in the trenches to fill them.'[363]

The vikings slaughtered Christian captives in order to achieve their goals. This narrative trope also appeared in the *Translatio* and *Miraculis*, in which the vikings hanged captives to scare the army of Charles the Bald, and similarly, this passage functions to highlight the wickedness of the vikings, expressed through their use of extreme violence.

The cruelty of the viking 'Other' did not just extend to the Christian Franks themselves but also to the cattle of the Carolingian realm. When a stalled cart, fully laden with stolen grain, was stuck in the mud, the vikings attempted to free the axle by making use of oxen, goading them with the butts of their spears to the point where the beasts of burden started limping.[364] Following this, the vikings went ahead and harnessed more and more oxen, and it is said that 'the poor beasts labored, struggled and strove (…)/ So that their straining flanks were red, awash with flowing blood'.[365] The vikings were cruel beyond measure, not just to the Franks, but also to their animals.[366]

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[362] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 36-39.
[363] *Ibidem*, 45.
[364] *Ibidem*, 69.
[365] *Ibidem*.
[366] Also observed by Dass: Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 116 n. 124.

Furthermore, Abbo chooses to culturally 'Other' the vikings in his work by describing that back in their home country, the Danes lived in caves instead of cities and houses: 'Who [=vikings] left not France for their caves (…)'.[367] John Friedman has shown that 'another mark of the alien was his existence outside the cultural setting of a city' and that 'monstrous men ordinarily dwell in mountains, caves, deserts, rivers, or woods (…)' .[368] By portraying the vikings in this manner, Abbo attempts to show that unlike the Franks, the vikings were uncivilised; the vikings were seemingly too primitive to be able to build cities and therefore had to live in shelter offered by nature, just like animals.

In fact, on multiple other occasions in the *Bella*, the humanity of the vikings itself appears not to be a given; throughout the poem, they are often compared to beasts. A good example is the following passage: 'Now, just as an overconfident wolf that is filled with shame,/ For it seized no prey, seeks out the depths of the forest, thus did / The foe [=vikings] fall back (…)'.[369] The vikings are explicitly compared with wolves, implying they were more like beasts than human beings. Moreover, the vikings let out 'horrendous shrieks' when they died, which further seems to underscore the comparison made with beasts.[370] On other occasions, the vikings do seem human; they were capable of mourning their dead, and they could hold conversations with the Franks.[371] Hence, the vikings in the Bella definitely seem to be the 'harbingers of category crisis'; they refuse to be classified as fully 'human' or 'beast', and therefore challenge the parameters of the two categories. As a result, the viking 'Other' in this text is even more monstrous.

As in the case of the *Translatio* and the *Miraculis*, the viking 'Other' in the *Bella* is the ultimate 'Other', characterised not only by its paganism but also by its cruelty, wickedness, and uncivilised nature, as we have seen in this section. As such, the viking 'Other' -in the words of Cohen- 'dwells at the gate of difference', and therefore is monstrous.[372] Considering once again that one of the main goals of Abbo seems to have been to praise Odo and, as such, legitimise his newly acquired kingship, it is not surprising that the vikings are described in this manner; by portraying them as monstrous, Abbo in turn underlines the bravery of those that fight and kill the vikings, of which Odo is a prime example. During the siege of Paris, numerous vikings are killed by Odo, sometimes almost in super heroic fashion.[373] Indeed, this is very much in line

[367] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 85.
[368] Friedman, *The Monstrous Races,* 30.
[369] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 37.
[370] *Ibidem*, 65. The implied bestiality of the vikings is also observed by Dass: Dass, 'Temporary Otherness', 107.
[371] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 35, 37, 31, 57-58.
[372] Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', 7-12.
[373] Gillis, *Religious Horror*, 67-97; Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, 63-64.

with Cohen's fourth thesis, in that those who repel the monsters are glorified extensively.[374] Thus, the portrayal of the vikings as monsters contributes to profiling Odo as an effective and strong military leader, the main pillar on which his legitimisation as a king rested. Moreover, by showing the extreme violence and cruelty of the vikings against the Christians, Abbo further stresses that the vikings should never be included in the *regnum Francorum*, but instead be repelled from the realm.

Viking being less monstrous

Despite the fact that the vikings fulfil the role of monsters in this text, they were capable to be less monstrous from time to time.

As in the *Translatio* and the *Miraculis*, it is implied on some occasions that the vikings acted the way they did to gain wealth. For instance, after the vikings encircled the tower of Paris and captured the twelve nobles inside, Abbo mentions the following: 'But one among them, Eriveus, was thought to be a king,/ By the Danes, for fair was his demeanor, and most noble;/ They hoped he would bring a good ransom, and so treated him well.'[375] The viking 'Other' here seems to be mainly interested in gaining wealth for the ransom of this captive, rather than frenzied warriors intent on killing just for the sake of it. Subsequently, when Siegfried was paid 60 pounds of silver, apparently by the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés itself, he was intent on leaving the area.[376] His men, however, did not want to leave and again attacked Paris, because they had not received wealth like Siegfried.[377] Bearing this goal of the vikings in mind, it does not seem surprising that they gladly accepted the tribute of 700 pounds of silver that Charles the Fat was willing to pay to them in order to make them leave.[378]

More striking, however, are the instances where the vikings have not only become less socially transgressive, but have seemingly almost become like the Franks themselves. According to Abbo, the vikings in 887, after yet another failed attack,

> '(…) sued for peace; offered hostages,/ And swore an oath that they would land on no other shore than that/ Of the Seine and would fall back to their prior positions./ And as for the region nourished by the Marne, they would leave it/ In peace, for which they gave us 'full assurance', as it is called./ (…) because of it

[374] Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', 7-8.
[375] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 59.
[376] *Ibidem*, 67, 115 n. 112.
[377] *Ibidem*, 67.
[378] *Ibidem*, 83.

> [=the assurance or treaty], both us and they, abided in peace-/ We both began to share the same house, bread drink, seat road bed./ Both our people marvelled that we could mingle so easily.'[379]

The vikings and the Franks appear to be able to live together harmoniously; the viking 'Other', in this passage, seems to have almost become interchangeable with the Franks. Earlier in the story, when the vikings were attacking Paris for the first time, Siegfried already hinted at this outcome: 'Take measure of the houses you wish to live in afterwards'.[380] The social and ethical alterity of the vikings seems to have disappeared almost entirely, meaning the vikings lose their function as 'dwellers at the gates of difference' in these instances. Moreover, they no longer are 'harbingers of category crisis' because of this; they seem to be firmly categorised as humans, just like the Franks.

It seems that the sporadic decrease of monstrosity in the *Bella* reflects the contemporary political and social situation in the West Frankish realm; around 890, the time during which Abbo wrote this poem, Franks had become acquainted with the vikings, and were not only harmed by their attacks but also interacted with them peacefully from time to time. Throughout the second half of the ninth century and into the tenth century, the vikings were gradually incorporated into the Carolingian political and social hierarchies, settling in Frankish territories and acquiring political titles.[381] The lowered degree of monstrosity of the vikings in the *Bella* seems to be a result of this process of integration and acculturation; the vikings were not just divinely-sent monsters that wreak havoc and leave, but were, as Abbo and his audience came to know in the decades of interacting with them, a people that could sometimes act less monstrously, almost even 'Frankish'.

Do these passages, then, show that Abbo believed the vikings could be part of the *regnum Francorum* after all? This is not the case, as will be argued further in the next section. When looking at the grand narrative of the *Bella*, Abbo gives glimpses of a lowered degree of monstrosity of the vikings only *after* he first illuminates what monstrous creatures they can be, which we have seen in the previous sections. Therefore, it seems that Abbo attempted to persuade his readers of the inability of the vikings to enter the *regnum Francorum* early on in his narrative, so that the readers would be sceptical and hesitant about the sudden 'near-Frankishness' of the vikings later on.

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[379] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 87.
[380] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 67; Dass, 'Temporary Otherness', 109.
[381] Coupland, 'From poachers to gamekeepers'; Coupland, 'The Vikings in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England', 199-201.

What these passages of lowered monstrosity do appear to show, however, is that around the time Abbo wrote the *Bella*, there were Franks who – possibly after having had peaceful interactions with the vikings – started to believe that the vikings *could* be incorporated into the *regnum Francorum*. With these passages, Abbo seems to give contemporary Franks holding this opinion a voice. The discussion of whether vikings could belong to the *regnum Francorum* is essentially a discussion of what it means to be 'Frankish'; as previously noted, the definition of the *regnum Francorum* was never definitive and changed as circumstances did. Especially after the Treaty of Verdun and later in the ninth century, socio-political circumstances altered rapidly, and 'Frankish identity' or the *regnum Francorum* was in constant need of re-evaluation and definition. In other words, with this less monstrous portrayal of the viking 'Other', Abbo is essentially asking his audience to reconsider who belongs to the *regnum Francorum* – who should be considered 'Frankish', and who should not. As we have seen in the previous sections, Abbo seems to have held the opinion that the vikings can never become Frankish and should therefore be repelled, and the next section will illuminate further why Abbo thinks this, despite the ability of vikings to become less monstrous.

Vikings as inherently deceitful characters

Even though Abbo illuminates that the viking 'Other' was capable of becoming less monstrous, he underlines that the vikings can never become quite like the Franks, as they remained inherently deceitful and therefore not to be trusted.

Soon after the abovementioned peace between the Franks and vikings was established, Abbo says that: 'They [= vikings] kept the bargain until they were freely allowed to drag/ Their ships, despite our walls, to the upper current. Once/ Gained, they swiftly floated their vessels on the river's flow.'[382] Following this, the vikings took twenty Christians captive, and treated them badly in their camps. As such, 'The Danes broke the oath, scorned Sens, and led their sea-chariots/ To the waters of the Marne. (…)/ Dead was the shared peace, gone the accord of the assurance.'[383] Abbo had already mentioned earlier that the Franks 'feared that the Danes would not stand by this assurance' and that it was a 'fragile accord', and now their fears had come true.[384] The vikings, despite having lived peacefully with the Franks for a time, remained the 'Other' nonetheless, as they remained cruel and deceitful in their hearts.[385] They still were

[382] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 87.
[383] *Ibidem*.
[384] *Ibidem*, 87, 85.
[385] Dass, in arguing that the passages of Abbo's work that describe peaceful interaction between vikings and

monstrous, despite the occasional decrease of the applicability of Cohen's theses.

The deceitful nature of the viking 'Other' is also underlined on other occasions by Abbo. When the Danes encircled the tower of Paris with the twelve nobles inside, 'they called out/ To the twelve warriors: '''We give you our oath''-falsely sworn- / ''Come out to us, O worthy men. You have nothing to fear.''/ Alas, the twelve put their trust in this oath, falsely given.'[386] As the twelve warriors believed that they would be ransomed by the vikings, they accepted to come out of the tower. They were deceived, however, and put to the sword by the vikings.[387] On another occasion, Odo was ambushed by the vikings while talking to Siegfried, therefore breaking the trust Odo put in Siegfried to negotiate peacefully.[388] Abbo summarises this deceitful feature of the viking 'Other' best when talking about the broken deal between Charles and the vikings:

> '(…) they[= vikings], who/ Took the silver, and then did other than what they had promised./ It was all a ruse, for they kept their greed deeply hidden,/ So what was in their hearts was not the same as what was on/ Their lips. (…)'[389]

Despite the less monstrous instances we have seen in the previous section, Abbo conveys to his audience that the vikings remain untrustworthy, and should still be repelled from the Carolingian realm; they broke the treaties and promises they made in the *Bella*. As a result, Abbo quelches any hopes that his readers might have had for the vikings to enter the *regnum Francorum* because of their less monstrous moments in the story. Abbo's portrayal of the viking 'Other' in the *Bella* re-establishes the parameters of the Frankish identity; for Abbo, the vikings were beyond any doubt 'non-Frankish', and in turn he shows his contemporary audience what, according to him, it meant to be 'Frankish'. For Abbo, the main and quintessential identity markers of the Franks seem to have been their Christianity as well as their trustworthiness, or fidelity, both identity markers that the vikings do not, and seemingly will never possess. Abbo conveys to his readers, some of whom may have felt that the vikings might have a place in the *regnum Francorum*, that mingling easily with the Franks should not by any means be regarded as an indication that a people can become 'Frankish'.

Again, the deceitful portrayal seems to reflect the contemporary attempt of Odo to

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Franks indicate that the vikings could be fully incorporated into the Carolingian realm, overlooks this aspect of the viking 'Other' completely. See: Dass, 'Temporary Otherness', 110-112.

[386] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 57, 59.

[387] *Ibidem*, 59.

[388] *Ibidem*, 65.

[389] *Ibidem*, 85.

legitimise himself as a king of the West Frankish realm. The deceitful portrayal of the vikings complements the aggressive defence tactic that Odo was famous for; even though the vikings seem to be able to become like Franks, Abbo stresses that they are inherently deceitful, meaning that any tactic other than fighting and killing them would prove ineffective, especially in the long run. Hence, the viking 'Other' in the *Bella* definitely seems to 'police the borders of the possible', as Cohen put it; the deceitfulness of the vikings warns readers that indulging in appeasement methods and trusting the vikings will ultimately lead to disaster.[390] In other words, a narrative function of the viking 'Other' is to show what is possible, and what is not – in this case, it shows that the conciliatory approach will never lead to success. This, in addition to the use of the viking 'Other' as a 'dweller at the gates of difference' and a 'harbinger of category crisis' in the *Bella*, makes them monsters that needed to be repulsed.

Abbo's belief that aggressive repulsion of the vikings is the best tactic can be detected throughout the entire story, as he applauds every death of a viking, but is perhaps most noticeable in the following passage, after the vikings broke the peace-treaty in 887:

> 'The citizens all run straightway through town and mart/ To seek out ruthless Danes, if any can be found./ They find five hundred -joy!- and put them to the sword./(…)/ The bishop Anscheric, to keep the truce, allowed/ The captives to go free - he should have killed them all!'[391]

It seems clear, according to the story, that the vikings should be repelled by sword. As such, Odo, pursuing this violent defensive tactic like no other in this story, is portrayed as the rightful king after Charles the Fat, who is portrayed as a rather weak king, as he seems to be more in favour of appeasement methods. It would also serve to explain the critique of Odo in the few additions at the end of the story; he seemingly failed to uphold his reputation as a strong ruler who opposed the vikings with violence near the end of the ninth century.

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[390] Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', 12-16.

[391] Adams and Rigg, 'A Verse Translation', 57. The translation of Adams and Rigg is used in this instance. The translation by Dass too detached from the original Latin: 'Swiftly, the inhabitants ran throughout the city and the/ Marketplaces, seeking cruel heathens, if they could be found./ Happily, they found some fifty, and struck them down and slew them./ […] / Because Bishop Anscheric wished to adhere to the treaty,/ He let some of the captives go free; he could have killed them all.' See: Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Viking Attacks on Paris*, 86-89. No Latin substantiates Dass' assumption that Anskeric only let *some* viking captives go, but not all, and in Dass's translation the value judgement of Abbo about Anskeric's release of the captives is not conveyed clearly. Moreover, Dass translates *Quingen* with 'fifty', while 'five hundred', which Adams and Rigg use, is correct.

Conclusion

This research examined the development and durability of the narrative discourse on vikings in the monastic community of Saint-Germain-des-Prés during the second half of the ninth century. This was done by uncovering what the viking 'Other' entailed in three Frankish works written at the monastic community during this time, namely the *Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis*, the *De Miraculis sancti Germani,* and the *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*. Innovatively, monster theory has been employed to further scrutinise the viking 'Other' and determine how 'monstrous' this 'Other' was in the texts. Moreover, this study illuminated in what social-political contexts these descriptions of the viking 'Other' were produced and explored whether they influenced the portrayal of the viking 'Other' in the texts.

The vikings in the *Translatio* are portrayed as a punishment of God, a divine tool used to punish sinful Franks. As such, the vikings 'policed the borders of the possible' in this text; they stood as a warning for the Franks, showing that a sinful life would not go unpunished. Moreover, the sins of the Franks were the cause of their weakness and inability to defend themselves against the vikings. In this way, the anonymous author established a parallel between moral cleanliness and the ability to oppose the vikings; Franks that could defend were in turn devout Christians. The viking 'Other' is also characterised by its paganism; they praised pagan gods and blasphemed the Christian one. The vikings could never convert to Christianity, even if they wished to do so, as observed in the case of viking leader Ragnar; their ultimate destination was hell. Hence, they function as 'harbingers of category crisis'; they challenged the uniformity of the category 'pagan', showing that some pagans could convert, whereas others could not. Moreover, the viking 'Other' in the *Translatio* is extremely violent, highlighting its cruelness. This is best illustrated by the scene in which the vikings hang 111 Christian captives. Lastly, the vikings were the cultural 'Other', in that they are described as naked, indicating their uncivilised nature. The religious, ethical, and cultural alterity of the vikings makes them 'dwell at the gates of difference'. The vikings in the *Translatio* were monsters *par excellence*.

The political context in which the *Translatio* has been written influenced this portrayal of the viking 'Other'. Charles the Bald had become king of Aquitaine in 848 after Pippin was dethroned because of his inability to protect the kingdom against the vikings. It shows the importance that effective military leadership against vikings had as legitimisation for kingship in Aquitaine. However, when Ebroin, the abbot of Saint-Germain-des-Prés and close supporter of Charles, commissioned the *Translatio* to be written in 849, there were still Aquitanian nobles not in favour of Charles's rule. It seems that Ebroin, who was in the middle of negotiations in

Aquitaine around this time, was in need of more evidence to convince the opposing and hesitating Aquitanians of Charles's abilities to effectively defend its realms against the vikings, and that they should fully support his endeavours to do so. The *Translatio* provided this evidence. The vikings were portrayed as monsters that held no place in the *regnum Francorum*, underscoring the need to repulse them from the realm. Importantly, this monstrous portrayal of the vikings in turn glorified Charles, who is portrayed as a strong leader able to oppose these monsters if it were not for the lack of support of his subordinates. The portrayal of the viking 'Other' was intertwined with the goal of the *Translatio* to function as political propaganda.

The viking 'Other' in the *Miraculis* has much in common with the viking 'Other' in the *Translatio*. This is not surprising, as Aimoin, the author of the work, based his work on the *Translatio*. It does illustrate, however, the durability of the narrative discourse on vikings within the monastic community. The viking 'Other' is again portrayed as a punishment of God, and in this way 'policed the borders of the possible'. Again, a parallel is established between the ability to oppose the vikings and moral cleanliness; the sins of the Franks made them too weak to fight the vikings. Additionally, the viking 'Other' is again characterised by its everlasting paganism in this work, functioning as a 'harbinger of category crisis'. Just as in the *Translatio*, the vikings are also using extreme violence, which shows their ethical alterity. The religious and moral 'Otherness' made the vikings the 'dwellers at the gates of difference' in this text as well. In short, the viking were monsters in the *Miraculis,* just as in the *Translatio*.

Nevertheless, the vikings in the *Miraculis* are less monstrous than the ones in the *Translatio*, which indicates that the narrative discourse on vikings in the monastic community of Saint-Germain-des-Prés was subject to change. First of all, the vikings in the *Miraculis* appear to be rationally operating actors focused on gaining wealth and useful materials like wood; they captured nobles and ransomed buildings in order to be paid, and removed wooden beams to use them for their ships. Secondly, the cruelness of the vikings is somewhat deflated, as they hang only 11 captives in the *Miraculis*, compared to the 111 in the *Translatio*. Lastly, Aimoin writes that the vikings may return as allies in the Frankish realm. In short, the alterity of the vikings is lower in the *Miraculis* than the alterity in the *Translatio*; the vikings 'dwelled at the gates of difference' to a lesser degree. They also 'policed the borders of the possible' less, as Aimoin chooses to not portray them as divine punishers of Frankish sins as much. The vikings in the *Miraculis* are monsters, but their degree of monstrosity is lower than the vikings in the *Translatio*.

The socio-political context in which Aimoin wrote the *Miraculis* offers an explanation for this portrayal of the viking 'Other'. Charles the Bald was again in need of legitimisation

around 875; he moved to Italy in 875 to claim his rule there, as Louis II, its former ruler, died. Numerous nobles in the Frankish heartlands heavily criticised Charles for this move, as he did not stay to protect the realm against the vikings. Numerous negative portrayals of Charles were circulating during this time. As such, these nobles were disloyal to Charles and prepared to yield to Louis the German, the brother of Charles. It seems that Abbot Gauzlin, himself a loyal supporter of Charles, commissioned this work that portrayed Charles as the defender of the Frankish heartlands, while condemning those who were not loyal to him, in order to counterbalance the negative portrayals of Charles that were circulating. The work is therefore a reflection of the contemporary political situation within the Carolingian realm. The viking 'Other' is used in the *Miraculis* as a narrative tool not only to glorify Charles the Bald but also to condemn the local elites. Just as in the *Translatio*, the monstrosity of the vikings shows they could not be incorporated into the *regnum Francorum*, and Aimoin in turn praises Charles for being able and wishing to oppose them while criticising the local elite for not doing so. Even worse, the local nobles were not loyal to Charles but chose the side of these monsters instead, prioritising their own interests rather than the realm's.

As for the lowered degree of monstrosity, I suggest that this is a result of the continued interaction with the vikings in the twenty years after the *Translatio*: Franks gradually started to become acquainted with the vikings, as they started to interact with them more and more. Viking presence was more common, and the vikings started to spend winters in Francia, and were gradually incorporated into the Frankish political system. The lowered degree of monstrosity, therefore, seems to be a reflection of this process of acculturation. Moreover, it seems to be another attempt by Aimoin to be conciliatory towards Charles; Charles was known to have some beneficial alliances with vikings around 875, and Aimoin showed his readers in this way that working together with vikings could sporadically be beneficial, thereby justifying Charles's alliances with some of them.

In the *Bella*, the viking 'Other' has lost its function as a punishment of God almost completely, and thereby its original function as a character that 'polices the borders of the possible'. Instead, Abbo, the author of the work, underlines that the weakness of the Franks and their inability to fight off the vikings is the result of their sins. By doing so, Abbo reestablishes the parallel between the Franks's ability to oppose the vikings and their moral cleanliness, which can also be found in the *Translatio* and *Miraculis*. The viking 'Other' is, just like in the other two works, characterised by its everlasting paganism. Additionally, the vikings are described as originating from hell itself, making them devilish and almost otherworldly characters. Again, the vikings are extremely cruel in this work; they killed innocent Franks and

ravaged the land beyond measure. Moreover, the vikings are the ultimate cultural 'Other'; they lived in caves and are compared with beasts on multiple occasions, showcasing their uncivilised nature. As such, the vikings are also 'harbingers of category crisis', as they are not fully 'human', but also not fully 'beast'. Their religious, ethical, and cultural alterity again makes the vikings in the *Bella* 'dwell at the gates of difference'.

Nevertheless, the degree of monstrosity of the viking 'Other' in the *Bella* is lower than the degree in either the *Translatio* or the *Miraculis*. Not only are they described as rational actors intent on gaining wealth, they have in some passages almost become interchangeable with the Franks; the vikings lived together with the Franks for a while and abided in peace. The alterity of the vikings seems to have almost disappeared completely in these instances, meaning they are not portrayed as monsters. The overall degree of monstrosity in the *Bella* is lowered because of these peaceful interactions with the Franks. However, Abbo illuminates that the vikings, in their hearts, remain inherently deceitful and should not be trusted. Every instance in the *Bella* of promises or pacts made by the vikings is followed up with the vikings breaking the said promise or pact. Despite the fact that the vikings can act less monstrous from time to time, Abbo warns his readers that they will unquestionably resort back to acting like monsters in the future.

Once again, an explanation can be found when examining the socio-political context in which Abbo wrote the *Bella*. The alleviation of the monstrosity of the vikings can again be best explained by the gradual incorporation of the vikings into Frankish society; especially during the 890's and in the tenth century there are many instances of vikings being integrated into the Carolingian political and social system. In 888, after the death of Charles the Fat, Odo, the previous count of Paris, had enough power to claim the kingship of the West-Carolingian realm. As he did not have Carolingian blood, his claim to kingship mainly rested on his effective military skills in combating the vikings. Compared to his predecessor, Charles the Fat, who seemingly preferred to pay off the vikings or make alliances with them, Odo's family was known for forcing the vikings out with violence. Odo is the one who seems to have commissioned Abbo's poem. It is therefore also not surprising that Odo is portrayed extremely positively, successfully fighting and killing many vikings. The monstrous and deceitful portrayal of the vikings complements the defence tactics that Odo was famous for; even though the vikings seem to be able to become like Franks, they are inherently deceitful, meaning that any tactic other than fighting and killing them would be ineffective, especially in the long run. Odo was in need of legitimisation of his kingship, and Abbo's portrayal of the vikings helped him achieve it.

This study has shown that some aspects of the viking 'Other' remained stable while other aspects changed during the second half of the ninth century in the monastic community of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. In all three sources, the vikings functioned as a quintessential 'Other', whose actions were altered by the writers of Saint-Germain-des-Prés to suit the respective political purposes; the viking 'Other' was a narrative tool that was used as contemporary political propaganda. The viking 'Other' was a monster in each source, and in turn glorified the ruler that was able to repulse them from the realm. In the *Translatio* and *Miraculis*, Charles the Bald was the ruler that could repulse them, and in the *Bella*, it was Odo. Indeed, both rulers were in need of legitimisation during their rule, and the *Translatio* and *Miraculis* provided it for Charles, while the *Bella* provided it for Odo. Interestingly, however, the degree of monstrosity has declined in the *Miraculis*, and even more so in the *Bella*. The lowered degree of monstrosity also reflects the contemporary socio-political context; during the course of the second half of the ninth century, Franks became acquainted with the vikings, and came to know that they were not always monstrous.

This research has shown the potential of using monster theory to effectively study the viking 'Other'; the theory revealed much about the narrative functions of the vikings in the studied primary sources. It paves the way for future research; not only the viking 'Other', but any 'Other' in the medieval period can be examined thoroughly by using this theory. Furthermore, this study highlights the value of studying the portrayals of vikings individually rather than creating one overarching and generalised narrative for all portrayals of vikings during the entirety of the Viking Age; the details of the viking 'Other' in a work can not only reveal much about the work itself but also about the socio-political context in which the work was written. Hence, future studies of the viking 'Other' that have a more limited historical and spatial scope should be conducted. In this regard, this study can be seen as only a start; an incredible amount of viking 'Others' remain yet to be uncovered.

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