A Reconsideration of Wulfstan’s Use of Norse-Derived Terms: The Case of Þræl

Sara M. Pons-Sanz

It is a well-known feature of the language of Archbishop Wulfstan II of York (d. 1023) that, despite exhibiting the characteristics of the late West Saxon dialect, it contains a large proportion of Norse-derived terms.¹ Yet, until recently, not much attention has been paid to this puzzling element in Wulfstan’s idiolect and, in particular, to the actual reasons which might have led the archbishop to select these terms.² Instead, simplistic views based on single extralinguistic factors are repeated time and again in the literature. While some scholars would associate these terms with Wulfstan’s possible origin from East Anglia (e.g. Clark), others would prefer to see them as a direct consequence of his dealings with the Scandinavianised population of York. The latter group is best represented by Whitelock and Bethurum. They hold a similar opinion but with a slightly different angle. Whitelock would attribute Wulfstan’s learning of the Norse-derived terms to his contact with York; thus, she claims that “it is natural enough that an archbishop of York should adopt some of the vocabulary of the Scandinavianised North”.³ Bethurum, preferring to assign not his acquisition but his selection of the terms to his Anglo-Scandinavian audience, states that “they are only to be expected of a man who addressed audiences in York”.⁴

These suggestions have to face major drawbacks, most of them associated with the fact that not much is known about Wulfstan’s life and career. We do know that he was bishop of London from 996 to 1002, when he was appointed archbishop of York

¹On the dialectal features of the Wulfstanian compositions, see Menner; Bethurum, ed., Homilies of Wulfstan, 49 – 54; Whitelock, ed., Sermo Lupi, 37 – 45; and Dance, “Sound, Fury, and Signifiers,” 51 – 3. On the presence of Norse-derived terms in Wulfstan’s texts, see also Fischer and, especially, Pons-Sanz, “Norsified Vocabulary”. Please note that the all-encompassing premodifier Norse-derived refers here to all varieties of Norse loans, as well as English new-formations containing a Norse loan and a native component with no direct Norse model. I owe this phrase to Dance, Words Derived from Old Norse, §3.3.
²Cp. Townend, 92.
³Whitelock, Sermo Lupi, 44.
⁴Bethurum, Homilies of Wulfstan, 54.
and bishop of Worcester. In 1016 he either resigned to the see of Worcester or appointed a suffragan bishop, while he clearly kept his northern see until his death in 1023.\(^5\) We do not know where he was born or educated, though. Accordingly, the explanation which draws on his East Anglian origin has to rely mainly on the facts that his body rests at Ely Cathedral and that it was mainly men from the southern Danelaw that were appointed to the double sees of Worcester and York.\(^6\) Yet, it is noteworthy that Archbishop Ælfric (d. 1051), Wulfstan’s successor to the see of York, chose Peterborough, the nearest monastery to Northumbria, as his burial place despite having been a monk at Winchester; it seems that his connection with the Fenlands probably stemmed from his years as archbishop of York and the same may apply to Wulfstan’s.\(^7\) Given the current state of affairs, Wulfstan’s relationship with this area remains a mystery, as neither linguistic nor non-linguistic factors are conclusive.\(^8\)

Similarly, those who would like to attribute his use of Norse-derived terms to his contact with York would have to account for the fact that we do not know how much time he actually spent in his northern see, especially before 1016.\(^9\) If we leave this caveat aside, the analysis of these views requires that we establish (1) whether Wulfstan’s texts show a clear increase in Norse-derived terms as his contact with York became deeper, especially after 1016; and (2) whether there exists a clear correlation between Wulfstan’s audience and his use of Norse-derived vocabulary.

The examination of the first issue has to be based on the chronological organisation of Wulfstan’s Norse-derived vocabulary. Carrying out such arrangement is not an easy task, though, as suggested by Wormald’s description of the problem at hand: “Any chronology for Wulfstan’s works rests only on yet more argued reconstruction, the premise being that, like most aging men, he tended to become ever more loquacious over the years.”\(^10\) Despite this pessimistic picture, Wormald has recently provided us with a “schematic chronology of Wulfstan’s works”.\(^11\) Wormald’s chronological arrangement is the backbone for Table 1, which presents the archbishop’s works according to their date and the number of types (as opposed to tokens) of Norse-derived terms recorded in them.\(^12\) There are only minor

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\(^5\) On Wulfstan’s career, see Whitelock, “A Note on Wulfstan the Homilist”; Bethurum, Homilies of Wulfstan, 55–68; Whitelock, Sermo Lupi, 7–17; and Orchard, “Wulfstan the Homilist”.

\(^6\) On Wulfstan’s tomb, see Keynes, 34–5. On the strategy by West Saxon kings to appoint the same person as bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York in an attempt to prevent him from behaving like Archbishop Wulfstan I of York (d. 956), see Whitelock, “Dealings of the Kings of England”.

\(^7\) See Cooper, 3 and 14.

\(^8\) For a detailed analysis of what we know and what we can infer about Wulfstan’s relationship with East Anglia, see Pons-Sanz, “Norsified Vocabulary,” 173–80.

\(^9\) On the time that Wulfstan might have spent at York, see Whitelock, “Wulfstan at York”; Pons-Sanz, “Norsified Vocabulary,” 160–4; and Wilcox, “Wulfstan’s Sermo Lupi”.


\(^11\) Ibid., 26–7; see also Pons-Sanz, “Norsified Vocabulary,” 15–21.

\(^12\) The title abbreviations and editions of the Old English texts mentioned in this paper follow those employed by The Complete Corpus of Old English in Machine Readable Form (hereafter OEC). Accordingly, bibliographical references are only given for the texts which are not included in that corpus.
differences between Table 1 and Wormald’s chronology; these differences can be classified into two groups according to the texts which they involve:

(1) Texts which are not mentioned by Wormald but which are commonly attributed to Wulfstan:

(1.a) The version of Ælfric’s First Pastoral Letter to Wulfstan in Old English recorded in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 201 (hereafter WÆLet 2) has been attributed to Wulfstan since 1918, when Jost discredited Fehr’s theory that it was the work of one of the archbishop’s imitators.13 Since Wulfstan received the Ælfrician letter ca1006, it seems reasonable to attribute his revision of that letter to a similar date.14

(1.b) In his edition of the *Institutes of Polity* (hereafter *Polity*), Jost asserted Wulfstan’s authorship of the tract known as *Episcopus*.15 Even though it is difficult to establish its exact date, it could be assigned to the early years of his career because “cc. 13–15 have not been influenced by the Wulfstan homily Bethurum VIIIib, though a very similar passage in the homily Napier LVIII has”.16

(1.c) Not much can be gained from *IX* and *X Æthelred*, which are “the detritus respectively of the Cottonian fire and (at a guess) of pruning by Avranches librarians with no knowledge of Old English”.17 Yet, Wormald has argued that *X Æthelred* is likely to be a version of the Enham decrees (*V–VI Æthelred*), to the extent that “it might […] have come closest of them all to the ‘official’ version”.18 Similarly, *IX Æthelred* may be “a fuller and more official statement of what survives as ‘VIII’ [Æthelred]”.19

(1.d) Bethurum has presented enough evidence to ascribe the so-called *compilation on status* comprising *Geþyncðo, Norðleoda laga, Mircna laga, Að* and *Hadbot* to the archbishop’s hand, although it is clear that his involvement differs from text to text.20 Given the fact that these texts have a common theme, we may want to date the tracts which Wormald does not mention to the same period as *Geþyncðo* and *Hadbot*.

(1.e) Wulfstan consecrated Æthelnoth as archbishop of Canterbury in 1020.21 After this date he would have sent a writ to Cnut and his wife informing them of the consecration and requesting Cnut to grant the archbishop some privileges (i.e. Ch 1386).

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13Jost, Review of *Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, 106–7; Fehr, ed., lxix – lxxxii. For an edition of the text, see Fehr, 68 – 145.
14See Fehr, lii; and Clemoes, 57.
16Whitelock et al., eds., no. 56.
21See ChronD 1020.
In an appendix to his edition of *Polity*, Jost included a series of tracts which are not part of *Polity* itself, but which could be considered to be the work of the archbishop. In her review of Jost’s edition Whitelock accepted Wulfstan’s authorship for the following additional texts: *Be gode þeowum*, *Ad sacerdotes: La leof*, *Ad sacerdotes: Tæcað cristenum*, *Canons of Edgar*, *Incipit de synodo*, *Be gehadedum mannum*, *De regula canonicorum* (= WHom 10a) and *Be sacerdan*, and merely echoed Jost’s identification of the so-called *Admonition to bishops* as Wulfstanian.22 Her scepticism regarding the latter appears to have diminished in later years because it is undoubtedly counted among Wulfstan’s works by Whitelock et al.23 Wormald’s chronology includes *De regula canonicorum* and *Canons of Edgar*. The only other text which we may be able to place in his chronological arrangement is *Be sacerdan* because Bethurum argues that *Grið* draws material from this text and Whitelock seems to have shared her views in her review of Jost’s edition of *Polity*.24

Wormald has recently noted that Wulfstan made some additions to *I Æthelstan*, *I Edmund* and *II – III Edgar*.25 It is, however, very difficult to know at what point during his career he would have done so.

Wulfstan has been credited with the rhythmical passages in the annals for 959 in the *D*- and *E*-texts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and for 975 in the *D*-text since Jost suggested his authorship in 1923.26 His authorship is not beyond dispute, though.27 Other than the fact that they may have been composed once Wulfstan’s contact with York started because of his see’s association with the so-called northern recension of the Chronicle,28 not much can be inferred about when the archbishop would have worked on them.

(2) Texts which are assigned a different date by Wormald:

(2.a) Wormald assigns WHom 4 and WHom 5 to Wulfstan’s London period; however, Godden has shown in the same volume that they were most probably written after 1005.29

(2.b) Wormald dates *HomU 41 (Nap 51)* ca1014. Bethurum, Jost and Stafford agree that *Nap 51* was probably preached during a meeting of the

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22Whitelock, Review of *Institutes of Polity*; Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 22. Except for *De regula canonicorum* and *Canons of Edgar*, these texts are referred to in Table 1 as follows: WPol 2.2.1, WPol 2.2.2, WPol 2.2.3, WPol 2.3, WPol 6.1, WPol 6.2 and WPol 4, respectively.
23Whitelock et al., no. 55.
26Jost, “Wulfstan und die angelsächsische Chronik”.
27See Pons-Sanz, “A Paw on Every Pie”. Similarly, Wulfstan’s direct authorship of *HomU 40 (Nap 50)* has been recently questioned by Corradini, who argues that the homily may have been put together in Exeter during Bishop Leofric’s (d. 1072) time.
29Godden, 368 – 70.
Reconsideration of Wulfstan’s Use of Norse-Derived Terms

Although it is not easy to associate it with a particular legislative meeting, the fact that the text finds its parallel mainly in V Æthelred could be an indication that it served as an outline of what was to be enacted as law in Enham.

In Table 1 the terms are presented together with the work where they are first recorded. Those which reflect constrained usage—that is, those which Wulfstan selected because they appear in his sources—are underlined, fully or partially according to the different nature of the constraints at work.

Even though Wulfstan’s Norse-derived terms seem to increase during the last years of his career, the two most important simplexes, lágú “law” (<ON log) and gríð “truce, asylum, sanctuary” (<ON gríð), are already present in his earliest works. His familiarity with these terms is suggested by their early integration in productive processes. One might want to agree with the general analysis of unlagú “bad law, injustice” and lahríht “legal right” as loanblends based on ON úlog and logrítt, respectively. Yet, given that lahgewrit “legal writing” is only recorded in WHom 10a, a homily composed during the earliest years of Wulfstan’s (arch)episcopate, and that it appears in a context dominated by what Don Chapman calls matching pairs, one of the archbishop’s favourite stylistic devices, it is difficult to deny his creativity behind its existence. Similarly, as far as the earliest records of the gríð word-field are concerned, we are almost forced to attribute the existence of, at least, handgríð “gríð granted personally by the king” to Wulfstan’s word-formation ability because, like the previous term, its use is restricted to the Wulfstanian canon and it always appears as a member of a matching pair of echoing terms, the other member being cyricgríð “church-peace, sanctuary”. Handgríð is first recorded in the Peace of Edward and Guthrum, a code from the same period as WHom 10a. This code also attests Wulfstan’s oft-mentioned preference for eorl (cp. ON jarl) over the native ealdormann “higher officer in the shire.” Equally interesting are the facts that sehtan “to conciliate” (<ON sætta) and þræl “slave” (<ON þræll) are also recorded in works composed during the earlier period of Wulfstan’s career, and that they

30Bethurum, Homilies of Wulfstan, 37; Jost, Wulfstanstudien, 106–9; Stafford, 41, n. 104.
31Jost, Wulfstanstudien, 108.
32I owe the phrase constrained usage to Benskin and Laing, 74–5. However, while it refers here to lexical items, Benskin and Laing apply it mainly to orthographic and phonetic features.
33E.g. Hofmann, §267; Peters, 91–2; Kastovsky, 333; and Wollmann, 231. See, however, Pons-Sanz, “Norsified Vocabulary,” 95–7, for an argument in favour of analysing them as Wulfstan’s new-formations.
34Matching pairs are defined as “pairs of alliterating or rhyming words that are bound closely together (seldom more than five words apart), almost always by coordinating conjunctions, in balanced, parallel phrases that usually consist of two stresses” by Chapman, “Stylistic Use of Nominal Compounds,” 124. Lahgewrit appears in the following context: “Ealdlice lahgewritu 7 eac godspellice bebodu us lærað 7 myngiað þæt . . .” (WHom 10a, 3–4; “old writings on the Christian law and evangelical commandments teach and remind us that . . .”)
35I use word-field as a synonym of word family, i.e. it refers to the group of words consisting of one simplex and the complexes which have that simplex as one of their components.
36On this trait of Wulfstan’s lexicon, see Whitelock, “Wulfstan at York,” 226; and Pons-Sanz, “Norsified Vocabulary,” 147–50.
Table 1 Chronological Distribution of Wulfstan’s Norse-Derived Vocabulary (NB: bold marks homiletic work)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHom 2</th>
<th>WHom 3</th>
<th>WHom 1b</th>
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<td>lagu)</td>
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<th>WHom 6, WHom 15</th>
<th>WHom 10a</th>
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<td>(lahgewrit, sahtan)</td>
<td>(grid, gridian)</td>
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<th>WCAn, WHom 8c, WHom 13</th>
<th>WHom 9</th>
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<tr>
<td>(jre)</td>
<td>(legian, lahlic, lahlice)</td>
<td>(gridom)</td>
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<td>(woruldlagu)</td>
<td>(unlagu, lahbraye, unsac)</td>
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<td>LawNorðleod</td>
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<td>(bônda), Nap 39</td>
<td>(hold)</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(hælnessðgrið, hædrgríð gnðlagu)</td>
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996, Bishop of London

1002, Archbishop of York & Bishop of Worcester

1005 – 06, Ælfric’s Pastoral Letters

(continued)
Table 1 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHom 16b, 1st part of Nap 47, LawIXAtr</th>
<th>WHom 12</th>
<th>WHom 11, WHom19, WHom 21</th>
<th>WHom 20.1</th>
<th>LawVIIIAtr (fölclaga, gríðleas, þréðriht)</th>
<th>LawVIIIAtr (inlagiæ, miæglaga, regollege, útæla)</th>
<th>1014–16, Swein's Conquest, Cnut's Accession</th>
<th>WHom 20.2, WHom 20.3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nap 27, Nap 52, Nap 53</td>
<td>WHom 18, Ch 1386, Nap 23, Nap 24</td>
<td>WHom 17</td>
<td>Nap 60, Nap 61</td>
<td>Nap 59</td>
<td>LawCn 1020</td>
<td>Polity</td>
<td>LawCn 1018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LawIEn, LawII – IIIEg, WPол 2.2.2, WPол 2.2.3, WPол 2.3, WPол 4</td>
<td>LawIAs, WPол 6.1 (cost)</td>
<td>WPол 2.2.1, ChronD 975</td>
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Unclear date

| Nap 50? | LawVIIIAtr (cyrircen), LawCn 1018 | LawCn (friðleas, frið, bæmsån, n[a/e]m, uncwydd, unbecrafod, drivælæm) |

1014 – 16, Swein’s Conquest, Cnut’s Accession
already exhibit his idiosyncratic usage: the former collocates with the alliterating *sacu* “conflict, strife” and the latter appears in a context where there is a clear exploitation of its unequivocal reference to slavery (see below). As with *lagu* and *grið*, that *eorl* and *þræl* are well-integrated in Wulfstan’s vocabulary is attested by their early participation in word-formation processes: for example, *Geþyncðo* records the only case of *eorlriht* “earl’s right” in the OEC, while *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (hereafter *Sermo Lupi*) includes the otherwise unattested *þrælriht* “slave’s right”. Wulfstan’s earliest works establish the foundations for the future development of his Norse-derived vocabulary. When this is compared with his approach to word-formation with non-Norse-derived terms, it becomes clear that this development can be associated with the archbishop’s own lexical practices rather than with any external influence.37

Any additional increase in the number of Norse-derived terms other than those belonging to the *lagu* and *grið* word-fields can be organised as follows:

(1) Norse-derived terms which are selected because of constrained usage:
   (1.a) terms the selection of which has most likely been prompted by constrained usage: *hold* “holder of allodial land, ranking below the earl” (<ON *holdr*), *uncwydd* “uncontested” (cp. ON *kveðja*), *unbecrafod* “not subject to claims” (cp. ON *krefja*) and *hámsöcn* “offence of attacking a man in his own house” (cp. ON *heimsökn*);38
   (1.b) terms the selection of which may reflect constrained usage: *drincelean* “reward in return for entertainment” (cp. ON *drekkuðaþan*).39

(2) New Norse-derived terms which are freely incorporated into Wulfstan’s vocabulary:
   (2.a) terms which represent Wulfstan’s awareness of the existence of different practices in the Danelaw: the monetary units of account *ðran* (<ON *aurar*) and *healfmarc* (cp. ON *mork*);
   (2.b) terms which are not specifically associated with the Danelaw: *bónda* “householder” (<ON *bóndi*), *cost* “condition” (<ON *kostr*), *cyricrín* “sacrilege” (cp. ON *ráns*), *unsac* “innocent” (cp. ON *úsekr*), *n[ðæ]m*

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37On Wulfstan’s uncommonly high ability to coin new terms, see Chapman, “Motivations for Producing and Analyzing Compounds”; Chapman, “Germanic Tradition”; and Pons-Sanz, “For Gode and for worolde”.

38*Hold* in the Wulfstanian canon is only recorded in the short tract known as *Norðleoda laga*, where Wulfstan’s intervention seems to be restricted to its inclusion in the compilation on status and the addition of a few phrases much in the Wulfstanian style. See Bethurum, “Six Anonymous Old English Codes”; and Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 391–4. *Uncwydd* and *unbecrafod* are only recorded in LawIIcN 72, the wording of which has been influenced by LawIIATr 14, as noted by Wormald, *Making of English Law*, table 5.4. *Hámsöcn* is recorded in LawIIcN 12 and 15, which are likely to rely on LawIIEm 6, as suggested by Pons-Sanz, “Norsified Vocabulary,” 125 and 141; and in LawIIcN 62, which follows LawIVATr 4.1, according to Wormald, *Making of English Law*, table 5.4.

39As far as the Wulfstanian canon is concerned, *drincelean* is only recorded in LawIIcN 81. Wormald, *Making of English Law*, table 5.4, identifies LawIIATr 3 as its source but the Æthelredian decree does not record this term. It is therefore difficult to know whether Wulfstan added it himself or whether it was already present in the document which he is likely to have followed when drafting LawIIcN 69–83. On this document, see Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 361–4; and Pons-Sanz, “Norsified Vocabulary,” 131–4.
“distrain of property” (<ON nám), friðlēas “outlawed” (cp. ON friðlauss) and the borrowed meaning of frið in LawIIcN 13, namely, the reference, not to peace and protection in general, but to the right of peace and protection which an individual enjoys in the legal society he or she is immersed in (cp. ON frið).⁴⁰

The terms presented under 2.b are the best—and, possibly, the only—indication of an actual increase in Norse-derived terms in the archbishop’s vocabulary because all of them, except for bônda and unsæc, are recorded in post-1016 works. It may be possible to interpret the use of frið in LawIIcN 13 as a semantic backformation: a noun, which already exists in the borrowing language, acquires a new meaning because of its use as the base of a complex which is a loan-translation of a foreign term (i.e. friðlēas). Thus, if frið and friðlēas are analysed together, Wulfstan’s vocabulary would have increased in four or five terms (if drincelēan is added to the freely chosen terms) after 1016. They are used only once in the corpus, possibly as an indication that Wulfstan became acquainted with specific legal terms as his career progressed. The typically East Scandinavian use of bônda to indicate the general citizen who enjoys the benefits of the law in LawVIatr 31–2 = LawcN 1018 20.1 = LawIIcN 8 = HomU 40 (Nap 50) 186–7 could be associated with this increase in the use of Norse-derived terms.⁴¹ Yet, the slight increase in Norse-derived legal terms exhibited in the archbishop’s post-1016 texts, especially I–II Cnut, could also be attributable to his contact with Cnut’s Danish court. Indeed, Stanley explains Wulfstan’s use of these terms as a result of the fact that “he lived into the age of Scandinavian kings in England”.⁴² Yet, this association does not acknowledge the fact that Wulfstan was already using a significant number of Norse-derived terms during the Æthelredian reign.

Admittedly, the chronological arrangement of Wulfstan’s works presented in Table 1 is only tentative and modifications could no doubt be made.⁴³ However, when the information which it provides regarding the development of Wulfstan’s Norse-derived lexicon is put together with the aforementioned fact that it is impossible to know how much time the archbishop actually spent in York, it seems clear that any straightforward and exclusive attribution of Wulfstan’s Norse-derived vocabulary to his contacts with the northern see has to be treated with great caution.

The suggestion that Wulfstan may have selected Norse-derived terms to accommodate his Scandinavianised Northumbrian audience is equally problematic. On the one hand, it assumes that Wulfstan was aware of the dialectal character of

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⁴¹On this meaning of bônda, see Steenstrup, 97; and Whitelock, ed., English Historical Documents, 455 n. 6. Cnut 1018 is not included in the OEC; for an edition of this text, Kennedy, 72–81.
⁴²Stanley, 249.
⁴³On the controversial dating of the three versions of Sermo Lupi, see below, n. 53. For a dating of WHom 17 to 1014 instead of 1020, see Wilcox, “Wulfstan’s Sermo Lupi,” 380–3.
these terms. This may well be the case as far as some terms are concerned. For instance, the aforementioned monetary units of account ōran and healfmarc are only recorded in the Wulfstanian corpus in the Northumbrian-oriented Peace of Edward and Guthrum (LawEGu 3.1–2). Similarly, lahslit “fine for breach of the law” (cp. OSwed. laghslit) is commonly given as the Danelaw equivalent of wîte (e.g. LawEGu 3.2, LawIIICn 45.3). However, the same conclusion cannot be reached as far as other terms are concerned. On the other hand, this suggestion does not take into account that, at least until 1016, Wulfstan also held Worcester, where the Scandinavian influence was much less important.

Wulfstan says in his Polity that bishops should shout, denouncing sins and proclaiming God’s laws (WPol 2.1.1 43). This is presumably what he would have tried to do, not restricting his works, knowingly, to the use of vocabulary clearly associated with one dialectal area which could be suspected to be difficult to understand outside his archdiocese. Moreover, when we try to match what appears to be a text’s intended audience with the Norse-derived terms it records, this process is not easily done. Here are some examples. I – II Cnut is supposed to have received official approval in Winchester (LawICn 0.1). Thus, since it has a status closer to an official legal code than any other of Wulfstan’s texts, very few Norse-derived terms would be expected because of its wider intended audience. Yet, II Cnut contains the highest number of Norse-derived terms in the corpus, while the ten Norse-derived terms recorded in I Cnut place it as well amongst the texts with a high number of borrowed terms. We may also feel tempted to compare the significant amount of Norse-derived terms in the Peace of Edward and Guthrum with their poor presence in VIIa Æthelred, a code demanding penance and fasting as a way of fighting against the nation’s enemies. VIIa Æthelred should be associated with VII Æthelred, a Latin version of the code included in the Quadripartitus. Even though Wulfstan’s stylistic traits are not clearly visible in the Latin translation, his influence is recognisable in the reference to the sale of Christians as slaves overseas (LawVII-Atr 5).

Thus, this manuscript context seems to argue in favour of the wide circulation of the original Wulfstanian text. The fact that VIIa Æthelred only contains three Norse-derived terms, however, can be explained as a result of the religious nature of its decrees. In fact, the three terms (lagian “to ordain”, bōnda and þræl) appear in the context most closely connected with the legal sphere of life, namely, the explanation of the fines to be applied if the penny is not properly paid.

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44 On the likely association of this code with Wulfstan’s archdiocese, see Whitelock, “Wulfstan and the So-Called Laws”.
45 Williams explains that any significant presence of the Danes in Worcestershire and the surrounding shires should be associated with the appointment of three Danish earls to the south-west midlands in the early years of Cnut’s reign. She argues that the Danish influence in the area was short-lived because the followers of the Danish earls appear to have assimilated reasonably early into a society predominantly English. Accordingly, she states that “there is nothing ‘Anglo-Scandinavian’ about the society of the west midlands in the 11th century”; Williams, 15–16. For a recent summary of the available evidence, see Dance, Words Derived from Old Norse, §§1.3.2–3.
46 On Wulfstan’s opinion on (arch)bishops’ pastoral responsibilities, see Wilcox, “The Wolf on Shepherds”.
47 See Wormald, “Æthelred the Lawmaker,” 58.
48 Viz. lagian “to ordain” (cp. ON lög), bōnda and þræl “slave”.
Reconsideration of Wulfstan’s Use of Norse-Derived Terms

Likewise, if the fact that Cnut 1020, HomU 48 (Nap 59), HomU 49 (Nap 60) and HomU 50 (Nap 61) are only recorded in the York Gospels is understood as an indication that they were intended to be used specifically at York, it is noteworthy that they contain very few Norse-derived terms and that most of them belong to the lagu and grið word-fields, the two word-fields of Norse-derived terms in the Wulfstanian canon which probably enjoyed the highest degree of familiarity in non-Scandinavianised areas.49

Sermo Lupi has the largest number of Norse-derived terms in its genre and a similar amount to those legal codes which exhibit the highest concentration of these terms in the canon. The different origins of its eleventh-century manuscripts may also hint at its wide circulation. While the second part of London, British Library, Cotton Nero A.i and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 113 can be associated with Wulfstan’s sees,50 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 419 is attributed by Wilcox to a south-eastern house (possibly Ramsey).51 Similarly, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 201 has been assigned several non-Worcester origins (e.g. Canterbury, Winchester or the regions of Mercia).52 Thus, rather than associating the important presence of Norse-derived terms with the text’s audience,53 they could be associated with its fusion of legal and homiletic features because, except for þrælihriht and grīðleas “unprotected, unable to provide protection”, it does not contain different terms from those used in other compositions.54

It has become apparent that Wulfstan’s contact with York, the most common explanation for his use of Norse-derived terms so far brought forward, cannot clearly account for their presence. While his relationship with this Scandinavianised area

49Cnut 1020: eorl, lagu, utlah “outlaw” (cp. ON útlagr), woruldlagu “secular law”; HomU 48 (Nap 59): lagu, lahlice “legally, according to the law”; grīðian “to protect, make a truce”; HomU 49 (Nap 60): lagu, lahslit; HomU 50 (Nap 61): lagu, lagian. On the use of the lagu and grið word-fields in non-Wulfstanian texts, see Fischer and Fell, respectively.
50See Ker, nos. 164 and 331.
51Wilcox, “Compilation of Old English Homilies,” §5.5; and Wilcox, “Dissemination of Wulfstan’s Homilies,” 202 and 208, n. 40.
52On the origins attributed to Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 201, see Whitbread; Wilcox, “Compilation of Old English Homilies,” §5.5.1.3; Hill, “Regularis Concordia,” 311; Hill, “Monastic Reform,” 113 – 14; Wilcox, “Dissemination of Wulfstan’s Homilies,” 202; and Wormald, Making of English Law, 206 – 10. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 343 dates from the second half of the twelfth century and originates from an unidentified house in the west midlands, according to Ker, no. 310.
53This association may be particularly tempting in light of Wilcox’s recent reassessment of the chronology of the three versions of Sermo Lupi and his conclusion that WHom 20.3 is the version closest to the original sermon, which Wulfstan would have delivered in York on 16 February 1014. Yet, even if this were the case, Wilcox himself points out that Wulfstan would have preached the sermon during a witenagemot with “councillors from throughout the country”; Wilcox, “Wulfstan’s Sermo Lupi,” 381. The dating of the three versions of Sermo Lupi is highly controversial, though, as Wilcox’s article suggests; Wilcox assigns WHom 20.3 to 1014, WHom 20.2 to 1014 × 1016 and WHom 20.1 to 1018 × 1023. This controversy, however, is not very significant for the present article because the three versions record the same Norse-derived terms with the exception of þræli and grīðian, which are missing from WHom 20.1.
54Wormald explains this fusion of legal and homiletic traits in Sermo Lupi very clearly: “The significance of Wulfstan’s later homilies is not that they fit neither homiletic nor legal categories but that they fit both. His homilies were becoming more legislative in content at the same time as his laws were acquiring teeth”; Wormald, “Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society,” 205 – 6.
might have played a role in his acquisition of some of the Norse-derived terms recorded in his canon, it would be too simplistic—and indeed inaccurate—to account for their presence by only referring to this aspect of his career.

Alternative suggestions are therefore needed. They can be provided when each of these terms is studied in its own right by closely scrutinising all its contexts and by analysing its semantic and stylistic relationships with its native equivalents. This approach suggests a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic factors as the most likely answer to the puzzle presented by Wulfstan’s lexical choices. Among the former, stylistic issues and the possibility which Norse-derived terms offer to restructure the relationship between a lexical and its corresponding semantic field appear to be the most important factors. Among the non-linguistic reasons, the existence of different practices and traditions in the Scandinavianised areas and the changing fashions in the legal language can be said to be the most influential factors. Spatial limitations do not allow for a detailed study of all these factors. Instead, I will concentrate on the second linguistic reason and will exemplify it by explaining the issues behind Wulfstan’s occasional selection of þræl instead of the native þeow.

The most common Old English word to refer to a slave is þeow. Its word-field is widely developed so as to account for the various aspects associated with that condition and this is reflected in the fact that approximately 44.5 per cent of the terms presented by the Thesaurus of Old English (hereafter TOE) in the section referring to “bondage” and “slavery” belong to this word-field. It is not surprising then that these are the terms which Wulfstan uses most commonly in his legal texts when referring to a slave. This may partially respond to the fact that the phonetic structure of the field allows him to highlight the difference between slavery and freedom by contrasting the members of the þeow and freo “free” word-fields. There are a handful of contexts, however, where Wulfstan chooses the þræl word-field instead.

In his studies on slavery in Anglo-Saxon England, Pelteret suggests that, in Wulfstan’s idiolect, þræl appears to have acquired a pejorative connotation which is not as clear among the members of the þeow word-field. His view seems to rely mainly on one context from WHom 9: “And swa swade manswican þe on þa wisan
swæslic swecíað oftost on unriht 7 þurh þæt deríað for Gode 7 for worulde, þæt syndan forbodan 7 Antecristes þrælas þe his weg rymað, þeah hy swa ne wenan” (WHom 9, 125–8). It may indeed seem very easy to attribute Wulfstan’s selection of the loanword in this particular context to some negative connotations associated with this term. However, when the use of the þræow word-field in similar Old English contexts receives due attention, other reasons that could have led Wulfstan to select þræl instead of its native equivalent begin to emerge.

As Pelteret points out, the relationship between humanity and God or the Devil is commonly described in Old English texts in servile terms through imagery drawn from social stratification. Thus, Wulfstan explains that we are all “Godes agene eowæl” (LawEpisc 14). Yet, it is clear from biblical and Patristic sources that the nature of the relationship varies according to the lord whom one serves. St Paul explains in Rom 6.22 that he who is not a slave of Sin becomes a slave of God (“servi autem facti Deo”), a state which offers holiness and everlasting life as the reward. This state of apparent slavery can be clarified by referring to Gal 4.7, which claims that, since God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts, we are no longer slaves, but God’s children and heirs: “iam non es servus, sed filius quod si filius et heres per Deum.”

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\(\text{MkGl [Li]}\) 10.44 = \(\text{MkGl [Ru]}\) 10.44. Not only is this context included by Darton, ed., s.v. slave-serve-minister 3.3, amongst those where slavery should be interpreted figuratively, but it also puts the ignominy suggested for the loanword into question. If þræl is indeed tinted with infamy or dishonour, its selection here is somewhat puzzling because it is very difficult to associate this context with any negative connotations. Secondly, and closely related to the first point, Aldred uses þræl regularly, while þfæow is not common in his glosses; see Pons-Sanz, Analysis of the Scandinavian Loanwords, 100–1 and 125. It is therefore not surprising that he selects the Norse-derived term in both literal and metaphorical contexts. All the biblical translations follow the translation of the New Testament published by the English College of Rheims.

59. “And deceivers of this sort, who in this manner are treacherous with a pleasant demeanour most often unlawfully and through that do harm before God and before the world, those [deceivers] are messengers and slaves of the Antichrist who prepare his way, though they do not think so”.

60. Pelteret, Slavery in Early Medieval England, 68–70.

61. “God’s own slaves”.

62. “He is not a [slave], but a son. And if a son, an heir also through God”. The translation published by the English College of Rheims and the King James version have servant instead of slave in this and similar contexts (see above, n. 58). Pelteret, Slavery in Early Medieval England, 68, explains that this is the reason why “the word ‘slave’ has been replaced in modern christian [sic] religious discourse by ‘servant’”. “Yet”, he continues, “the antecedent Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Old English versions of the Bible were unambiguous in their use of the legal status word ‘slave’”. This statement is especially true as far as Gr. δοῦλος “born bondman or slave […] then, generally, bondman, slave” is concerned. However, Heb. ‘ebed, L servus and OE þeow are slightly more problematic. Botterweck et al., eds., s.v. ‘abadd, ‘ebed, “bodā (i.e. X, 376–405), explain that “[t]he subst. ‘ebed refers to a person who is subordinated to someone else. This subordination can manifest itself in various ways, and ‘ebed, accordingly, can have different meanings: slave [e.g. Exod XXI.20], servant, subject [e.g. 1 Kings XX.9], official [e.g. 2 Sam IX.2], vassal [e.g. 2 Kings XVI.7], servant or follower of a particular god [e.g. Psalm 119]”. Similarly, L servus could mean both “servant” and “slave”, according to Lewis and Short, eds., s.v. servus. On the ambiguity developed around the Old English term, see below. That those who serve God should in principle be understood as slaves of God rather than servants of God is suggested by the fact that the Greek version of the Bible uses members of the unambiguous δοῦλος word-field when referring, for instance, to Christ’s own degradation when becoming man (Phil 2.7), to Mary’s relationship towards God in the Annunciation (Luke 1.38) and to Paul’s self-identification as the “slave of Christ” and the “slave of God” (Rom 1.1; 2 Tim 2.24). On the slaves of God, see further Vogt, chap. 8; Darton, s.v. slave-serve-minister; and Magennis.
That association between bondage to God and freedom, and therefore the integration of this relationship into the wider semantic area of *service* is suggested in Old English by the alternation of the *þeow* and *þegn* word-fields.\(^{63}\) The members of the *þegn* word-field are not commonly associated with the semantic field of “slavery”, as their absence from the section in *TOE* dealing with bondage and slavery indicates. Admittedly, in the tenth-century Northumbrian dialect of Aldred the glossator *þegn* could mean “slave” or rather “young slave”, *þegn* being a cognate of Gr τέκνον “child, son” (cp. L *puer* “male child, boy” and “servant, slave”). Nonetheless, Pelteret notes that, even in that dialect, this sense appears to have been on the decline because of an alternative specialised sense which became common in late Old English, namely “retainer, a freeman who serves a noble or a king”.\(^{64}\)

Pelteret himself points out that two members of the *þeow* word-field, namely, *þeowdūm* and *þeowian*, have lost the legal sense associated with slavery, and can refer to the broader idea of *service*.\(^{65}\) Accordingly, they can be used as synonyms of a member of the *þegn* word-field:

\[
\text{We lærað þæt Godes þeowas beon geornlice Gode þeowigende and þenigende and for eall cristen folc þingigende. (WCan 1)\(^\text{66}\)}
\]

\[
\text{We lærað þæt preostas cirican healdan mid ealre arwurðnesse to godcundre þenunge and to clænan þeowdome, and to nanum oðrum þingum. (WCan 26)\(^\text{67}\)}
\]

However, these two members of the *þeow* word-field are not the only ones to be coordinated with the *þegn* word-field to indicate the broader concept *service*:

\[
\text{fuglas þringað}
\]
\[
\text{utan ymbe æþelne; æghylc wille}
\]
\[
\text{wesan þegn ond þeow þeodne mærum (Phoen 163b–5b)\(^\text{68}\)}
\]

It is clear that, in this context, neither term means “slave”. Accordingly, Blake translates *þeow* in this context as “servant”.\(^{69}\)

He who serves the Devil has a very different relationship with his lord. Rom 6.20–1 present death as the only reward for the slaves of sin. They can never have the

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\(^{63}\)See Girsch, 43; cp. Magennis, 169.

\(^{64}\)Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Medieval England*, 304. While *þegn* originally referred to someone who served a lord in a personal capacity, it became the normal means to describe a noble engaged in the business of helping to govern the realm. On the semantic change undergone by this term and on the social status of thanes during Wulfstan’s time, see Loyn and Gillingham.

\(^{65}\)Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Medieval England*, 42.

\(^{66}\)“And we urge that priests zealously serve and minister to God and intercede for all Christian people”, as translated by Whitelock et al., 305.

\(^{67}\)“And we urge that priests maintain the churches with all reverence for divine ministry and for pure service, and for no other thing”, as translated by Whitelock et al., 323.

\(^{68}\)“Birds throng about the prince—each wants to be a vassal and a servant to the glorious lord”, as translated by Bradley, 289.

\(^{69}\)Blake, ed., 117, s.v. *þeow*. 
apparently paradoxical state of slavery/freedom enjoyed by the slaves/children of God. It is precisely this difference that could have prompted Wulfstan to select þræl to refer to the slaves of the Antichrist in WHom 9. The contexts where þræl appears in pre-Wulfstanian texts, namely, the glosses to the Lindisfarne and Rushworth Gospels and to the Durham Ritual, and II Æthelred, a text with which Wulfstan may have been more familiar (see below), suggest that this term had not yet acquired a wider meaning, unlike the members of the þeow word-field. Therefore, Wulfstan probably selected it so as to emphasise the idea of slavery without leaving any space for ambiguity. A member of the þeow word-field is selected only once in the Wulfstanian canon in a similar context: “wolde þa synfullan alysan of deofles þeowete” (WÆLet 2 11). In this case Wulfstan has simply done what we expect him to do: he has placed the stylistic effect derived from the presence of the diphthong /e:o/ in dœfol and þeowete over lexical precision (cp. Jn [WSCp] 8.34).

Further evidence against Pelteret’s interpretation of the meaning of þræl may be found in other contexts of the Wulfstanian canon. Pelteret himself explains that, in Wulfstan’s works, þeowetling normally implies some “weakness arising out of the legal condition of slavery”, a condition which suggests an attitude of pity on the part of the speaker. Yet, þræl could be said to have similar pitiful connotations in the following context from Sermo Lupi: “cradolcild geðeowade þurh wælhreowe unlage for lytlere þeofðe, 7 freoriht fornumene 7 þrælriht genyrwde, 7 ælmesriht gewanode” (WHom 20.1 42–3 = WHom 20.2 48–9 = WHom 20.3 47–8; cp. WHom 20.1 49–54).

An attempt to emphasise the idea of slavery is also likely to have led Wulfstan to select þræl instead of þeow as the opposite term to þegn when trying to highlight the differences in social status suggested by the two terms. The selection of þeow would have been confusing because the two word-fields are presented as synonymous in other Old English contexts, as shown in the quotation from The Phoenix. The following context can then be interpreted in this light: “We witan, þæt þurh Godes...”
Wulfstan was very keen on the contrast between þræl and þegn. In VIIa Æthelred the loanword alternates with þeowmann; VII Æthelred translates both as servus (LawVIIAtr 4):

7 gif hwa þis ne gelæste, ðonne gebete he þæt, swa swa hit gelagod is: bunda mid XXX ðælignum, þræl mid his hide, þegn mid XXX scillingum. (LawVIIAtr 3)\(^{78}\)

7 hiredmanna gehwilc sille ðælign to ælmesan oðde his hlaford sille to him, buton he sylf hæbbe heafodmenn teoðian.

7 þæowemen þa ðrig dagas beon worces gefreode wið ciriscocne 7 wið ðam þe hi þæt fæsten þe lustlicor gefastan. (LawVIIAtr 5–5.1)\(^{79}\)

As expected, whereas þræl is selected to contrast with þegn in LawVIIaAtr 3, the presence nearby of the compounds hiredmann and heafodmann and the verb frēogan makes þeowmann preferable in LawVIIaAtr 5.1 because of the echoic effects it creates.

Wulfstan also uses þræl when condemning the situation derived from decrees like

Gif Ænglisc man Deniscne ofsleo, frigman frigne, gylde hine mid XXV pundum, oððon man ðone handdædan agyfe; 7 do se Denisca ðone Engliscan ealswa, gif hine ofslea.

\(^{77}\)‘We know that through God’s grace a thrall has become a thegn, and a ‘ceorl’ has become an ‘eorl’, a singer a priest, and a scribe a bishop’, as translated by Thorpe, ed., I.335.

\(^{78}\)‘And if anyone does not render this, he shall make amends as has been established by law: a householder shall pay 30 pence, a slave shall undergo the lash, and a thegn shall pay 30 shillings’, as translated by Robertson, ed., 115.

\(^{79}\)‘And every member of a household shall give a penny as alms, or his lord shall give it for him, if he has nothing himself, and men of position shall pay tithes. And on these three days slaves shall be exempt from work, in order to attend church and keep the fast more willingly’, as translated by Robertson, 115.
We could argue again that the negative connotations associated with the loanword would have prompted Wulfstan to select it in the following context from *Sermo Lupi*:

\[
\text{\begin{quote}
If a slave escape from his lord, and, leaving Christendom, becomes a Viking, and after that it happens that an armed encounter occurs between thegn and slave; if the slave should slay the thegn outright, he will lie without payment to any of his family; and if the thegn should slay outright the slave whom he previously owned, he will pay the price of a thegn”, as translated by Swanton, 181.
\end{quote}}
\]

However, constrained usage in a loose sense (i.e. the fact that the loanword appears in the Æthelredian text) and the possibility to contrast again thanes and slaves may have played a more important role in his selection of *þræl* than any negative connotations possibly associated with it.

We can conclude that the negative connotations which have been claimed for *þræl* in the Wulfstanian canon are not necessarily present. Instead, Wulfstan’s selection of the term appears to have been prompted by what could be described in Hope’s terminology as *comparative inefficiency* on behalf of the *þæow* word-field. The loanword seems to have been attractive for the archbishop because of the possibility which it offers to emphasise the idea of slavery without allowing for its interpretation as a more general kind of service.

The detailed study of the occurrences of the loanword *þræl* in the Wulfstanian canon has paid off and specific linguistic reasons for Wulfstan’s lexical selection can be brought forward. By adopting a similar approach to that presented in this article, we will hopefully be able to gain a deeper understanding of the use of Norse-derived terms in the Wulfstanian canon and in Old English texts in general.

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\[\text{80}^{\text{80}}\text{If an Englishman slays a Dane, a freeman a freeman, he is to pay for him with 25 pounds, or the actual slayer is to be surrendered; and the Dane is to do the same for an Englishman, if he slays one. If an Englishman slays a Danish slave, he is to pay for him with one pound, and the Dane the same for an English slave if he slays one”, as translated by Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 438.}\]

\[\text{81}^{\text{81}}\text{If any slave escape from his lord, and, leaving Christendom, becomes a Viking, and after that it happens that an armed encounter occurs between thegn and slave; if the slave should slay the thegn outright, he will lie without payment to any of his family; and if the thegn should slay outright the slave whom he previously owned, he will pay the price of a thegn”, as translated by Swanton, 181.}\]

\[\text{82}^{\text{82}}\text{Hope, 709 – 14.}\]
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