*Translatio imperii et studii*: translating Orosius’ *Histories* and the making of Old English

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Abstract: This article looks at the geographical first chapter of the Old English Orosius to explore theorisations of written Old English, a small local language, as an imperial language. That chapter is considered in light of King Alfred’s vernacular educational programme as articulated in *The Preface to the Pastoral Care* and in the context of the multilingual nature of England in the late ninth and early tenth centuries.

This article examines the portrayal of geography in the Old English translation of Orosius’s *Histories Against the Pagans* to demonstrate the importance of imperial models for forging English as a written literary language, especially for history-writing, across the ninth to eleventh centuries.[[1]](#footnote-1) By imperial I mean rule over multiple peoples who are part of a polity that has been conquered, subjugated or absorbed; although not considered in this article, polities which pay tribute but are formally separate are a dimension of imperial rule. Christian imperial rule further entails protection of the faithful and the Church. This is a purposefully loose definition of imperial, intended to make space for multiple imperial ideologies and practices.[[2]](#footnote-2) The *Old English Orosius* was produced at some point between 870-930 and was copied and read during the tenth and eleventh century, as its four surviving copies testify.[[3]](#footnote-3) During this period, English was shaped into a confident written vernacular used extensively across almost all domains of learning. In the early and central medieval West, only Irish is comparable.[[4]](#footnote-4) In looking at geography and language to explore the ways written English was not a straightforwardly demotic or national language, this article considers a theme central to Orosius’s own text: *translatio imperii et studii*.[[5]](#footnote-5) The translation of the widest circulating history of antiquity in the Latin Middles Ages, which ranged across four empires, brings the paradox of a small local language – because that is what Old English was – being modelled on an imperial language into sharp focus.[[6]](#footnote-6) The translation of Orosius’ *Histories* into English was conceptually a different undertaking than the near contemporary translation of Orosius into Arabic, a major sacred (though not Christian) and imperial language itself.[[7]](#footnote-7) The latter was an outward looking move, the translation into English was an inward looking move. My focus will lie with how important *translatio imperii* ***et studii*** was to the shaping of English as a book language, and particularly as a language for history-writing. This article asks what translating Orosius’s *Histories* did to Old English and what the choice to translate this text tells us about the expectations and ideas of the written vernacular at court and among the secular and ecclesiastical elites within its orbit.

I must emphasize at the start that imperial models are not the only ones for Old English and that the imperial was always intermingled with questions of ethnicity, nation, kingdom, and religion. But the formation of English as a discipline, like that of any of the western European vernaculars, remains shaped by a long practice of nationalising literary history.[[8]](#footnote-8) I hope the perspectives I offer here use geography to bring in a missing element in our understanding of the multiple impulses for writing English (whose interaction it is not possible to explore in this article). A unified English kingdom, or even one which included just some of the Angles and Saxons of Britain, was not the only political idea available in the late ninth and tenth centuries; aspirations for dominion over Britain (if not Britain and Ireland) were also articulated and England itself could be understood in imperial as well as national terms. Here I want to suggest that we let various ideas of England as a territory and as a polity, the English as a people and English as a language jostle with each other when we look at the theorization*s*, explicit and implicit, behind the development of literary culture in English.[[9]](#footnote-9) In considering English engagement with empire, we must keep in mind the obvious point that other polities within and beyond Europe were also using empire to think with, including with regard to the theorization of written vernacular languages. Such theorizations include, for example, Otfrid von Weissenburg’s strikingprefaces to his biblical verse *Evangelienbuch*, written in East Francia.[[10]](#footnote-10) Earlier studies, my own included, have explored connections between the *Old English Orosius* and Carolingian and Salian imperial ideologies.[[11]](#footnote-11) In an Insular context, Welsh kingdoms, so much the object of English imperialism, articulated their own imperial ideologies, as we see for example in the Latin *Historia Brittonum* 829/830 (Gwynedd) and the tenth-century vernacular *Armes Prydein Vawr* (South Wales).[[12]](#footnote-12) Even within the confines of Britain, imperial aspiration was a shared discourse.

This article begins with a substantial political and linguistic contextual section which explores the multilingual nature of the space that only became England in the later tenth century. This point is a key foundation for the argument which follows about the imperial aspects of written Old English. This article then proceeds by looking at the place of geography, language and empire in King Alfred the Great’s famous programmatic statement about his promotion of English in the preface to a translation of Gregory the Great’s *Pastoral Care*.[[13]](#footnote-13) The main part of the article reads the geographical first chapter of the Old Englishtranslation of Orosius’ *Histories* in order to pursue the theme of geography, language and empire from the late-ninth to the mid-tenth century. Alfred’s *Preface* and the *Orosius* geography are read in light of each other to draw out the place of imperial thinking to the conceptualisation of written Old English.

*Politics and multilingualism*

The kingdom of the English as a polity did not exist before the mid-tenth century. Its extent, moreover, was neither stable nor inevitable. In the face of strong regional identities, unstable political boundaries in Britain and foreign conquest, ethnicity, kingdom and empire all came into play. This multiplicity is later effaced by the teleology of the nation-state, especially when seen from a West Saxon or southern English perspective. The argument pursued here, including in this brief political context section, does not represent the writing of English in Wessex, and in the South more generally, as the literary culture of England or the English. England, like Ireland and elsewhere in Britain, was in the early Middle Ages comprised of many small kingdoms. By the end of the ninth century, as a result of internal competition and Scandinavian incursions, these early kingdoms had been reduced to Wessex in the South. Kent had been absorbed by Wessex. Mercia in the midlands had been carved up between West Saxon and Scandinavian rule and the latter were in control in Northumbria below the Tees, leaving an English-speaking community between the Tees and the Forth. The prose *Preface to the Pastoral Care*, reveals Alfred’s knowledge of England north of the Humber to be hazy.[[14]](#footnote-14)From this position, the West Saxon kings forged a single English kingdom. I use the verb forged deliberately: England did not emerge naturally, but was the result of the exercise of military power that was aggressive but also opportunistic and not driven from the start by a clear ideology of a united England.

The key figures in the creation of an English kingdom are Alfred the Great (d. 899), Edward the Elder (d. 924), Athelstan (d. 939), Edmund (d. 946) and Edgar (d. 978). They pushed Scandinavian and Hiberno-Norse rulers (but not settlers and thus speakers of Norse and Gaelic) out of England and clashed with other rulers in western and northern Britain, making both gains and losses. In this regard, while there is much celebration of Athelstan as the first king to unite England, his rule was not uniformly welcomed in the North. After his incorporation of Northumbria into his kingdom in 927, Scandinavian rule was re-established from 939-944 and 947-954, during which period we find Archbishop Wulfstan I shifting his loyalty between English and Scandiavian rulers; only from the south of England does this look like treachery.[[15]](#footnote-15) The north of England was only firmly tied into a kingdom ruled from the South in the reign of William the Conqueror. In the context of thinking about the writing of Old English, it is important to underscore that linguistically, alongside English speakers, the area ruled directly by West Saxon kings (as their kingdom, not including, for example, overlordships in Wales) from the mid-tenth century onwards included Norse, Brittonic and Gaelic speakers. English was, moreover, spoken in Lothian, a space which would ultimately become southern Scotland.[[16]](#footnote-16) English speakers and England did not neatly and exclusively map onto each other.

Especially at the beginning of this period, ideas of an English polity were inchoate and multiple, drawing on ideas of empire as well as kingdom and ideas of kingship that were about rule over people as much as over territory (as we will explore in more detail below looking at the use of the word *Angelcynn* (Angle-people, the English)) and grounded in Christian identity. We see, for example, ideas of imperial rule expressed as a part of just such a constellation in the address to Alfred at the beginning of the Welsh monk Asser’s life of the king: he is first *omnium Brittanniae insulae Christianorum rector* (‘ruler of all the Christians of the island of Britain) and then *Anglorum Saxonum rex* (‘king of the Angels and Saxons’).[[17]](#footnote-17) Two generations later, Athelstan was the first king to be styled, in royal documents known as charters as *rex Anglorum* (‘king of the English’). Charters also reveal an imperial dimension to Athelstan’s status as king of the English in the use of a Greek word for king (*basileos*) and his assertion of rule over all of Britain; he is, for example, ‘king of the English and equally governor of all of Britain’ (*basileos Anglorum et eque totius Britanniæ orbis gubernator*).[[18]](#footnote-18) I have deliberately used the phrase ‘imperial dimension’ because the terms *basileous* and *gubernator*, as *rector* for Alfred,tread lightly in this space and admit of the complexity of conceptualisations of royal, imperial and Christian rule. This is Christian kingship over other kings with aspirations for dominion over Britain, but is not a claim to be on a par with a figure like the earlier Louis the Pious or the later Otto I (both unambiguously called *imperator augustus*) or the contemporary East Roman (Byzantine) emperor. The reference of the term *basileous* out to the East Roman empire, underscores as well, the presence of multiple Christian and Islamic empires and kingdoms with imperial aspirations in ninth and tenth centuries western Eurasia and North Africa, especially in the wake of the collapse of the Carolingians and Fatimid, Abbasid and Cordoban caliphates.[[19]](#footnote-19) The horizons of West Saxon imperial thinking, which will shape the writing of English, are both more local and more global (in the sense of engaging widely within the *oikoumene*, the known world) than Carolingian Francia.

*Writing Old English*

Before the reign of Alfred the Great, English had been a written language and a literary language since the beginning of the seventh century but its use was sporadic and not consistently institutionally supported, as was the situation on the continent until the twelfth century.[[20]](#footnote-20) The laws of the recently converted Kentish King Æthelbert (d. 616) were written down in English, a practice Bede considered to be following the Roman manner.[[21]](#footnote-21) The Golden Age of Northumbria emphatically included written Old English poetry with Bede’s famous account of the poet Cædmon, illustrating how important vernacular literary culture, and specifically biblical verse, was to his construction of the English people (*gens Anglorum* – people of the Angles).[[22]](#footnote-22) An extensive corpus of Old English poetry, though preserved in tenth and eleventh-century manuscripts, circulated across the kingdoms of the English before the early tenth century.[[23]](#footnote-23) Alfred’s biographer Asser depicts the king as a young prince learning to memorise written Old English poetry from a book of his mother’s.[[24]](#footnote-24) While new research is making visible that the writing of English was becoming more sustained in Mercia in the ninth century, it was Alfred, and his advisors, including key Mercians, who had the opportunity to realise the potential of written Old English prose, including in the realm of history-writing, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles.[[25]](#footnote-25) During the reigns of his successors,written English was promoted in Wessex and Mercia, and was expanded further during the mid-tenth to early-eleventh century Benedictine Reform.[[26]](#footnote-26) In this regard, Alfred was more successful than Otfrid whose grand plans for Old High German lacked institutional support.[[27]](#footnote-27)Across the south of England especially from the mid-tenth century onwards, English was increasingly written in a grammaticized form of the late West Saxon dialect.[[28]](#footnote-28) The limited survival of Old English from Northumbria (and all of it written in Northumbrian not West Saxon) even after the period of Scandinavian rule, points to a detachment from the West Saxon project, both politically and culturally, in the different practices around written Old English in the distinctly multilingual North.[[29]](#footnote-29)

*Alfred’s educational programme*

The instrumentalization of written English during the reign of Alfred the Great has been well and illuminatingly studied as has its situation within West Saxon political thought.[[30]](#footnote-30) This work has generally stressed the national preoccupations of this preface and an untroubled idea of Englishness. This section makes a case for an imperial dimension to the ideology of the written vernacular by looking at the geographical horizons of the *Preface to the Pastoral Care* in which Alfred (and his advisors) famously laid out his English language education programme.[[31]](#footnote-31) Learning from Kathleen Davis’s strong postcolonial account of nation in the *Preface*, my reading emphasizes the multiplicity of peoples living within the space that only later became England and lays even more emphasis on the yet unformed nature of an English polity.[[32]](#footnote-32) In so doing, it engages with recent work on multilingualism and on empire.[[33]](#footnote-33)

The *Preface* is well-known for its depiction of English (*Englisc*) as the language that ‘we can all understand’ (*we ealle gecnawen mægen*) that is, as a marker of shared identity, an ethnic marker. Language is not necessarily such a marker and so we should register the choice made to deploy it here, especially in what is such a multilingual space.[[34]](#footnote-34) It is, moreover, preoccupied with people rather than territory: Alfred writes insistently of *Angelcynn* (English/Anglian people), not *Engla lond* (land of the English/Angles) which was not used with reference to an English kingdom until the late tenth century, when there was an English polity with increasingly clear territorial boundaries.[[35]](#footnote-35) Not territorializing this *Angelcynn* enables us to see more clearly the terms with which the *Preface* makes an argument for English as a written language. Emphasis on people does not imply that territory did not matter. Quite the contrary is made explicit in the opening lines of the *Preface* which reverberate through the text. In recalling earlier happier times among the *Angelcynn*, Alfred depicts idealized kings who were strong at home (*innanbordes*) and ‘extended their homeland (*eðel*) outwards’ that is into space occupied by other peoples and kingdoms.

Territory comes fully to the fore when the *Preface* takes a geographical turn as Alfred surveys the state of learning, specifically literacy in English and Latin, among the *Angelcynn* south of the Thames, between the Thames and the Humber, and north of the Humber. Alfred is looking well beyond the realm of the kings of the Anglo-Saxons. In so doing, he erases the different political identities of the once independent English kingdoms and also of the settled Scandinavian populations in northern Mercia, East Anglia and southern Northumbria and the presence of Brittonic speakers amidst English-speakers in the west and north – peoples and places well beyond his rule.[[36]](#footnote-36) Verbal mapping in the *Preface* acts as an expression of power even if it was not a yet realised (or even fully conceptualised) power and in this it follows Roman and Carolingian imperializing geographies.[[37]](#footnote-37) Furthermore, in conceiving of English as a shared written language, Alfred either excludes significant Scandinavian and Brittonic speaking populations or imposes on them a written language which is not their own.[[38]](#footnote-38) The imperial dimension of written language, which is present here, comes into sharper focus when the *Preface* deploys the trope of *translatio studii* which weaves together sacred, ethnic and imperial ideas. Learning moves from East to West as first the Greeks and then Romans translate the Bible, from Hebrew (associated with a chosen people, rather than an imperial people) into their own languages. The designation of the Romans as *Lædenware* (‘Latin people’ as is usual in contexts of *translatio studii* rather than the more common *Romware* ‘Rome people’) underscores both the importance of language to identity in the *Preface* and that that identity can be at once ethnic, religious and imperial.[[39]](#footnote-39) Furthermore, considering the incorporation of multiple peoples within the Roman Empire, *Lædenware* may encourage us to read the *Preface* as envisaging English as a written language for a multilingual population including Scandinavian, Brittonic and even Gaelic speakers. In this regard, it is relevant to note the general exclusion of Old Norse words from written Old English as it develops over the course of the tenth century.[[40]](#footnote-40) Finally, Alfred’s *translatio imperii et studii* is not envisaged here as exclusively English. Rather he insists it is shared by ‘all other Christian peoples’ who the king claims also translated at least parts of the bible into their own languages; here imperial, national/ethnic and universal Christian identities all overlap and are shared among Christian peoples.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Looking at the linguistic and political experiences of the men Alfred names as his advisors, Plegmund, Asser, Grimbald and John further underscores the multiple perspectives which came to bear on the theorizing of English in Alfred’s court. This multilingual group includes two men from Francia, the Welsh bishop of St David’s, and the Mercian Archbishop of Canterbury. Collectively, these men have experience of power that can be understood in imperial terms: the crumbling Carolingian Empire and West Saxon expansion in Mercia and overlordship in Wales. For all of Alfred’s wide chronological and geographical ranging in the *Preface*, its geographical horizons contract rapidly in the present when the king announces his desire to send copies of the translated *Pastoral Care*, including the preface we have just been considering, ‘to each bishopric in my kingdom’ (that is south of the Thames and parts of Mercia). English was a small local language and Alfred’s kingdom smaller than Saxony or Bavaria.

*The Old English Orosius*

We can turn now to the late ninth to early tenth-century *Old English Orosius* to focus in on how its practice of translating reveals underlying theorisations about Old English as a language of history-writing. Although both abridged and in some places supplemented, the Old English text is largely faithful to Orosius’s late antique history of the empires of antiquity, written by an Iberian at the behest of St Augustine. It maintains the ambitious chronological and geographical sweep of Orosius’s text and its comparative approach to the history of empire. Abridgement does not set it apart from contemporary Carolingian copies of the Latin text. The Old English foreshortening of Orosius’s seven books reveals a serious rereading of the text. The largest cuts come from the later books which treat Roman history. The result is that the text works much more evenly across the four empires of Orosius’s narrative of *translatio imperii* – Babylon, Macedonia, Carthage and Rome. Rome, while preeminent for its imposition of a *pax Christiana*, is effectively put in its place and in the past, with space made for future Christian empires.[[42]](#footnote-42)

The translator of the *Old English Orosius* uses abridgement very effectively to make the Gothic sack of Rome the end of his narrative, as Godden insightfully discusses. The result is to portray a *translatio imperii* from the Romans to the Goths in a striking contrast to his Latin source. Both texts recount the Gothic attack on Rome in 410 and the Old English follows the Latin in emphasizing that the buildings of Rome were unharmed – the Goths did not leave Rome in ruins. But the two accounts diverge sharply in the point they draw from this gentle sacking. Orosius with his strong apologetic argument, contrasts the devastating fourth century BCE sacking of Rome by the Gauls with the Gothic attack during which God protected the city because it was Christian. He then continues the story through the brief rule of the Gothic Alaric and his successor Athaulf, portraying Honorius as, however precariously, remaining emperor. Orosius explicitly refutes that there was any *translatio imperii* to the Goths. Athaulf, he writes, initially intended

to obliterate the name of Rome and make the Romans’ land the Goths’ empire…,so that there would have been…a *Gothia* where there had once been *Romania* and that he…would now be what Augustus Caesar had once been.

But realising that the Goths were ‘wild’ barbarians unable to respect the rule of law, he decided instead to ‘seek for himself the glory of having restored and extended the Roman Empire by the might of his Goths.’ The Old English translator, working long after the final fall of Rome, which, of course, had not yet happened in Orosius’ own life time, suggests just such a *translatio* from Roman imperial rule to Gothic kingship. He achieves this by drastically truncating and simplifying the ending, from two substantial chapters to two sentences recounting the marriage of Athaulf to Honorius’s sister and the settlement of the Goths in Italy and the movement of other Goths on to Spain and Africa. As well as its specific interest in the Goths, this move fits in with Leneghan’s observations that the *Old English Orosius* heightens Orosius’ theme of *translatio imperii*.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Whether or not the West Saxon dynasty, during the reign of Alfred or subsequently, commissioned it, the *Old English Orosius* quickly came to be associated with them. The tenth-century manuscript was produced in the West Saxon capital, Winchester, by one of the scribes of the earliest surviving copies of the dynasty’s history, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, itself the historiographical product of Alfred’s vernacular educational programme.[[44]](#footnote-44) Furthermore, considering Alfred and his descendants, the Gothic ancestry claimed by Alfred’s mother and recorded by Asser immediately after the West Saxon royal genealogy at the beginning of his life of Alfred stands out; there is a direct link between the West Saxons and the first people to replace the Romans as imperial rulers.[[45]](#footnote-45) The translator not so much translates as rewrites the Orosius’ *Histories* in Old English, boldly using a local language to open the door to the new peoples of Latin Europe to take over as successors to the Romans. This use of Old English is aligned as well with its prose style. It is neither awkwardly Latinate, as we find in the Mercian *Old English Bede* and Gregory’s *Dialogues*, nor is it the ‘very plain prose style’ of the early Anglo-Saxon Chronicle or the Ohthere and Wufstan additions to the *Old English Orosius* which will be discussed in the following section.[[46]](#footnote-46)

*Geography and the Old English Orosius*

The *Old English Orosius* begins with its much-discussed geographical chapter. The work of Godden, and Leneghan, alongside Ben Allport, Helen Appleton, Andreas Bihrer and Fabienne Michelet on this chapter underpins my argument here about this text and the writing of Old English.[[47]](#footnote-47) Natalia Lozovsky, Patrick Gautier Dalché and A. H. Merrill’s work on late antique and Carolingian geographical writing provides wider frameworks.[[48]](#footnote-48) The Old English geographical chapter broadly follows Orosius’s original text, with some simplification, except, that is, for two substantial additions and subtle but very telling changes in the descriptions of Britain and Ireland: exploring these changes allows us to continue to focus on *tranlatio studii* andthe nature of written Old English.[[49]](#footnote-49) Like Orosius’s Latin, the Old English first gives a brief overview of Asia, Europe and Africa, before moving on to describe each in more detail. The section on Europe initially stays close to Orosius’s Latin, defining the regions with reference to seas and rivers, and mountains. However, where the Latin reaches the end of its account of *Germania* with a statement from the very Roman Orosius that he will now turn away from barbarian territory and move south of the Danube, the *Old English Orosius* inserts a geographically expansive addition about the world of the East Franks.[[50]](#footnote-50) Godden has persuasively argued that these additions probably come from a gloss or commentary to an East Frankish copy of the Latin Orosius.[[51]](#footnote-51)

This addition maps the East Franks, the peoples within its hegemony, those they are seeking to dominate and beyond, as it ranges to the Frisians in the west, to Scandinavian peoples in the north and to the Bulgarians (who from 913 designated their own ruler as an emperor) in the southeast and finally to the Greeks where the Frankish world came in contact with that of the East Roman Empire.[[52]](#footnote-52) There is a parallel in this addition to the mapping of the *Preface* which extends beyond the territories controlled by Alfred. The space covered by the Old English addition is a conspicuously multilingual, potentially including speakers of Germanic, Slavic, Uralic and Iranian languages as well as Greek. In sharp contrast to the previous section (which directly translates Orosius), it maps not regions, but peoples, who are divided by rivers and seas and situated with respect to each other, rather than territorially defined polities. In this regard it recalls the interest of the *Preface* in the *Angelcynn* within a geographic space defined by rivers. The presence of peoples, like the Magyars, who only settled in central Europe after the fall of Rome, draws attention the up-to-date nature of this material and its alertness to the not-yet fixed nature of the boundaries between peoples in Europe more broadly as in Britain.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Leneghan has opened up the implications of this addition for ideas of *translatio imperii* in England, arguing that this addition presents the Carolingians as expanding their empire beyond the Roman world. Leneghan further suggests that the two references in this short section to the Old Saxons reminds its West Saxon audience of their supposed fifth-century origins in the now East Frankish space and that we can read this as a figure for *translatio imperii* from Francia to West Saxon England, as Carolingian power wanes.[[54]](#footnote-54) My emphasis has lain with the multilingual nature of this imperial space and on its interest in East Frankish space including but extending well beyond the relationship between England and its origin legends. I would emphasize further that it is not necessary to see an exclusive transfer of imperial ideology from the Carolingians to the West Saxons in order to see the West Saxons making use of Carolingian imperial ideology and indeed, we saw Alfred*,* in *The Preface to the Pastoral Care*, with his eyes on ‘all other Christian peoples’.[[55]](#footnote-55) Indeed the area mapped by the addition includes the heartlands of the Ottonian dynasty (Henry I, r. 919-936, first East Frankish king without Carolingian ancestry, paternal or maternal) and spaces where they extended power over Danes, Slavs and Magyars.[[56]](#footnote-56) In this section, a writer of English, a local language with wide horizons, updated and expanded the world of Orosius, rather than focusing on the English. It is notable, moreover, that those expansions did not include updating the georgraphy of Britain to include the English. The English were evidently not of interest to the East Franks and the Old English translators appears to respect the integrity and authority of that material.

The English were not, however, forgotten in the *Old English Orosius*. Following directly on from the last line of this first addition, which ends with the peoples of the far North, are two further geographical additions, which take narrative form.[[57]](#footnote-57) It is not certain whether or not this section was part of the original translation of Orosius’ *Histories* or whether it builds on the previous addition, but it formed part of the text from its earliest surviving manuscript.[[58]](#footnote-58) These accounts of the voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan into the far North, provide further opportunity to consider *translatio imperii et studii* – imperial aspirations and the writing of a local language – as entangled. These accounts record, as oral reports, two voyages of exploration made by Ohthere, from northern Norway, and Wulfstan, perhaps from England. Within the addition, Ohthere’s verbal mapping of his travels is presented to Alfred, who is identified as his *hlaford* (lord) and to whom he gives a gift of walrus tusks, asserting, as Allport discusses, a hierarchical relationship between the two men.[[59]](#footnote-59) Ohthere’s account to Alfred, congruent with the references to the Old Saxons in the previous addition, associates the English and the Southern Scandinavans. In finishing his account, he is preoccupied with the origins of the English, mentioning the continental Angles and Saxons and identifying Jutland as where the English lived before coming to this land.

There is much that can be said about these vivid accounts of sea voyages in the far north, particularly Ohthere’s.[[60]](#footnote-60) They rightly hold a special place within the study of Old English as prose that is not translated from Latin and as documenting links between the English and Scandinavia, far away from continental Europe. Whereas the previous section of the geographical preface transposed Carolingian Latin commentary on Orosius’ *Histories* into Old English, here the transposition is from the spoken word to written English. Study of the Old English reveals that this exchange took place in Old Norse, with Ohthere’s words being translated from Norse for the West Saxon court. This is a powerful reminder of the supra-regional nature of Norse in this period, in contrast to the local nature of English.[[61]](#footnote-61) Particularly since they follow on immediately from the East Frankish addition, documenting the spread of Carolingian power, the sea-voyage additions figure English power as a *translatio imperii* in the North.[[62]](#footnote-62) This narration of *translatio imperii* in the vernacular points to the importance of imperial models for the writing of English – to *translatio studii*. Written English, without a Latin intermediary, captures northern imperial aspirations.[[63]](#footnote-63) But as recent research is showing, and to which this present article aims to contribute, it is precisely in the context of continental European history-writing that the additions of Ohthere and Wulfstan make sense and this, as will be explored, has implications for the conceptualisation of English.[[64]](#footnote-64)

First, especially Ohthere’s account but also Wulfstan’s are, in large part, verbal maps in narrative form, recalling the association of mapping and imperial power from antiquity through to the Carolingians.[[65]](#footnote-65) Furthermore, for all of their performed orality, this section’s authorising connection, as will be discussed below, to accounts of Scandinavia such as we find in Jordanes’ sixth-century *History of the Goths* and Paul the Deacon’s eighth-century *History of the Lombards* has implications for the writing of English. In including Ohthere (remember the interest in English origins in his account), the translator of the *Old English Orosius* was trying to solve the same problem which faced these earlier Latin writers, especially Jordanes. How do you bring Scandinavia into history-writing when classical and late antique histories know almost nothing about it and when you want to cleave close to the authority of already written texts?[[66]](#footnote-66)

As Ben Allport has incisively shown, the *Orosius* translator frames Ohthere’s oral report so that it mirrors the conventions of late antique history-writing.[[67]](#footnote-67) The substance of Ohthere and Wulfstan’s accounts have much in common with Jordanes and Paul in the way they combine journeys, geography and ethnography and in how they worry about the absence of written sources, though they each handle this differently. Jordanes and Paul use written sources when they can, make oblique allusions to eyewitnesses, prevaricate and deflect with digressions when they cannot. For examples, Jordanes takes over classical accounts of *ultima Thule* for Scandinavia. Paul makes a reference which recalls the importance of eyewitness accounts in classical historiography.[[68]](#footnote-68) The Ohthere and Wulfstan episodes solve the problem of Scandinavia’s absence from written sources by being themselves eyewitness accounts and which act as digressions within the larger narrative. Fascinatingly, Ohthere is represented as refusing to tell information he knows only second hand.[[69]](#footnote-69) Both Jordanes and Paul the Deacon point as well to why Ohthere’s account ends with the origins of the English in Scandinavia in ways which are not simply about English nation building but about following authoritative models. Explaining the origins of the Goths and Lombards is why Jordanes and Paul are interested in Scandinavia in the first place.[[70]](#footnote-70) Like the *Old English Orosius*, both Paul and Jordanes make unusual references to the *scridefinne* (Ski Finns - the Sami).[[71]](#footnote-71)

Although knowledge of Paul the Deacon is considered more likely in Wessex at the turn of the tenth century, there are tighter links between Ohthere and Jordanes than Paul if one looks to the shape of the narratives as well as thinking in terms of sources.[[72]](#footnote-72) Before turning to Scandinavia, Jordanes begins with a brief section which quotes the opening of Orosius’s geography; he writes

our ancestors, as Orosius states (‘ut refert Orosius’), established that the circumference of the whole earth is enclosed by the edge of the Ocean and divided into three parts…Asia, Europe and Africa.[[73]](#footnote-73)

Orosius is the jumping off point for his own tour of oceanic islands as he approaches his goal of writing about the island of Scandza, origin of the Goths. Jordanes’ dependence on Orosius may have particularly commended him to the Old English translator of the *Histories*. Furthermore, and strikingly for our interest in England, Jordanes offers an extended account of Britain as a digression, perhaps in part because he is daunted by the task of writing about Scandza without a Roman source.[[74]](#footnote-74) In other words Jordanes’ digression about Britain may have suggested the *Old English Orosius*’ digressions about Scandinavia. Finally, Jordanes opens *The History of the Goths* with these memorable lines:

While I had intended to keep close to the shore of a peaceful coast, carried by a little boat, and as someone has said, to fish for small fry in the ponds of the ancient authors, you, brother Castalius, urge me to hoist my sails for the high seas.[[75]](#footnote-75)

This metaphor of sailing for his own work of writing *The History of the Goths* may stand behind the inclusion of narratives put in the mouth of the sea voyagers of the *Old English Orosius*, either accounting for their form or simply suggesting and authorising their inclusion.[[76]](#footnote-76) Jordanes himself refers to the ‘testimony (*attestio*) of travellers’ at a key point in his narrative.[[77]](#footnote-77) Ohthere after all begins by describing, in extensive detail, how he sails north – these are not the details of a map reader but of a sailor, watching the coastline. Wulfstan’s account starts out similarly. While it is far from assured that *The* *History of the Goths* was known in England, perhaps Frankish scholars, well-known to be present in Wessex across the time frame of the translation of the *Old English Orosius*, brought knowledge of it.[[78]](#footnote-78) Lozovsky emphasizes how late antique and early medieval writers rarely updated their geographies, choosing to stay close to the written authorities of Antiquity, with Jordanes as an exception.[[79]](#footnote-79) It is fascinating to consider the possibility that the translator of the *Old English Orosius* had access to *The History of the Goths* and recognized what Jordanes was doing in updating geography to bring in Scandinavia. From this perspective, in incorporating Carolingian gloss or commentary and adding in Ohthere and Wulfstan’s accounts, he was thinking conceptually and as an heir to Jordanes. Furthermore, the closeness of the texts is also emphasized when the Old English uses ‘cwæð Orosius’ (said Orosius) in translating the opening of Orosius’ geography, just as Jordanes used ‘refert Orosius’ in quoting Orosius’s opening, before turning to Scandinavia.[[80]](#footnote-80) Looking at Ohthere and Wulfstan in light of Jordanes and Paul suggests that *translatio studii* was powerful framework for the writing Old English even when it appears to be at its most native – presenting itself as oral, engaged with the world far beyond the boundaries of the Roman or Carolingian worlds.

Turning away from the Frankish world and the Scandinavian North and returning, as the text does, to follow Orosius’ Latin, the *Old English Orosius* also makes small but crucial changes in its account of Britain and Ireland which again provide us with perspective on the translator’s use of Old English. In making such changes, the translator now works more within norms of late antique and medieval geographical writing, by not adding material to an authorial source, in contrast to his treatment of Germania, Central and Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia. First in the brief overview of Asia, Europe and Africa, the text includes a small but very assertive change in the representation of the west. Both the Latin and Old English texts record the pillars of Hercules in Spain at the edge of the Roman Empire, but where the Latin then points out that Spain is the furthest western point in Europe, the English substitutes Ireland: ‘On hyre (Europe’s) westende is Scotland’ (on its western edge is Ireland) for ‘Europae in Hispania occidentalis oceanus termino est’ (the Ocean by Spain is Europe’s Western boundary).[[81]](#footnote-81) When the *Old English Orosius* returns to Britain and Ireland in more detail, the translator does not so much add as reorder. Where the Latin moves from Britain to the barely known *ultima Thule* in the far north west, to Ireland, the Old English draws Britain and Ireland together and then turns to *ultima Thule*.[[82]](#footnote-82) Furthermore, the translator refers to ‘Igbernia, þæt we Scotland hatað’ (Hibernia, that we call Scotland) which has the force of looking out to Ireland not only from Britain, but from England and, germane to this current article, explicitly in English. Ireland’s western position, this time in relation to Britain is then emphasized by a further change in the text, which notes that the island of Ireland is closest to where the sun goes down. Horace’s Ode IV,15 drives home the imperial weight of this reference. Horace writes:

 tua, Caesar, aetas

…

et veteres revocavit artis,

per quas Latinum nomen et Italae

crevere vires, famaque et imperi

 porrecta maiestas ad ortus

 solis ab Hesperio cubili.

 Hor. *Carm*. 4.15.4-17

(Your age, Caesar, has…revived the ancient arts by which the name of Latium, the power of Italy, and the prestige and majesty of the Empire were extended from the sun’s western bed to his rising.)[[83]](#footnote-83)

The far West is where power stops. Orosius’s references to Ireland in relation to Galicia in northwest Spain are moved into the preceding section on Spain. In the tenth century, as the West Saxons claimed more and more of Britain, their insular aspirations were wider and Ireland too comes into play.[[84]](#footnote-84) This quotation from Horace also reminds us that like tenth-century English identity, Roman identity existed at different scales from the local to the imperial. The changes that the translator of the *Old English Orosius* made to Orosius’ authoritative text show him to be a sophisticated and informed reader of Roman history-writing, who left an imprint on Old English in the process. He does not blunder but make calculated changes, fully away of how late antique and early medieval writers had expanded the horizons of history-writing before him.

*Conclusion*

As they steadily claimed more and more of Mercia from the Scandinavians and looked even further North across the Humber and even into what is now Scotland, the West Saxons were aiming to dominate in the Insular world, including across the Irish Sea. These aspirations, visible in the *Preface to the Pastoral Care*, are very clear in the Chronicle poem for 937 on the battle of Brunanburh. Our earliest copy of this poem is found in the A version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.[[85]](#footnote-85) The first poem included in the Chronicle, it celebrates Athelstan’s defeat of the combined forces of the Hiberno-Norse, Scots and Strathclyde Welsh. Its distinctive multilingual entanglement of Old English, Old Norse and Carolingian Latin poetics shows written Old English being used to explore imperial ideology. The terms of *Armes Prydein Vawr*, a Welsh vernacular poetic response to the expansion of English power that *Brunanburh* celebrates, makes clear that empire was at stake, but that empire could be hoped for by the Welsh (looking back to British dominion before and after Roman rule and perhaps buoyed by the resilience of Strathclyde/Cumbria) as much as by the English. Even on the island of Britain, imperial thinking and vernacularity did not belong exclusively to the English.[[86]](#footnote-86) Returning to the *Old English Orosius*, West Saxon insular aspirations are treated subtly with the substitution of Ireland for Spain in the West. There is no overturning of the norms of Roman history-writing, or an entirely different world view, but rather, the way the English stays close to the Latin underscores that aspirations for expanded territory and the writing of their local language – *translatio* *imperii et studii* – are carefully wound together. Such a view of English was very bold. English had claimed for itself the authority of Latin as a language of history. English, moreover, was not reserved only for local history as in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and the *Old English Bede*, though the use of Old English for these texts is also remarkable, but capable of exploring imperial ideologies for the rise of England, situated within a succession of empires, even if the scale of its imperial aspirations – Britain and Ireland – were much smaller.

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8. J. Leersen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam 2006) esp. 173-224. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For its interest on the interaction of empire and other ideas of community, the most relevant of the extensive recent work on empire for my argument here are the essays in *Empire and Communities in the Post-Roman and Islamic World*, eds W. Pohl and R. Kramer (Oxford 2021). And see below page #. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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16. For key accounts of the creation of England which have been formative here, see P. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London 1989) 114-25 and G. Molyneaux, *The Formation of the English Kingdom in the Tenth Century* (Oxford, 2015); F. Edmonds, ‘The Expansion of the Kingdom of Strathclyde’, *Early Medieval Europe* 23 (2015) 43-66 and N. McGuigan, *Máel Coluim III Canmore: An Eleventh-Century Scottish King* (Edinburgh 2021), 15 and 33-37 and ‘Going North: Revisiting the End of Northern Independence’ in *The Reigns of Edmund, Eadred and Eadwig, 939-959*, eds M. Blanchard and C. Riedel (Woodbridge 2024) 121-49. For the languages of what was becoming the West Saxon English kingdom, see Charles Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 89-95; F. Edmonds, *Gaelic Influence in the Northumbrian Kingdom: The Golden Age and the Viking Age* (Woodbridge 2019)155-84; F. Edmonds and S. Taylor, ‘Languages and Names’ in *Northern England and Southern Scotland in the Central Middle Ages*, eds K. J. Stringer and A. J. L. Winchester (Woodbridge 2017) 137-72; T. O’Donnell, M. Townend and E. Tyler, ‘European Literature and Eleventh-Century England’, in *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature* (hereafter *CHEMEL*), ed. C. Lees (Cambridge 2013) 607-36. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. W. Stevenson (revised D. Whitelock), *Asser’s Life of King Alfred* (Oxford 1959), address (p.1); translated by S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth 1983). Hereafter cited by chapter number. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. S. Foot, *Athelstan: The First King of England* (New Haven 2011) 212-26 and Molyneux, *Formation of the English Kingdom*, 206-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. T. Gebhardt, ‘From Bretwalda to Basileus: Imperial Concepts in Late Anglo-Saxon England?’ in *Transcultural Approaches to the Concept of Imperial Rule in the Middle Ages*, eds C. Scholl, T. Gebhardt, and J. Clauß (Frankfurt am Main 2017), 157–183 (esp. 165-167); W. Drews, ‘Imperiale Herrschaft’, esp. 14-16, 26-28; and Bernhardt, ‘Concepts and Practice,’ 147; E. Müller-Mertens, ‘The Ottonians as Kings and Emperors’ in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol 3, ed. T. Reuter (Cambridge 2000), 231–66 (238 and 242-247); and above p. #. That *basileus* denoted a king would have been well-known from Isidore’s *Etymologiae*, IX.iii.18: *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX*, ed. W. Lindsay (Oxford 1911) and translated *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, S. Barney *et al*. (Cambridge 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ní Mhaonaigh and Tyler, ‘Language of History-Writing’ 457 and S. Glauch, ‘St. Gallen’, *Schreiborte des Mittelalters: Skriptorien ‒ Werke ‒ Mäzene*, ed. M. Schubert (Berlin 2013) 493-512. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, eds and trans. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford 1969) II.5. Hereafter cited as *HE*, book and chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Bede, *HE* IV.24 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. E. Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 223-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Asser, *Life of Alfred*, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. C. Rauer, ‘Early Mercian Text Production: Authors, Dialects, and Reputations’, *Amsterdamer Beiträge Zur Älteren Germanistik*, 77 (2017) 541-58; and S. Irvine, ‘English Literature in the Ninth Century’, *CHEMEL*, 209-31. The translation of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* into Old English is thought to have been made c. 883-930 (a time frame similar to the *OEO*). Its translator was a Mercian, who, if this date range is correct, was working after Mercia had accepted West Saxon overlordship. The *Old English Bede* (hereafter *OEB*) could also have been translated by a Mercian in Alfred’s circle; it shares a mode of translation with the Old English translation of Gregory the Great’s *Dialogues* which arose in that context (S. Rowley, *The Old English Version of Bede’s Historia Ecclesiastica* (Cambridge 2011), 5-6; and J. Bately, ‘Old English Prose before and during the Reign of Alfred’ *Anglo-Saxon England* 17 (1988) 93-138 (103-04, 118-19, 123-28, 132-33 and 138). A study of the *OEB* would provide more ethnic and ecclesiastical perspectives on the theorizing of Old English. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. E. Treharne, ‘The Authority of English, 900-1150’, *CHEMEL*, 554-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ní Mhaonaigh and Tyler, ‘Language of History-writing’, 470. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. M. Irvine *The Making of Textual Culture:‘Grammatica’ and Literary Theory: 350-1100* (Cambridge 1994), 405-60 and J. Davies, ‘The Literary Languages of Old English: Words, Styles, Voices’, in *CHEMEL*, 257-77 (267-72). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The key texts: gloss to the Lindisfarne Gospels and the late poem *Durham*. For the complex relationship of the ‘Northern Recension’ of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle with West Saxon power, see P. Stafford, *After Alfred: The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and Chroniclers: 900-1150* (Oxford 2020) 106-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Irvine, ‘Ninth Century’, and work cited there, esp. important is D. Pratt, *The Political Thought of Alfred the Great* (Cambridge 2007) 113-337. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See above footnote 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. K. Davis, ‘National Writing in the Ninth Century: A Reminder for Postcolonial Thinking about the Nation’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 1998 (28) 611-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Discussed above and see E. Tyler, *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in England, c.800- c.1250* (Turnhout 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Most recently, Thomas, *History and Identity*,55-88 for discussion of language and ethnic identity in early medieval Britain. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Here, I depart from Davis and the general reading of *Angelcynn*, especially in these early uses, as meaning both people and place, ‘the English’ and ‘England’ (*Dictionary of Old English: A to Le* online, eds A. Cameron, *et al*. (Toronto 2024). On *Anglecynn* see evolution of S. Foot’s thought: ‘The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity before the Norman Conquest’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, series 6, 6 (1996) 25-49 and ‘Where English Becomes British: Rethinking Contexts for *Brunanburh*’ in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks*, eds J. Barrow and A. Wareham (Aldershot 2008) 127-44 and Molyneaux, *Formation of the English Kingdom*, 204-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See above page # [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. N. Lozovsky, ‘Maps and Panegyrics: Roman Geo-Ethnographical Rhetoric in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages’, in Cartography in Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Fresh Perspectives, New Methods, Technology and Change in History, eds R. Talbert and R. Unger (Leiden 2008), 169–88 (esp, 179) and see now also H. Appleton, ‘Mapping Empire: Two World Maps in Early Medieval England’, in *Ideas of the World*, ed. Atherton, *et al*., 310-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ní Mhaonaigh and Tyler, ‘Language of History-writing’, 467-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Dictionary of Old English* for *Lædenware*. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. T. Hahn, ‘Early Middle English’, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. D. Wallace (Cambridge 1999) 61-91 (64-65) and S. Pons-Sanz *The Linguistic Effects of Anglo-Scandinavian Linguistic Contact on Old English* (Turnhout 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. On imperial thinking, vernacular writing and the East Franks, see Ní Mhaonaigh and Tyler, ‘Language and History-writing’, 468 and work cited there. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Bately, *OEO*, lx; Mortensen, ‘Diffusion’113; I. Valtonen, *The North in the Old English Orosius: A Geographical Narrative in Context* (Helsinki 2008) 516 and 525; M. Godden,‘The Old English *Orosius* and its Context: Who Wrote it, for Whom, and Why?’, *Quaestio Insularis* 12 (2011) 1–30 (esp. 9 and 22) and ‘Sources’, 297–320; E. Tyler, *England in Europe: English Royal Women and Literary Patronage, c.1000-c.1150* (Toronto 2017) 28-29; and R. Evans and R. McKitterick, ‘Carolingian Epitome’. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. M-P Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose: Histoires (contra les païens*), 3 vols (Paris 2003) VII 43:5-6, translated by A. Fear, *Seven Books of History against the Pagans* (Liverpool 2010) and *OEO* VI.38.156. M. Godden, ‘The Anglo-Saxons and the Goths: Rewriting the Sack of Rome’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002) 47–68 (esp. 59-62); Valtonen, *The North*, 543-53; F. Leneghan, ‘*Translatio imperii*’,esp. 679-90; Tyler, ‘Universal History’, 67; and V. Leonard, *In Defiance of History: Orosius and the Unimproved Past* (London 2022), 132-36. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Bately, *OEO*, xxiii; M. Parkes, ‘The Palaeography of the Parker Manuscript of the Chronicle, Law and Sedulius, and Historiography at Winchester in the Late Ninth and Tenth Centuries’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976) 149-71 (156–57), but note D. Dumville strongly disagrees that Winchester was the location of this copying, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge 1992) 55–13; and Godden, ‘Sources’, 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Asser, *Life of Alfred*, 2; Godden, ‘Anglo-Saxons and Goths’, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Bately, ‘Old English Prose’, 118-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Godden, ‘Sources’, esp. 316 and ‘Context’; B. Allport, ‘Home Thoughts of Abroad: *Ohthere’s Voyage* in its Anglo‐Saxon Context’, *Early Medieval Europe* 28 (2020) 256–88; H. Appleton, ‘The Northern World of the Anglo-Saxon Mappa Mundi’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 47 (2020) 275–305; A. Bihrer, *Begegnungen zwischen dem ostfränkisch-deutschen Reich und England (850 - 1100)* (Ostfildern 2012) 477-80; F. Michelet, *Creation, Migration and Conquest: Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford 2006) 132-42 and 139-59; and Leneghan, ‘*Translatio imperii*’. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. P. Gautier Dalché, ‘Tradition et renouvellement dans la représentation d’espace géographique au IXe siècle’, *Studi Medievali*, series 3, 24 (1983) 121–65; N. Lozovsky, *The Earth is Our Book: Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400-1000* (Ann Arbor 2000) 68-86 and ‘Roman Geography and Ethnography in the Carolingian Empire’, *Speculum* 81 (2006) 325–64; and A. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2005) esp. 1-169. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. *OEO* I.1.3-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Orosius, *Histories* I.2.54 and *OEO* I.1.13-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Godden, ‘Sources’, esp. 314-317. Bately suggests a glossed copy, commentary or *mappa mundi*, *OEO*, lx-lxx. On East Francia see also Bihrer, *Begegnungen*, 479-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Leneghan, ‘*Translatio imperii*’ focuses on the concerns with the North and Britain’s place within it, which are to the fore, but the addition has much wider geographical boundaries. See also Michelet, *Creation* 132-39, and Appleton, ‘Northern World,’ 289-305. Lozovsky, ‘Roman Geography’, 354 draws attention to Carolingian geographical manuscripts and the idea of a *translatio* from Rome to Francia. On Bulgaria, Drews, ‘Imperiale Herrschaft’, 26-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Godden, ‘Sources’, 315-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Leneghan, ‘*Translatio imperii*’ esp. 673-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. As with the idea of being a ‘chosen people’ in the early Middle Ages, being an imperial people was widely claimed, see C. O’Brien, ‘Chosen Peoples and New Israels in the Early Medieval West’, *Speculum* 95 (2020) 987–1009. See above, p.#. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Müller-Mertens, ‘Ottonians as Kings and Emperors’, 238 and 242-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ohthere: *OEO* I.1.13-16 and Wulfstan: I.1.16-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Bately, *OEO*, lxcii-lxxii and Allport, ‘Home Thoughts’, esp. 259 and work cited there. Lost folios in the tenth-century manuscript mean that it is possible that Wulfstan was not included before the eleventh century. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Allport, ‘Home Thoughts’ 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Valtonen’s extensive *The North* is comprehensive in discussions of previous research. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. M. Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England: Linguistic Relations between Speakers of Old English and Old Norse* (Turnhout 2002), 96-109 and J. Bately, ‘The Language of Ohthere's Report to King Alfred: Some Problems and Some Puzzles for Historians and Linguists’, in *Anglo-Saxons: Studies Presented to Cyril Roy Hart*, eds S. Keynes and A. Smyth (Dublin 2006) 39-53; and E. Tyler, ‘Writing History and the Politics of Language in Eleventh-Century England: Latin, English, Norse, French, Welsh and Irish’. This will be published in April and I will supply details at that point. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Leneghan, ‘*Translatio imperii*’, 673-78; Appleton, ‘Northern World’, 289-99 and Allport, ‘Home Thoughts’, 258, 273-74 and 287. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. (however ironically given it was not until the reign of Athelstan that English kings, held sway over more land inhabited by English people than did Scandinavian rulers, and then not definitively). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Allport, ‘Home Thoughts’ definitively makes this case and Lozovsky’s discussion of the Late Antique and Carolingian material provides key context, *Earth is Our Book*,139-155 as does Valtonen, *The North*, 42-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. See above, p. #. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Lozovsky, *Earth is Our Book* 78-86 and 139-55, esp. 147-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Allport, ‘Home Thoughts’ esp. 262-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. T. Mommsen, *Iordanis Romana et Getica*. Monumenta Germaniae historica (hereafter MGH), Auctorum Antiquissimorum 5.1 (Berlin 1882) 53-138, (cited by paragraph) 8-16 and 27; translated by P. Van Nuffelen and L. Van Hoof, *Romana* and *Getica* (Liverpool 2020); and L. Bethmann and G. Waitz, *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, MGH, Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX (Hannover 1878) 47-187, (cited by book and chapter) I.2, I.4, I.5, I.6, I.8 I.15; translated by W. Foulke, *History of the Lombards* (Philadelphia 1907). Allport, ‘Home Thoughts’, esp. 262-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. *OEO* I.1.14. Allport, ‘Home Thoughts’, 269; Losovsky, *Earth is Our Book*, 147-52; and Merrill, *History and Geography*, 115-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. *OEO* I.1.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Jordanes, *Getica* 21 and Paul, *Historia*, I.5.On *scridefinne* in late antique and medieval texts, Allport, ‘Home Thoughts’, 263-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Allport, ‘Home Thoughts’, 265 and Valtonen, *The North*,159-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Jordanes, *Getica* 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Jordanes, *Getica* 10-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Jordanes, *Getica* 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. On Rufinus’ translation of Origen’s *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* as Jordanes’ model, see W. Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History: Jordanes, Gregory of Tour, Bede and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton 1988), 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Jordanes, *Getica* 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Bately, *OEO*, lxi.See above for Grimbald and John in Alfred’s court. On *The History of the Goths* in the Carolingian realm, M. Tischler, ‘Remembering the Ostrogoths in the Carolingian Empire’, in Kramer *et a*l., *Historiography* 65–122 (72-73 n.26). On knowledge of Jordanes in the ninth-century Carolingian Empire, R. McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge 2004), 55, 56, 194, 201, 204, 212, and 276. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Lozovsky, ‘Roman Geography’, 362. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. *OEO* I.1.8 andJordanes, *Getica* 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. *OEO* I.1.9 and Orosius, *Histories*, I.2.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. *OEO* I.1.19 and Orosius*,* Histories, I.2.76-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, ed. and trans. N. Rudd, Loeb Classical Library 33 (Cambridge MA 2004) 258-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Wenzhuo Shi when writing her MA dissertation (University of York, 2019) on the representation of India in early medieval English texts first drew my attention to Ireland in the *OEO*. F. Tinti, (*Europe and the Anglo-Saxons* (Cambridge 2021) 10-11) reads the changes to the representation of Britain and Ireland as emphasizing Britain’s closeness, rather than remoteness, to continental Europe, and Michelet, *Creation*, 133-35, sees a centring of a perspective looking out from Britain. All of these readings can work together. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Though not in the same hand that copies the OEO, above footnote 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. On empire in *Brunanburh*, see E. Tyler., ‘England between Empire and Nation in “The Battle of Brunanburh”’, in *Whose Middle Ages? Teachable Moments for an Ill-Used Past*, ed. by A. Albin, M. Erler, T. O’Donnell, N. Paul, and N Rowe (New York 2019) 166–80 (and work cited there), Foot,‘English Becomes British’ and now Leneghan, ‘End of Empire’, 417-19 and P. Cavill, ‘Kings, Peoples, and Lands: The Rhetoric of *The Battle of Brunanburh*, in *Ideas of the World*, eds Atherton, *et al*., 385-402 (394, 396 and 399). Texts and translations of *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *Armes Prydein Vawr* (see also William’s edn cited in footnote 12)in *The Battle of Brunanburh: A Casebook*, ed. M. Livingston (Exeter 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-86)