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The Old English Translations of Bede’s Historia Ecclesiastica and Orosius’ Historiarum adversus Paganos: A Comparison

Questo lavoro rappresenta il tentativo di confrontare il più precisamente possibile le versioni in antico inglese di due opere latine: le Historiarum adversus Paganos di Orosio e la Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum di Beda. L’interesse di questo confronto sta nel verificare l’ipotesi che nel tradurre questi due testi entrambi storici ed ecclesiastici, nonostante le differenti scelte, siano stati utilizzati anche dei principi guida comuni.

1. Samples of the texts and technique of evaluation

The Old English version of Bede’s Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum and that of Orosius’ Historiarum adversus Paganos Libri septem belong to the group of translations undertaken at king Alfred’s behest. Since the king’s wish was to improve the educational level of his people, which had so badly decreased after the invasions, he started a programme of educational reform which included the translation of a number of Latin texts into the language his subjects could understand. Bede’s Historia Ecclesiastica and Orosius’ Historiarum were probably chosen among the works to translate because they could provide learned men with all they needed to know about ancient and British history.

The venerable Bede (673-735), the author of the Historia Ecclesiastica, spent most of his life as a monk at Wermouth-Jarrow monastery, studying scriptures, teaching and writing. His studies embraced grammar, hagiography, natural science, history, biblical exegesis and poetry. His Historia Ecclesiastica has remained as a monument of eighth-century Northumbrian scholarship and it can be considered as both a history of the Church in England and a history of gens Anglorum. Bede’s great purpose was to give the English a history, which was broader than they thought and make the English a part of a historical development in continuation with the Roman Empire (Stephens 1977: 6). Ælfric attrib-
uted the translation of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* in a homily on St. Gregory issued in 992 to Alfred himself, but in the 19th century the king’s authorship started to be questioned: first Henry Sweet claimed that the Old English Bede was too over-literal to have been performed by the king and later Thomas Miller claimed that much of the vocabulary of the translation was not West Saxon but Mercian (Whitelock 1962: 57). Nowadays the Old English Bede is included in the works belonging to Alfred’s scheme of reform even if it was probably carried out by one of the king’s Mercian helpers and not directly by Alfred (Greenfield/Calder 1986: 58).

Paulus Orosius, on the other hand, was a Spanish monastic who, at the beginning of the fifth century, was induced by St. Augustine to write a history of the world from the creation to AD 416. Orosius’ main aim was an attempt to demonstrate the improvement brought by Christianity to the Romans not withstanding such fifth century’s calamities as the sack of Rome carried out by the Goths. This theme could be relevant to ninth century England too (Bately 1991: 78).

Even if the Old English Orosius is included in William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* among the translations performed by King Alfred, a serious analysis of the syntax and of the vocabulary of the work has convinced many scholars that the king cannot be directly responsible for the Old English version of the *Historiarum* (See Bately 1970: 433-459 and Liggins 1970: 290-322).

The aim of my work was to compare as precisely as possible, beyond the well-known general characteristics, the different techniques employed in the translations of these two ecclesiastical and historical texts and to see if, behind the differences, it could still be possible to figure out a common design.

In order to carry out this comparison I tried to apply the objective method of analysis Nida expounded in his *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964) to a sample taken from the two works. Nida’s method allows to evaluate very precisely the way in which a translation is carried out because it quantifies all the structural alterations, omissions, additions, changes in order of the words that a translator decides to perform turning a text from a language into another. Moreover, I chose this method because Nida used it in his analysis of different translations of the Bible, which can be considered in many parts both a historical and
religious text just as Orosius’ *Historiarum* and Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

In the setting up of an evaluation of a translation Nida identifies three levels:

- firstly, a literal transfer, which is a morpheme-to-morpheme “transliteration” of the original text into the receptor language,
- secondly, a minimal transfer, in which all syntactical and lexical alterations which are obligatory for the text to conform to the language of the translation are carried out,
- thirdly, a literary transfer, in which not only obligatory alterations but also optional modifications can be found and calculated comparing this third level with the minimal transfer.

Nida divides the differences between the second and the third level into four groups: changes in order, omissions, additions and structural alterations.

Since it was not always possible for me to find an Old English equivalent for each morpheme of the Latin text to set up the literal transfer and, most of all, it was too difficult to establish the syntactical and lexical alterations which should have been obligatory to build the minimal transfer, I decided to simplify Nida’s analysis and to confine myself to the third level. First, I numbered each word of the portion of the Latin text taken into consideration and found in the Old English version the equivalent word the Anglo-Saxon translator had chosen. Then, I calculated the amount of changes in order, omissions, additions and structural alterations. In addition to those categories I have also analysed the specific word order of each sentence and the order of genitive + noun groups.

My analysis\(^1\) concerned the translation of the first eight chapters of the first book of Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*. In the following extracts we can see how Nida’s analysis allows us to evaluate precisely the differences between the two versions of the text:

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\(^1\) This article is actually a summary of the results of the research I carried out in my graduation thesis; there I tried to keep the three levels of Nida’s analysis, even if it was not always possible to build the literal and minimal transfers without employing some modern English words and even if the syntactical alterations of the minimal transfer were built following some fixed guiding principles. See: Simonetta Mengato, *The Old English Translations of Bede and Orosius. Techniques and Ideology*, Tesi di Laurea, Univ. di Padova 1997.
Extract 1

**LATIN BEDE**

1) Capiuntur 2) autem 3) saepissime 4) et 5) vituli marini, 6) et 7) delphines, 8) necnon 9) et 10) ballenae: 11) exceptis 12) variorum 13) generibus 14) conchyliorum; 15) in 16) quibus 17) sunt 18) et 19) musculae, 20) quibus 21) inclusam 22) saepe 23) margaritam, 24) omnis 25) quidem 26) coloris 27) optimam 28) inveniunt, (...)

**OLD ENGLISH BEDE**

7 Her 1) beoþ 3) oft 1) fangene 2) * 4) * 5) seolas 6) 7 8) * 10) hronas 9) and 7) mereswyn 7 her 11) beoþ oft 11) numene 12) missenlicra 13) cynna, 14) weolscylle 7 19) musculæ 18) 7 17) * 15) on 16) þam 20) * 28) beoþ 22) oft, 28) gemette 21) * þa 27) betstan 23) meregrotan 24) ælces 26) hiwes.

11 **CHANGES IN ORDER:** 3) oft, 7) mereswyn, 10) hronas, 18) 7, 19) muscule, 22) oft, 28) beoþ gemette, 27) betstan, 23) meregrotan, 24) ælces, 26) hiwes.

6 **OMISSIONS:** 2) autem, 4) et, 8) necnon, 17) sunt, 20) quibus, 21) inclusam.

7 **STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS:**
3) oft - superlative saepissime
14) weolscylle - genitive conchyliorum

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4 Bold type has been used to identify additions, asterisks for omissions and structural alterations have been underlined.
11) beoþ numene weolscylle - dative absolute exceptis variorum gener-ibus conchyliorum
on þam beoþ gemette - two relative clauses: in quibus sunt, quibus inveniunt
28) beoþ gemette - inveniunt
27) betstan 28) meregrotan - singular meregrotan… optimam
18) 7 - et ‘also’

8 ADDITIONS: 7, her, 7, her, oft, 7, 7, þa

WORD ORDER: AuxVS (co-ordinate to main clause) (= Lat. VS).
AuxVS (co-ordinate to main clause) (= Lat. VS).
XAuxVS (relative clause).

Missenlicra cynna weolscylle (genitive + noun) (≠ Lat.).
Betstan meregrotan ælces hiwes (noun + genitive) (= Lat.).

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**Extract 2**

**LATIN BEDE**


**OLD ENGLISH BEDE**

1) Dara **cyninga** 2) tidum 3)* 10) **wæs se** 6) halga 5) wer 4) Eleuther **biscop** 7 7) papa **bære** 8) Romaniscan 9) cyrican. 11) Sende 12) to 13) him 14) Lucius 15) Breetone 16) cyning 17) ærendgewrit; **bæd hine** 7 18) halsade 19) **bæt he** 20) **þurh** 21) his 22) bebod 23) cristene 24) gefrened wäre.

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5 *Bedae Opera Historica*, op. cit., p. 28.
6 *The Old English Version of Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, op. cit., p. 32.
2 CHANGES IN ORDER: 10) wæs, 4) Eleuther.

1 OMISSION: 3) cum.

4 STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS:
waes se halga wer Eleuther (main clause) - *cum Eleutherus …praesset* (time clause)
7) papa - *pontificatui*
15) Breotone - *brittaniarum*
18) halsade - *obsecrans*

9 ADDITIONS: cyninga, se, bispoc, 7, bæd, hine, 7, he, þære

WORD ORDER: XVS (main clause) (≠ Lat. XSV)
VSO (main clause) (= Lat.VSO)
(S)V (main clause)
(S)V (co-ordinate clause)
SXVAux (purpose clause) (= Lat. (S)XV)

cyninga tidum (genitive + noun) (= Lat.)
Breotone cyning (genitive + noun ) (= Lat.)
papa romaniscan cyrican (noun + genitive) (= Lat.)

**Extract 3**

LATIN BEDE

1) Vidit 2) que 3) ibi 4) non 5) parvam 6) hominum 7) multitudinem 8) utriusque 9) sexus, 10) conditionis 11) diversae 12) et 13) aetatis, 14) quae 15) sine 16) dubio 17) Divinitatis 18) instinctu 19) ad 20) obsequium 21) beatissimi 22) confessoris 23) ac 24) martyris 25) vocabatur, 26) et 27) ita 28) fluminis 29) ipsius 30) occupabat 31) pontem 32) ut 33) intra 34) vesperam 35) transire 36) vix 37) posset.

7 Bedae Opera Historica, op. cit., p. 40.
OLD ENGLISH BEDE

2) 7 he 1) geseah 3) ðær 4)5) micle 7) menigo 6) monna 8) æghwæðeres 9) hades; 7 væron 11) missenlicræ 13) yldo 12) 7 10) getincge men. 14) Seo menigo monna 15) butan 16) tweon 18) mid 17) Godcundre 18) onbryrdnysse 25) wæs geciged 19) to 20) þenunge ðæs 21) edigan 22)* 23)* 24) martyres 26) 7 hi 27) swa 29) ðæs 28) streames 31) brycge 30) abysgade væron 32) þæt hi hwene ær 33)* 34) æfenne 35) oferfaran 36)* 37) ne mihten; 7 CHANGES IN ORDER: 2) 7, 6) monna, 10) gestincge, 13) yldo, 25) wæs geciged, 29) ðæs, 30) abysgade væron.

4 OMISSIONS: 22) confessoris, 23) et, 36) vix, 33) intra.

8 STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS:
4)5) micle - non parvam
wæron missenlicræ yldo 7 gestincge men: new co-ordinate sentence
14) seo (adjective)... menigo monna wæs geciged - quae (pronoun) ... vocabatur.
17) mid Godcundre (adjective) onbryrdnysse - Divinitatis (noun) instinctu
21) ðæs eadigan martyres - beatissimi (superlative) confessoris ac martyrhis
29) ðæs - ipsius
30) ðæs streames brycge abysgade væron - fluminis ipsius occupabat pontem
37) oferfaran ne mihten - transire vix posset

11 ADDITIONS: he, 7, væron, men, menigo, monna, ðæs, hi, hi, hwene, ær.

WORD ORDER:  SVO (co-ordinate to main clause) (= Lat. SVO)
VXS (co-ordinate to main clause)
SXAuxV (main clause)
SXVAux (co-ordinate to main clause) (≠ Lat. (S)VO)
SXVMod (result clause) (= Lat. (S)XInfMod)

The Old English Version of Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People, op. cit., p. 38.
Nida’s method is easily applicable to the Old English version of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, but it could not be applied to the version of Orosius’ *Historiarum adversus Paganos* because this one is too different from the original. Indeed, while Bede’s translator adds information or omits even long bits of the original text without changing the structure of the Latin source, the high amount of additions in many passages of the Old English Orosius completely alters the original version in both content and form. In a few instances of the translation the additions proved to be many so that a quantitative evaluation of them would have made no sense.

The following extract about Hercules, with its incredibly high amount of additions, is a definite demonstration that Nida’s analysis applied to this text would be completely useless:

### Extract 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LATIN OROSIUS¹⁰</th>
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⁹ The analysis takes into consideration the translation of chapters X-XXI from the first book and chapters I-II from the second book of Orosius’ *Historiarum adversus Paganos*.

Since Nida’s method was not applicable, the analysis was carried out simply comparing the Old English passages to the correspondent Latin ones, adding a few remarks:

OLD ENGLISH OROSIUS

On þæm dagum 9) wæs 3)* 4)* 1)* 2)* 6)* 7)* 5) swa micel 8) ege from ðæm wifmonnum ðætte Europe ne Asiam ne ealle þa neahþeoda ne mehtan æpencean ne acræftan hu hi him wiðstondan mæhten, ær þon 10)* hie gecuron 11) Ercol þone ent þæt he hie sceolde mid eallum Creca cræftum 48) beswican; 12)* 13)* 14)* 15)* 16)* 17)* 19)* 18)* 19)* 20)* 21)* 22)* 23)* 24)* 25)* 26)* 7 þeah ne dorste he geneðan þæt he hie mid firde gefore, ær he 45) ongan 29)* 30)* 31)* 32)* 33)* 34)* 35)* 37)* mid 28) Creca 36) scipun þe mon dulmunus hætt, þe mon sægð þæt on an scip mæge an þusend manna 7 þa nihtes 48) on ungearwe 38)* 40)* 41)* 42)* 43)* 44)* 46)* 47)* 48)* 49)* hi on bestæl 7 hie swiðe forslog 7 fordyde 7 hwæðere ne mehte hie þæs londes benæman.

LATIN OROSIUS

Anno ante Urbem conditam CCCCLXXX, Vesoges, rex Aegypti, meridiem et Septentrionem, divisas paene toto caelo ac pelago plagas, aut miscere bello, aut regno iungere studens, Scythis bel-lum primus indixit, missis prius legatis, qui hostibus parendi leg-es dicerent.

12 The following extract is taken from: Orosio, Le storie contro i pagani, op. cit., p. 72.
Anno ante urbem conditam ... - ær þæm þe Romeburg getimbred wære IIII hunde wintrum 7 hun-deahtatigum, Uesoges, Egypta cyning, wæs winnende of suðæle Asiam, of oð him se mæsta dæl weard underþieded 7 he, Uesoges, Egypta cyning, wæs siþan mid firde farende on Scîþie on ða norðdælas, 7 his ðæredracan before asende to þære ðeode 7 him untweogendlice secgan het þæt hie oðer sceolden, ọþþe ðæt lond æt him alesan, ọþþe he hie wolde mid gefeohte fordon 7 forherigan.

Anno ante urbem conditam ... - ær þæm Romeburg getimbred wære ...
Sciþis - Scîþie (with the doubling of consonant in front of -j).
missis prius legatis - his ærendracan before asende: co-ordinate to main clause (an ablative absolute is never rendered in the Old English Orosius with the equivalent construction of dative absolute).
The transaltor divides into two different moments the war carried out by Vesoges, who is said first, to have submitted the South and then, to have fought in the North and sent the messangers to the Scythians.
Asiam: this kind of geographic additions are quite numerous, as the translator has to clarify the text for the English audience.
The translator adds what precisely the laws of surrender are, therefore he tries to instruct his audience.
Three coordinate sentences show the great use of coordination.

WORD ORDER:  
SVAuxX (time clause)  
SAuxVX (main clause)  
XSAuxV (time clause)  
SAuxXV (co-ordinate to main clause)  
O(S)VX (co-ordinate to main clause)  
XInf.(S)V (co-ordinate to main clause)  
SOV (noun clause)  
OXV (disjunctive clause)  
SOModXV (disjunctive clause)  

13 The following extract is taken from: The Old English Orosius, op. cit., p. 28.
Egypta cyning (genitive + noun)
Egypta cyning (genitive + noun)

### Extract 3

**LATIN OROSIUS**

Inde continuo reversi perdomitam infinitis caedibus Asiam vectigalem facere; ubi per XV annos sine pace inmorati tandem uxorum flagitatione revocantur denuntiantibus, ni reedant subolem se a finitimis quaesituras.

**OLD ENGLISH OROSIUS**

7 þa hie hamweard wendon be westan þære ie Eufrate, ealle Asi-am hie genieddon þæt hie him gafol guldon7 þær wæron fiftene gear þæt lond herigende 7 westende, oð heora wif him sendon ærendracan æfter, 7 him sædon þæt hie oðer dyden, oððe ham comen oððe hie him woldon oðerra wera ceosan. Hi þa þæt lond forleton, 7 him hamweard ferdon.

reversi - 7 þa hie hamweard wendon: co-ordinate clause.
The translator adds the fact that women sent messangers.
There is one word pair: wæron herigende 7 westende

*Be westan þære ie Eufrate*: one more geographical addition which explains where the Scythians lived.

**WORD ORDER**: SXV (co-ordinate to main clause)
OSV (co-ordinate to main clause)
SXOV (result clause)
(S)AuxXOV (co-ordinate clause)
SXVO (time clause)
(S)XV (time clause)

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14 The following extract is taken from: Orosio, *Le storie contro i Pagani*, op. cit., p. 72.
15 The following extract is taken from: *The Old English Orosius*, op. cit., p. 29.
2. Analysis of the translations

The main reason why King Alfred or his helpers felt free to rewrite Orosius’ text but were more careful towards Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* can be found in what the two different writers together with their works represented for the Anglo-Saxons. Bede reached European fame and wrote a history of the Anglo-Saxons with the main concern of describing the growth of the Church in England (Greenfield / Lapidge 1986: 21). King Alfred did not need to change much of the original perspective and he treated the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* with the respect his English author deserved in the mind of his own people. On the contrary, Paulus Orosius was a Spanish monastic, and even if his fame was greater throughout all the Middle Ages than that of Bede, for the fact that he was not English and that he wrote a history of Europe and not of England (which was the king’s main concern), Alfred felt free to produce a translation of his work far from being literal.

In the Middle Ages translations could be easily adapted to the needs of the translator or of the public to which the new versions were destined, except for the biblical and liturgical texts, which were rendered more literally. For instance, in the translation of *De fide Catholica contra Iudaeos* into Old High German, the translator turns from literal translation (for biblical quotations) to free translation (for argumentative parts), and adds explanatory widenings with a persuasive function (Saibene 1994: 207-9). As for comparison, the translations made one century after the Alfredian programme of educational reforms by Notker from St. Gallen, who provided versions in Old High German of texts which could be useful for his pupils, contained many explanations and *excursum* (Santoro 1994: 244-5).

If we can say that Bede’s translator never rerewrote sections of the text, not a few parts of Old English Orosius show a self-confident trans-
lator who produces essays of independent prose which just take the Latin text as a starting point. For instance, in the tirade against the Romans who complain about the coming of the Goths, only the general original theme is maintained. There, the translator starts reproaching the Romans (while in the correspondent Latin part this comes at the end of the paragraph) and addressing them with the Old English vocative ge:

*Hu ungemetlice ge Romwara bemurciað 7 besprecað...* Then he transforms the Latin *totis viribus Romanas ingressi provincias* into three different clauses: *for þon þa Gotan eow hwon oferhergedon 7 iowre burg abraecon 7 iower feawe ofslogan.* Afterwards he adds that the lands the Goths ask for are empty and uncultivated (*hit ær þiosan genog æmettig læg 7 genog weste 7 his ane note ne hæfdon*) and that before Christian times people never asked for peace in exchange for money unless they had been submitted (... *hwær hit gewurde ær þem cristendome... ænegu þeod æt ofperre mehte frið begietan ofþe mid golde, oððe mid seolfre, ofþe mid ænige feo, buton he him underþiedd wäre.*)

The Old English Bede is closer to the original text than the Old English Orosius also in the way it often follows as much as possible Latin syntax and therefore Latin subordination:

- Latin Bede: *siquidem in ea passus est sanctus Albanus, de quo presbyter Fortunatus in Laude Virginum, cum beatorum martyrum qui de toto orbe ad Dominum venirent mentionem faceret...*
- OE Bede: *Swylce eac on þa tid on Breotone wæs þrowiende Scs Albanus be þam Fortunatus presbyter on Fæmnena lofe ða he gemynegode þara eadigra martyra ða þe of eallum middanearde to Drihtne coman...*
- Latin Bede: *Si vis perennis vitae felicitate perfrui, diis magnis sacrificare ne differas.*
- OE Bede: *Gif þu þysses lifes gesælignysse mid us brucan ne yld þu þeet þam myclan godum mid us onsecge.*

On the contrary the Old English translator of Orosius’ *Historiarum adversus Paganos* prefers to employ parataxis and juxtaposition which are not typical Latin characteristics.

The translator of Old English Bede often employs Latin constructions which mimic the original Latin syntax such as dative absolutes (for a Latin ablative absolute) and accusative + infinitive forms:

- Latin Bede: *... devotione completa...*
– OE Bede: ...gefylledre wilsunnesse...
– Latin Bede: ... Christianum iam me esse (cognosce) ...
– OE Bede: wite ðu me cristen beon.

I could not find any such constructions in the part of the Old English Orosius which I have analysed.

The two translators also differ in their use of conjoined word pairs. Bede’s translator employs them very frequently to render better and clarify his source and not only to embellish his work:
– Latin Bede: At Sanctus Albanus qui se ultro persecutionibus fidei Christianum esse prodiderat...
– OE Bede:... And Scs Albanus ða mid sylfes willan cyðde 7 openade ehterum Godes geleafan ðæt he cristen wære ... (prodere means both “tell” and “reveal”).
– Latin Bede...ecclesia est mirandi operis atque eius condigna extructa.
– OE Bede: ... þær cyrice geweorht 7 getimbrad wundorlices gewe-orces 7 his þowunge 7 martyrodome wyrþe. (Geweorcan would be sufficient to translate extruere, but the translator chooses to add getimbran, “make of wood”).

So, in the Old English Bede conjoined word pairs can be considered a means of translation (the meaning of a Latin word is rendered by both Old English words) but, since they are very frequently employed in the Old English linguistic and literary system (they can be found in poetry and in law texts too), they also represent the way in which the translator conforms to the already existing rules of the receptor language (De Vivo 1999 54-55, 68-71).

In the Old English Orosius conjoined word pairs cannot be found as often as in the Old English Bede but they are used even if they have no direct correspondent Latin term. For instance, bemurciað 7 besprecað and sibb 7 frið in the tirade against the Romans are more a stylistic device than a necessary translation technique.

As far as word order is concerned, the results of the samples taken into consideration (the translation of chapters I-VIII of the first book of Bede’s Historia Ecclesiastica and that of chapters X-XXI of the first book and chapters I-II of the second book of Orosius’ Historiarum adversus Paganos) again differ quite from each other. For instance, of the 38 genitive complements of the Old English Orosius, 29 follow a genitive + noun order, and only 6 of them follow a noun + genitive order.
Noun + genitive groups can be caused by a particularly heavy genitive which must be postponed on the right of the noun or by the fact that the noun is already determined by another qualifier:

- ... *þa mielcan gefoht Creca 7 Trojana ...* (a + n) + (g + g)
- ... *hwætestan men ealles þisses middangeardes ...* (a + n) + (a + g)
- ... *of þæm hwætestan monnum Germania ...* [(a + n) + g]

The tendency towards genitive + noun order is so strong in the Old English Orosius that even when the genitive is heavy the translator a few times follows the genitive + noun order:

- ... *Europe 7 Asia þone maestan dæl ...* (g + g) + (a + n)
- ... *Babylonia 7 Asiria anwald ... ([g + g] + n)

There are also three genitive + noun + genitive orders:

- ... *ægðer ge þara æþelinga wif ge þara oferra monna ...*

So the change to complete pre-position of inflected genitive which is said to have begun during the Old English period (Mitchell 1985: 555) has already reached a very high degree in the Old English Orosius.

On the other hand, if we take into consideration the 102 genitive complements of the Old English Bede, as there are 50 genitive + noun groups, 51 noun + genitive orders, and one genitive + noun + genitive order, the tendency towards genitive + noun order is not as strong as it was in the Old English Orosius, but the two tendencies seem to balance. In the Old English Bede the Latin influence must be taken into consideration, because 64 genitive groups have Latin equivalents. Of the 35 times in which the Old English translator decides to follow the Latin order 24 times it is a noun + genitive order which is kept and only 11 times it is a genitive + noun order, therefore it is the tendency towards noun + genitive which seems to be stronger.

As far as the order of subject, verb and object is concerned in the main clauses or co-ordinates to the main clause of both the Old English Orosius and of the Old English Bede, a tendency towards SOV can be detected. In the Old English Orosius 45 times the object comes before the verb and only 14 times the object follows the verb:

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16 I could not compare the genitive + noun groups of the Old English Orosius to the Latin because they had no equivalents in the original version.

17 Actually in Old English three basic orders are common: SV; S…V and VS. The SV order can occur both in principal and subordinate clauses, while the S…V order is most common in subordinate clauses (Mitchell/ Robinson 1992: 63-65).
Hi þa þæt lond forleton ... (SOV).
– ... 7 ealle Babylonia aweste ... (co-ordinate to the main clause: (S)OV).
– ... he gegaderade bone fultum þe he þa mæhte (main clause: SVO).

The tendency to leave the verb in last position is confirmed by the fact that when in a main clause the direct object comes before the verb, 9 times the other complement comes before the verb too, and only 3 times the other complement is postponed:
– ... 7 þær wæron fiftene gear þæt lond herigende 7 westende ... (co-ordinate to the main clause: (S)AuxXOV).
– ... 7 mid ungemeticlike þinunge he wæs þæt folc cwielmende ... (co-ordinate to the main clause: XSAuxOV).

In the main clauses of the Old English Bede, as there are 30 SOV orders and 26 SVO orders, the tendency towards SOV is still stronger than that towards SVO, but less strong than in the Old English Orosius18. As the Alfredian version of the Historia Ecclesiastica is quite literal, the Old English word order is often comparable to that of the Latin text. In main clauses 16 times the translator chooses to follow an SOV order which is already in the Latin text, therefore the Latin SOV influence is quite strong:
– Latin Bede: ...Claudius imperator ...expeditionem in Brittaniam movit. (SOXV).
– OE Bede:...Caludius se casere ... fyrde gelædde on Breetone. (SOVX).

As far as subordinate clauses are concerned in both texts the preference for SOV order, as expected, is even stronger than in main clauses. In the Old English Orosius 53 times the direct object precedes the verb, and only 11 times it comes after.
– ... for þon þa Gotan eow hwon oferhergedon ... (causal clause: SOV)
– ... þæt ure Dryhten us gesceop ... (noun clause: SOV)

If there is another complement and not only the direct object, Orosius’ translator chooses an SOXV or SXOV order (15 times), and never an SOVX order, unless there is more than one complement besides the direct object:

18 The SV order became more and more frequent during the Old English period. (Mitchell 1985: 713).
– ... oð hie him þær eard genamon. (time clause: SXOV)
– ... on þære ilcan tide þe Babylonia ðiowdome onfeng from Ciruse ðæm cyninge ... (relative clause: XSOVX, of the two complements besides the direct object, one is kept before the verb and the other is postponed).

In the Old English Bede 45 subordinate clauses have a SOV order and only 12 of them have a SVO order. Again Latin influence is quite evident, because 17 times the translator keeps a Latin SOV order, and only 3 times he changes a Latin SVO into SOV order.
– Latin Bede: ... qui ... sanctum Dei confessorem ferire recusavit. (OV)
– OE Bede: ... þæt he wiðsoc þæt he ðone Godes andettere sloge. (SOV)
– Latin Bede: ... a quibus nomen acceptit, .... (S)XOV)
– OE Bede: ... fram þam hit naman onfeng ... (XSOV).

Of the 12 subordinate clauses which have a SVO order, 2 keep a Latin order SVO, and four change a Latin SOV into SVO19:
– Latin Bede: ... unde etiam plurimae longitudinis habet dies aestate, sicut et noctes in bruma. (SVOX)
– OE Bede: is on ðon sweotol ðæt þis ealand hafað mycele lengran dagas on sumera swa eac nihta on wintra ... (SVOX)
– Latin Bede: ... Deum verum ac vivum qui universa creavit adoro ... (SOV)
– OE Bede: ... 7 ðone -lifingendan se gescop heofon 7 eorðan 7 ealle gesceafa ic simble bigange ... (SVO, the new order is probably caused by the fact that the Old English direct object is much heavier).

3. Ideology behind the translations

The ideology lying behind the translations of these two Latin texts can be detected by a precise analysis of the additions and omissions performed by the two translators. As far as additions are concerned, even if

19 Oldoni analyses the word order in a text which is later than Old English Orosius and Old English Bede: the first cycle of Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies. He claims that the most common word order in main clauses is of the type SVX and SVO, and that, even if the type #conj-S—V# is the most frequent word order in subordinate clauses, a tendency towards SVO can still be seen there, too (Oldoni 1995).
they are much more abundant in the Old English Orosius, both translators tend to follow the same guiding principles. Indeed, they both try to explain every detail which might be unknown to their audience and therefore they try to clarify the text. The difference is in the kind of text they translate. For instance, Bede’s translator obviously does not need to add much information to clarify a geographic description of the British Isles to his Old English audience, but Orosius’ translator tells his audience about people and events which take place in far countries and therefore he has much more geographic references to explain. In the Old English Bede only one geographic addition is performed and it is to clarify where *Gaul* is:

- Latin Bede: *Habet a meridie Galliam Belgicam* ...
- Old English Bede: *Hit hafað fram suðdaele þa mægþe ongean þe mon hateð Gallia Bellica.*

But in the Old English Orosius many geographic additions can be found:

- Latin Orosius: *Inde continuo reversi perdomitam infinitis caedibus Asiam vectigalem facere.*
- Old English Orosius: *7 þa hie hamweard wendon, be westan þære ie Eufrate...* (The translator explains that to go back home the Scythians have to go west of Euphrates river, which was already known form the Bible).
- Latin Orosius: *... domo pulsi in Cappadociae Pontique ora consederunt...*
- Old English Orosius: *... gebudon Capadotiam 7 Pontum neah þære læssan Asian.*

(This is a clear explanation of where Cappadocia and Pontum are). Both in the Old English Orosius and the Old English Bede, translators add historical details to instruct their audience and to help them to understand the texts. Indeed these texts could be used in schools instead of the Latin versions and therefore every detail which could be unknown had to be clarified, but again, Bede’s translator, who most of all speaks about British events, has to specify to his audience only a few details such as:

- Latin Bede: *... Maximianumque cognomento Herculium socium creavit imperii.*
- Old English Bede: *Se geceas Maximianum him to fultume his rices*
ge sealde him westdæl middaneardes. (The translator adds that Maximianum was given the west part of the world).

On the other hand Orosius’ translator has to clarify lots of historical events which are probably not known by an Old English audience, and that in the original text are only hinted at because they can be taken for granted by the certainly more learned audience Orosius had written his text for:

- Latin Orosius: ... raptus Helenae, conjuratio Graecorum, et concursus mille navium, dehinc decennis obsidio, ac postremo famosum Trojæ excidium praedicatur.

- Old English Orosius: ... gewearð ðætte Alexander, Priamises sunu ðæs cyninges, of Troiana ðære byrig, genom ðæs cyninges wif Monaelsa, of Læcedemonia, Creca byrig, Elena. Ymb hie wearð ðæt mære gewinn 7 micla gefeoht Creca 7 Troiana swa ðætte Crecas hæfdon M scīpa ðara miclana dulmana 7 him betweenum gesworan ðæt hie næfre noldon on cy��be cuman ær hie hiora teonan gewræcen. 7 hi ða X gear ymbe ða burg sittende wæron 7 feohtende. (Here the translator rewrites the equivalent Latin passage to give a brief summary of the war of Troja: he quotes some of the main characters and not only Helena, he explains which kind of ships was used, and that the Greek had sworn they would never go back home before taking their revenge).

- Latin Orosius: Modo autem Gothi quos Alexander evitandos pronuntiavit, Pyrrhus exhorruit, Caesar etiam declinavit ...

- Old English Orosius: 7 nu ða ða Gotan coman of ðæm hwatestan monnum Germania, ðe ægðer ge Pirrus se reða cyning, ge Alexander ge Iulius se craftega casere, hie alle from him ondredon ðæt hi hie mid gefeohte sohte. (The translator explains to his audience that the Goths come from Germany, that Pirrus is wicked and that Julius Caesar is the mighty emperor- similarly Bede’s translator defines Diocletianus as the yfelan casere and Constantinus as the godan casere).

Both translators seem concerned about clarifying foreign terms or names to make sure that their audience understood them:

- Latin Bede: ... iuxta civitatem Verolamium, quae nunc a gente Anglo- rum Verlamacaestir sive Vaeclingacaestir appellatur...

- Old English Bede: neah ðære ceastre ðe Romane heton Verolami-
um seo nu fram Angelðeode Werlameceaster oþþ Wæclingaceaster is nemned. (The translator explains that Verolamium was the Roman name of the town).

– Latin Orosius: ... unde Amazones dictae.
– Old English Orosius: For þon hi mon hæt on Crecisc Amazonas þæt is on Englisc “fortende’. (Orosius’ translator explains that Amazones is a Greek term which in English means “burnt”).

Both translators seem to take advantage of their translations, when they can, to remind the audience with principles of Christian faith:
– Latin Bede: ... susceptam fidem Brittani...
– Old English Bede: and ða onfengan Bryttas fulluhte 7 Cristes ge-leafan (The translator specifies that to get Christian faith one first has to be baptized).
– Latin Orosius: Neminem jam esse hominum arbitror, quem latere possit, quod hominem in hoc mundo fecerit rectum ...
– Old English Orosius: Ic wene, cwæð Orosius, þæt nan wis mon ne sie, buton he genoh geare wite ðætte God þone aerestan monn ryhtne 7 godne gesceop 7 eal moncyn mid him. (The audience is here reminded that when creating the first men, God created all mankind too).

As far as omissions in Old English Bede are concerned, one important kind regards contrasts between the Britons and the Romans, as for instance the battle between Cassivellaunus and Julius Caesar, or the betrayal of Roman allies in Britain. Bede’s translator also omits details about foreign countries such as the famine in Syria while Claudius was emperor, or the mentioning of Southern countries such as Italia, Armenia, Macedonia, or historical references which are not directly relevant to British history as Severus who was troubled by civil wars, or Claudius who sought war everywhere. The fact that Alfred first omits details about foreign countries in Bede’s translation and then makes one of his scholars translate Orosius’ Historiarum adversus paganos, which is basically a history of the world, might seem rather surprising, but, actually, if we think about the kind of omissions performed in Old English Orosius this will seem less contrasting.

Indeed, the translator keeps the original Christian view of world history: the empires of Babylon, Macedon and Carthage led to the empire of Rome which was Christ’s instrument for spreading true faith all over
the world (Whitelock 1966: 90). For this reason, he omits references to
details which he does not consider as directly relevant to the transmis-
sion of the authority to rule given by God to these four empires.

For instance he only briefly sums up the long and detailed report of
the battles between Lacedaemonians and Messians and the subsequent
involvement of the Athenians:

– Old English Orosius: 7 þæt Creca folc fela geara him betweenum
dreogende wæron, ægþær ge of Læcedemonia, ge of Mesiane, ge of
Boetium, ge of Atheniensium; 7 monege ōþera þeoda to ðæm ilcan
gewinne getugon.

or he does not even mention wicked Aremulus king of the Latins:

– Latin Orosius: Fuerat etiam paulo superiore tempore apud Latinos
rex Aremulus, qui per annos xviii flagitiis inpietatibusque crescens,
ad postremum divino iudicio fulmine interceptus matura supplicia
immatura aetate dissolvit. (completely omitted).

Orosius’ text ends in a moment in which the authority to rule given
by God is still owned by the Romans, and the English, who came to
Britain when the Romans had withdrawn, would represent the immedi-
ate next step of God-given authority (Kretzchmar 1987: 143). This in-
terpretation would link the two translations and would explain the em-
phasis given in Old English Bede to the Roman possession of the island
and the attempt to hide contrasts between Roman empire and Britain.

Therefore, no matters how different the subject of the two texts
might seem, and how different the two translations are in the way they
follow the original works, because they are performed respecting the
same general guiding principles and they are linked in their being func-
tional to a general aim, which should be that of inserting Alfred’s king-
dom in a providential design.
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