Orosius was a theologian who wrote a history of world events in Latin in the 5th century and this history was translated into English freely and elaborated upon, possibly by King Alfred, in the late 9th century. Its syntax may therefore be influenced by Latin. The Old English Orosius is known to us from two manuscripts, the older of which is known as the Tollemache or Lauderdale Orosius and is used here; the other is referred to as Cotton Tiberius B 1. The language is West Saxon and it was most likely produced in Winchester in the early 10th century and, so it was copied later than King Alfred’s time. The text is written using the Anglo-Saxon minuscule, a slightly adapted insular minuscule.
Ærupæm þe romebur3 e timbred þære iii hunde pin 
trū 7 hundeæhtati3um uesø3es e3yptacinin3 þæspin 
nende of suð dæle asiam oð him se mæsta dæl þearð un 
derþieded. 7 he uesø3es e3yptacinin3 þæs siþÞan mid firde 
farende on sciþþie on ða norð dælas 7 his ærendracan 
beforan asende to þære ðeode 7 him un þpeo3endlice sec 
3an het þæt hie ---- sceolden ðþæþe ðæt lond æt him alesan 
ðþþe hehie polde mid 3e feohte fordon 7 forheri3an. Hie 
him þa3esceadpislice 7pyrdon 7 cpædon þ hit 3e malic 
þære 7 un ryhtlic þæt spæ oþerþlenced cynin3 sceolde 
pinnan on spæ earm folc spahie þæron. heton him þeh 
þ7pyrde sec3an þ him leofre þære pið hiene to feohtan 
ne þoði 3afol to 3iædanne hie þæt 3ælæstan spæ 7 sone þone 
cyinin3 3eflémdon mid his folce 7 him æFTERFOL3IENDE 
þæron 7 ealle æ3ypte apestan buton þæm fenlondþ 
anþ 7 þahie hamþeard pendon be pestan þære le eu 
frate ealle asiam hie 3e nieddon þ hiehim 3afol 3ul 
don 7 þær þæron fiftene 3ear þ lond heri3ende 7 pes 
tende oð heora pif him sendon ærendracan æfter. 
7him saædon þ hie oðerþyden ðþþe ham comen oððe hie 
him poldon oððra þera þeo þæsan. hi þa þæt lond forleton 
7him ham þeard ferdon.

Table 3.1: Orosius transcription
In Table 3.2, I give the Old English version from Bately (1980: 28-31; lx), word-by-word glosses, and a translation into Modern English. Bately’s edition is the one usually used in scholarly work and I use it in section 1.2 because it makes the text easier to parse. The numbers correspond to the sentences in the analysis part.

(1) Ær þæm þe Romeburg getimbred nære iii hunde wintrum 7 hundeahtatigum, Uesoges, Egypta cyning, wæs winnende of suðdele Asiam, oð him se mæsta dæl wearð underþieded.
(2) 7 he Uesoges, Egypta cyning, wæs sibban mid firde farende on Scibbie on ða norðdelas, 7 his ærendracan beforan asende to þære ðeode, 7 him untweogendlice secgan hit þæt hie [oðer] sceloden, oþhe ðæt lond æt him alesan, oþhe he hie wolde mid gefeohte fordon 7 forherigan.
(3) Hie him þa gesceadwislice ondwyrdon, 7 cwædon þæt hit gemalic nære 7 unryhtlic þæt swa ofwerwylcend cyning sceolde winnan on swa earm folc swa hie wæron.
(4) Heton him þe þæt ondwyrdre secgan, þæt hie leofre nære wið hieno to feohtanne þonne gafol to gieldanne.
(5) Hie ðæt gelæstan swa, 7 sona þone cyning gefliemdon mid his folce, 7 him æfterfolgiende wæron, 7 ealle ægypte awestan buton þæm fenlondum anum.
(6) 7 þæ hie hamweard wendon be westan þære ie Eufrate, ealle Asiam hie genieddon þæt hie him

(1) Before that Rome.city built was four hundred winters and eighty, Vesoges, Egypt’s king, was conquering of south.part Asia, till him the most part became subjugated.
(2) And he Vesoges, Egypt’s king, was then with army going to Scythia in the north.parts, and his messengers before sent to that people, and them undoubtingly say commanded that they either should, or that land for him pick or he them wanted with fighting destroy and ravage.
(3) They him then wisely answered and said that it was greedy and unjust that such rich king should wage.war on such poor people as they were.
(4) (They) told them though that answer give, that them better was against him (the king) to fight than taxes to yield.
(5) They that did so, soon that king drove.away with his people, and him chasing were, and all Egypt waste.lay except the fenlands only.
(6) And then they homewards turned by West (of) the river Euphrates, all Asia they

(1) 480 years before Rome was built Vesoges, Egypt’s king, was fighting in the southern part of Asia, until he had subjugated most of it.
(2) And Vesoges, Egypt’s king, then went with his army to the northern parts of Scythia, and sent his messengers before him to the people, and commanded them to say in no uncertain terms that they either should pay him for that land or that he would destroy them through war.
(3) They then wisely answered him and said that it was greedy and unjust that such a rich king should wage war on such a poor people as they were.
(4) They told the messengers to answer the king that they would rather fight to pay taxes. They that did and soon drove the king away with his people, and they were chasing him and destroyed all of Egypt except the fenlands only.
(6) And then they turned homewards at the West of the river the Euphrates, and forced all
2.2 Analysis

The analysis goes sentence by sentence. As I said above, I have used Bately’s spacing and rendering of some letters to make it easier to read. Because it is the first text, I will emphasize word order rather than morphology, which is more challenging perhaps. Remember that plural third person pronouns are very similar to singular ones. Thus, *him* can be dative plural ‘them’ or singular ‘him’; *hie* is nominative or accusative plural ‘they’ or feminine. The periods used in the manuscript are quite helpful in indicating clausal boundaries.

The first sentence starts with a complicated adverbial clause, then the main clause, and then another adverbial clause. I have put brackets around the subordinate clauses, and have bolded the subject and underlined the finite verb of the main clause.

(1)  \[[Ær þæm þe Romeburg getimbred wære] ili hunde wintrum 7 hundeahatigum]\n
**Uesoges Egypta cyning** *waes* winnende of suðæle Asiam,