The First Person

The *Eracles* translator needed to alter William’s habitual use of statements in the first-person point of view. Throughout his text William referred to the Kingdom of Jerusalem as ‘nostrum’ [our] and to those living in the Latin East as ‘nos’ [us]. An example occurs in Book 18.10, where Cyprus is mentioned as providing food and supplies to those living in the East. This is recorded in the Latin as ‘Cyprum insulam nobis vicinam, populis refertam fidelibus, regno nostro utilem et amicam semper’ [The island of Cyprus, which lies near to us, filled with a faithful people, that were always helpful and friendly to our kingdom]. In the translation it reads ‘Chipre qui est une ile de quoi maint bien sont venu a la terre de Surie; car est bone terre et plenteive’ [Cyprus, which is an island from which many goods are sent to the land of Syria; for it is a good land and plentiful]. The translator removed the first person and has identified Syria as being the place to which the provisions were sent. A similar example occurs in the discussion of the marriage between Baldwin I and Adelaide del Vasto. William of Tyre placed the arrival of Adelaide in the Latin East as ‘in nostram . . . regionem’, while the translator rendered this as ‘en la terre de Surie’.

If the insertion of place names was fairly straightforward for the translator, the prologues could not be replaced so simply. William had included separate prologues, one at the beginning of the work, another at the beginning of Book 16, and a final one before Book 23. In the first prologue, William set out his reasons for writing the text, and made conventional statements about his sources and his dedication to accuracy. The prologue before Book 16, the start of the reign of Baldwin III, indicated the point when William became personally aware of affairs in the Kingdom of Jerusalem and was able to use eyewitness testimony rather than rely on written accounts, as for the First Crusade. The third prologue, which comprises a single chapter, explains that in 1184 William had stopped writing his history due to the continuous misfortunes besetting the Kingdom of Jerusalem but that subsequently he had been persuaded to continue his narrative. Such prologues, found in many medieval
prose writings, served to guide the reader prior to reading the text. The author hoped to condition the reader towards a favourable view of the text. William adhered to this tradition. Through the prologues he defended himself against criticisms of the text, apologised for imperfections, established provenance, supported the necessity for the text, and dedicated the work to a patron.\(^6\) By adhering to established norms of prose writing William evidently hoped to establish the authority of his text for church leaders for whom he was writing. In the translation, however, this need was not necessary, as William's text had already become authoritative. It is interesting, nonetheless, that the translator chose to omit all three prologues. By comparison, many of the revisions to the *Gesta Francorum*, such as Guibert of Nogent\(^7\) or Robert the Monk,\(^8\) included prologues that served a similar tutelary function to William's and criticised its style, arguing that the text needed their improvement. Both revisions, however, are in Latin and were intended to improve the original. The translator of the *Eracles*, in contrast, was not seeking to improve William's text, as it follows it very closely, and praised William. The purpose appears rather to bring William's work to a non-Latin speaking audience.

When William wrote his prologue to Book 23, probably in 1184, the Kingdom of Jerusalem had been suffering setbacks as Saladin rose to prominence and the king, Baldwin IV, was dying from leprosy. This time of turmoil for the Latin East may have been viewed by the West as divine punishment for the sins of those living in the East.\(^9\) William reflecting on these difficulties was optimistic; he portrayed Raymond of Tripoli as being capable of leading the kingdom as regent for Baldwin IV and wrote to persuade his readers, both in the East and West, that the kingdom still received the favour of God.\(^10\) By the time of the translation, however, Jerusalem had been lost and successive crusades had failed to recover it. Perhaps William's prologues were no longer relevant to the political situation. It is possible, of course, that there was originally a prologue in the translation, but none of the surviving manuscripts include any indication of one, and it would have had to have been lost very early not to have survived in any of the extant manuscript copies.

While there is no definite date for the translation, there are certain indications that it was made towards the end of the reign of Philip II, around the time


\(^{9}\) Edbury and Rowe, pp. 151–153.

\(^{10}\) Edbury and Rowe, pp. 163–166.