

# Voices in Medieval History Writing

*Claudia Claridge, University of Augsburg*

## Abstract

This article investigates speech and writing presentation in medieval historiography, based on (excerpts from) six texts from the Old and Middle English periods, and focusing on the functional aspect. It shows that in order to capture peculiarities of the register/genre, approaches from the fields of evidentiality, evaluation/appraisal, and literary as well as academic stylistics need to be combined. Three functional groups of quoting are identified: (i) providing evidence/proof (in similar but not identical ways to modern academic practices) and borrowing authority from suitable texts (e.g. the Bible), (ii) direct or indirect evaluation, also by foregrounding through quotation, and (iii) various narrative functions such as plot advancement, characterization, focusing, and the creation of greater reader involvement. Besides references to writing and speaking, the article also highlights the potential significance of references to hearing, in particular in oral cultures.

## *1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>*

History writing is an undertaking that is crucially built on words—the words left behind by agents and witnesses of the historical events and situations it sets out to describe and explain. Unlike other fields of research it can draw relatively little on purely material evidence, the developments of modern socio-statistical and scientific methodology in, e.g. archaeology, notwithstanding.<sup>2</sup> Original documents of all kinds (so-called sources) as well as writings of witnesses close(r) to the events in question and of past historians have thus always formed the basis of any historical narrative.

The term ‘narrative’ points to the fact that history writing is also different from other scholarly undertakings insofar as it has similarities to fictional narrative, with the division between the two blurring the more one moves in certain directions, genre- or time-wise. Furthermore, history writing is distinguished from most other scientific prose, say geological treatises, by being more intimately concerned with finding or creating

---

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Peter J. Grund for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, this is different for prehistoric times, before the invention of writing.

meaning and purpose in human undertakings—in other words, it is potentially more prone to (teleological) world-views and ideologies.

This paper focuses on medieval history writing, which is distinguished from the modern register by the absence of a professional academic group and accompanying infrastructure, by the non-separation of secular and religious spheres, by the dominance of Latin texts and models, and by different genres (e.g. medieval chronicles vs. modern research papers). The aim is to present a first survey of the uses of references to and/or presentations of speech and writing in medieval history texts, with the emphasis on functional rather than on formal issues.

## *2. Perspectives on representing voices in history writing*

There are a number of perspectives which can fruitfully be considered for the topic at hand, namely (i) speech, writing and thought presentation, (ii) citation in the context of genre analysis, (iii) reporting in the context of evaluation, and (iv) the connection between quoting and evidentiality.

One current model of speech, writing and thought presentation originated in Leech and Short's (1981) treatment of fiction, and was later developed by Semino and others (e.g. Semino and Short 2004) also for other genres (news reporting, (auto)biography). According to Semino and Short (2004: 49), there are six different ways in which speech and writing<sup>3</sup> can be represented in texts, here illustrated only for speech: narrative reporting of voice (NV, *they talked*), narrative reporting of speech act with or without topic indication (NRSA, *he promised her to come*<sup>4</sup>), indirect speech (IS, *she said [that] she would be late*), free indirect speech (FIS, *It was already five: she would be late.*), direct speech (DS, *she said: "I will be late"*), and free direct speech characterised by the absence of a reporting clause (FDS, *"I'll be late."*). The types presumably most relevant for history writing are NRSA (especially when the topic is also indicated), IS and DS, together with the parallel writing categories. These categories provide not only content, but

---

<sup>3</sup> There is some thought presentation in historiographical texts, but it is rare compared with the other types. It will be neglected here because of the focus of this special volume.

<sup>4</sup> In line with Leech and Short (1981: 324) such cases are classified as NRSA here, as opposed to indirect speech as in Semino and Short.

through a reporting phrase also a fairly clear marking of the origin(ator) of the message, its illocutionary force and potentially an assessment of its reliability (cf. *Jones alleges* vs. *Jones states*). The other types lacking either content or clear agency/action marking may be too vacuous or confusing for a good historical account.<sup>5</sup> Of the three text types investigated by Semino and Short (2004), (auto)biography has the closest affinity to history writing: interestingly, it has the highest instance of writing presentation but the lowest of speech presentation (Semino and Short 2004: 59). We could hypothesize therefore that writing presentation may also dominate over speech presentation in history writing—a hypothesis that is in line with the importance of written sources in (modern) historiography.

Genre analysis, especially the analysis of modern academic genres, has paid attention to generic citation practices (e.g., *inter alia*, Swales 1990; Baynham 1999; Hyland 1999). Reporting the words of others in academic writing is an important part of the construction of disciplinary knowledge, of negotiating meaning, and of creating/maintaining a community of practice. The study of citation practices pays attention to this by, e.g., looking at the foregrounding or backgrounding of other authors in using integral (name of cited author within running text) or non-integral (in brackets or in note) citation methods, in quoting directly, summarising or generalising content, and at the use of reporting verbs. Hyland (1999: 347–350) found relatively more integral forms in humanities fields (linguistics, sociology, philosophy), in particular in philosophy (64.6%). Looking at reporting verbs, he found more counterfactive (e.g. *fail*, *overlook*) and stance-marked types (e.g. *advocate*, *hypothesize*, *refute*), showing more negotiation rather than certainty of content. Given the nature of historical research we might expect similar tendencies in history writing, but of course the integral/non-integral distinction does not apply in the same way to historical texts before the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the notion of authoritative writers may also be inhibiting with regard to reporting verbs. Hyland found most cited content to be summarized or given in a generalized form

---

<sup>5</sup> Of course, what is seen as a good historical account will differ with time and circumstances; thus there may be instances where a certain indeterminacy is desirable for the historian. A later and larger study will thus look at all types in order to determine which are really used or avoided, and to what extent.

instead of as direct quotes in all fields, which, given the reliance on sources, we may perhaps expect to be different in history writing.

Evidentiality, if understood as a semantic-functional domain concerned with the encoding of a source of information or knowledge used by a speaker or writer (Diewald and Smirnova 2010), can fruitfully be applied to any context where proof and credibility is at stake. Grund (2012) used it in his investigation of the Salem trials of 1692, for example. Evidence in the widest sense is also crucial in historiography, thus explicit reference to and evaluation of this aspect is to be expected. Grund (2012: 11) distinguishes four ways of including evidence in discourse, namely by marking the information as based on sensory input (sight, hearing,<sup>6</sup> smell, taste, touch), on inference related to sensory input, on assumption, and on verbal input (quotative with or without precise source). While all may occur in history writing, only the last type is of interest for this paper; interestingly, it is also the most frequent category in Grund's data (2012: 15). Quotative without a source is called hearsay in other systems (e.g. the morphosyntactic one by Aikhenvald 2004) and this difference could indeed be of interest for history writing, where authoritativeness and faithfulness may play a role.

As reporting includes attitudes to the quoted material (e.g. Chafe 1986) or, in White's words, "external voices can be read as surrogates for the authorial voice" (quoted in Bednarek 2006: 213), there is thus a link to evaluation and stance. Bednarek (2006), who is interested in evaluation in the media, uses a three-fold distinction between sourced/non-sourced averral, hearsay and mindsay. Averral combines features of sensory proof and inference in Grund's model. Hearsay comprises all kinds of verbal representations, while mindsay concerns reporting the thoughts and views of others. In this paper, it is clearly the verbal/'linguistic' evidence that is in focus, i.e. the categories of quotative and hearsay from Grund and Bednarek respectively, and this again can be linked to the patterns of realisations described by Semino and Short, as well as by Hyland. In the context of appraisal theory (White 2001), the features in focus here fall under intertextual positioning and engagement with other views. Through the reporting clause, quoted material can be presented in a neutral way (non-endorsement), or can be positively endorsed or negatively dis-

---

<sup>6</sup> Note that 'hearing' here should be taken to *exclude* the overhearing of verbal matter. However, the reporting verb *hear* with respect to the quotative type will play a role in the present data.

endorsed (cf. Hyland's analysis of reporting verbs mentioned above). Historians can thus use speech representation to (dis-)align their own judgments with that of others, be it historical characters or other historians, or even 'hide' their own evaluation behind those of others, thus making their treatment seem more 'objective'.

### *3. Speech and writing in medieval history writing*

While the aspects treated in Section 2 also apply to medieval, or generally older, history writing, there are also some further points which concern pre-modern historiography exclusively.

Evidence was of course regarded as of high importance also by medieval historians, but in their view the best evidence was that based on sight—in other words, eyewitnesses outrank any other types of evidence as to their trustworthiness (Kempshall 2011: 183–185). Best of all were those cases where the historian himself is the eyewitness. However, eyewitness accounts could also be reported, which furthermore extended to (trustworthy!) people no longer alive, and thus, according to Cicero, sayings and writings of the ancients, including statements by previous historians, could be resorted to as proof (Kempshall 2011: 285). The influence of legal traditions on historiography also ensured the 'witness status' of written documents, quoted verbatim, and sometimes extensively, by such historians as Eusebius, Gregory of Tours, and Bede (Kempshall 2011: 219). The latter even admitted oral tradition as evidence, although in such cases the historian could not absolutely guarantee reliability (Kempshall 2011: 290). In the attempt to find arguments from authority, the orator, and by extension the historian, could even resort to poets, wise men, and popular sayings, in the view of Quintilian (Kempshall 2011: 286). This already shows a wide range of quoting occasions for the medieval historian.

This range is further increased by the trope of *sermocinatio*, invented speech given to historical characters appropriate to their standing, character and to the situation they were in (Kempshall 2011: 339). This had already been practised by one of the earliest historians, Thucydides, due to the impossibility of remembering or recording the precise words used during the events described (Burrow 2009: 38). While Thucydides tried to stay as close as possible to the content of what had been actually spoken, other historians may have been less scrupulous. First of all, historiography was considered to be part of the art of language

(Kempshall 2011: 5), thus rhetorical embellishments for the sake of variety, a more exciting narrative or a more forceful argument were admissible. History writing, like most texts, was supposed to pay attention to the three basic functions of rhetoric, namely to teach, to move, and to please (Kempshall 2011: 536)—with speech presentation very suited to the latter two. Secondly, there was an ongoing medieval debate about the relationship of history writing to fiction, of the role of truth and verisimilitude. A possible stance on this, e.g. one advocated by John of Salisbury, was that truth and fiction(ality) did not necessarily exclude one another, as the latter could also lead to trustworthy representation (Kempshall 2011: 426). Gerald of Wales, for example, took to the ploy of presenting nicely paired speeches, advocating the pros and cons of an action—regardless of whether these speeches had a factual basis (Kempshall 2011: 341).

A characteristic history writing shares with all other old texts is that the conventions for representing quoted material were different (cf. Moore 2011). There was no specific quotation punctuation, so that the reader needs to rely on certain lexical markers around and within the quoted passage, e.g. inquit (*seyde he* and similar), pronoun change, and speech modality changes (Moore 2011: 44). Such lexical markers need not be present; thus most, but not all, quoted passages in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* contain a speaking verb (Moore 2011: 46), for example. Where introductory verbs are used they may not always be as specific as one might wish, e.g. *quethen* 'say' (as well as modern *say*) could equally be used for speaking and writing (Moore 2011: 57). The distinction between direct and indirect speech is also less clear than in modern texts (Moore 2011: 85).

There is hardly any literature on the language of medieval historiography and apparently only one study specifically on speech presentation, namely Nichols' (1964) investigation of the French historian Jean Froissart, who wrote as a contemporary on the period 1325 to 1400. Froissart needs to be looked at along the lines mentioned above, i.e. as a writer paying attention to the rhetorical effect on his readers, and looking for a (moral) truth that may blur the lines between fact and fiction. Nichols identified four basic uses of speech in Froissart's narrative. The first type concerns (very) brief snippets of speech, which often mark an emotional response and/or come at a climactic point in time, thus adding immediacy, vividness and drama to a scene. The second

type is represented by longer spoken passages produced by one person on one subject, allowing the reader access to the mind and character of historical personalities—and highlighting that Froissart’s is a history of the *actions of people*. Thirdly, there is longer speech when complex intrigues and strategies are explained, which has the combined effects of making things easier to understand, more vivid, and revealing the motivations of the actors.<sup>7</sup> The fourth and last type, the dialogue, is seen as the most important and versatile by Nichols, with Froissart over the course of the narrative increasingly mastering this literary device and thus bringing about “a sense of individuation” (Nichols 1964: 286) in depicted speakers. Again, the focus lies on personalities and on a message (truth) beyond the mere facts. Nichols’ findings are in line with Moore’s (2011: 117) assessment of late Middle English history writing using quoting predominantly for rhetorical and dramatic reasons within narrative development.

In sum, what we can expect to find in medieval history writing is speech and writing representation to cover the whole range from factual documentation for the purposes of evidence to dialogue for the sake of dramatization—or the range from objectivity to subjectivity, from fact to fiction. It will be interesting to see whether individual texts show preferences along these broad lines.

#### 4. Data and methodology

The data basis for this investigation comprises the whole or extracts of six works, with about 60,000 words of Old English and roughly 90,000 words of Middle English.<sup>8</sup> The works in question are Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, Ms. A (ASC-A), the *Peterborough Chronicle*, Ms. E (ASC-E), *Brut* or *The Chronicles of England*, Trevisa’s translation of the *Polychronicon* (TPol), and *The English Conquest of Ireland*. For comparative purposes, a small selection of modern history writing has

---

<sup>7</sup> Direct-speech representation as a strategy for clarifying people’s intentions and motivations has been found to have increased in late medieval narrative (Fludernik 1996 quoted in Del Lungo Camiciotti 2007), the context Froissart belongs to.

<sup>8</sup> A corpus of history writing spanning the time from c. 880 to 1900 is under preparation for a large-scale investigation of this register.

been extracted from the *FLOB* corpus. The seven texts, comprising 14,105 words, were identified by finding suitable titles in the J (=science) category in the corpus manual<sup>9</sup> (Hundt et al. 1998).

Two medieval texts, *The English Conquest of Ireland* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, manuscript A, are included in their entirety, whereas all the others are represented by smaller chunks. From the *Peterborough Chronicle*, the years/annals not covered by manuscript A were taken, i.e. the years 1071 to 1154. Thirty-four chapters spread over all five books were randomly selected from Bede. The *Brut* is represented by seventy-eight sections (counted by headlines in Brie's edition) distributed across the coverage from King Vortigern's time to that of King Henry VI. For the *Polychronicon* the excerpt included in the *Helsinki Corpus* was supplemented by three further chapters taken from Book VIII. Three texts each represent the Old English and the Middle English period, but the amount of text is much greater for the later period.

Most of the medieval texts included are not English originals, but translations from Latin or French. In the Middle Ages, history writing, like most other (learned) registers, was naturally conducted in Latin, with vernacular historiography, French as well as English, being in the minority. The *Anglo-Saxon* and *Peterborough Chronicles* texts are among these vernacular rarities (although the earlier parts of ASC-A, up to 890, will have been based on some Latin input (Gransden 1990: 130)). Also, the later parts of the *Brut*, the so-called continuations covering the period after 1333, were originally written in English, whereas those parts up to 1333 were translated from French. The *Brut* selection included here is split roughly half and half between translated and original English text. The remaining three texts, Bede, *Polychronicon* and *Conquest*, are translations. The authors and/or translators of these texts are not always known, which is entirely the case for ASC-A, ASC-E, and *Brut*. Of the former two, we only know that they were compiled and written by clerics, as they were kept at monasteries and churches (Gransden 1990: 131). The translators of the early parts of the *Brut*, Bede, and *Conquest* are also anonymous; the former may have come from Herefordshire based on dialectal evidence (Matheson 1998: 48). An author involved in the English continuations of the *Brut* may have been William Rede, Bishop of Chichester (Matheson 1998: 42); other authors may have been

---

<sup>9</sup> The texts or rather files from *FLOB* in question are J37, J40, J55, J56, J57, J58, and J59.

secular clerks in the London area (Gransden 1990: 133). An unknown 15<sup>th</sup>-century translator produced *Conquest* from a Latin chronicle, itself based on the *Expugnatio Hibernica* (c. 1189) by Giraldus Cambrensis (Matheson 2012: 28). Giraldus was archdeacon of Brecknock in Wales and also served King Henry II for about ten years. The evident church context of most authors and translators is not surprising, given the spread of literacy and learning in the Middle Ages; monasteries have thus been identified as the prime *locus* of historiography, especially chronicle writing (Gransden 1990: 133–134). In this context, Bede might already be regarded as a prototypical historiographer; in addition his work, the *Ecclesiastical History*, was a famous and influential model in the Middle Ages (Kempshall 2011: 160).

The selection here represents texts “whose primary authorial intent, as perceived by a medieval reader (or hearer), was to record the events of past or recent history” (Matheson 2012: 26). However, they cover only a subsection of what Matheson’s classification encompasses, namely those kinds of texts that we would see as the more prototypical historical ones from the modern perspective. Verse chronicles, poems, saints’ lives etc. would need to be looked at as well but are left for a later study. The genres in the present corpus fall into the coverage of the medieval terms *annales*, *cronica*, and *historia*—which are variously defined by different authors and have shifting boundaries with each other. Both *annales* and *cronica* are structured by years and the entries attached to them, where the only difference (if any) between them may be the amount and detail of content under each year. Some parts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles thus are rather annalistic in nature. *Historia* could be seen as more elaborate, both regarding content (e.g. including causes and effects) and language (needing more rhetorical effort, cf. Kempshall 2011: 443–445). Bede’s text thus is a *historia*, but later works called ‘chronicle’ may also be seen to have such characteristics, e.g. the *Polychronicon* and later parts of the *Brut*. As we will see below there is a difference regarding reporting between chronicles, in particular those of an annalistic type, and *historia*.

For extracting the data two different methods were used. As the modern *FLOB* material was small-scale it was simply read through to identify relevant passages. For the medieval material, in contrast, WordSmith Tools (Scott 2010) was used for concordancing. Relevant search items from the semantic fields of speaking and writing were

compiled by drawing on information from the *Old English Thesaurus* (Roberts and Kay 2000) and the *Oxford Historical Thesaurus*. Both verbal and nominal forms were looked for (e.g. for OE verb: *cweðan* ‘say’, noun: *pistol* ‘letter’), in order to allow for different styles of introducing quoted material. Wildcards and spelling variants ensured that as many relevant hits as possible could be found. While the technique employed yields fairly comprehensive results, it is probably more successful for DS and IS than for NRSA; no claim to full recall is thus made here. For this reason, formal characteristics will also not be the main focus here, but rather the specific functions served by speech and writing presentation.

5. *A brief excursion: speech and writing presentation in modern history writing*

A brief look at modern practices may be helpful, both for highlighting problems and for making us aware of our reception practices. Writing presentation can probably be seen as the norm in modern history writing—in the sense that modern historians extract their information from written sources (and that we as readers know this) and that truly oral sources could at any rate only be accessed for fairly recent events (c. 60–70 years preceding the writing of the work). This does not mean, however, that everything is styled as writing presentation; in fact, much quoting is left indeterminate between speech and writing—for example *tell*, *remark*, and *observe* in (1)–(3) are possible in either medium.<sup>10</sup>

- (1) In 1932 Lord Gort **told** Edmonds that if only the next generation of officers read his books they would avoid some of the worst mistakes of their predecessors. (J56 193)
- (2) [...] this official pretence exasperated Palmerston: “it is not a question of law but of common sense”, he **remarked**. (J57 176)
- (3) The Anglo-Japanese treaty of Yedo could not be directly attributed to force, unlike that of Tientsin in the same year, “unless”, **observed** Lewis drily,

---

<sup>10</sup> Semino and Short (2004: 106, 111, appendices 5 and 6) also found verbs non-specific to writing to be the rule; only for DW (direct writing) was the verb *write* also used as one option.

“the Emperor of Japan is influenced by the example of his brother of China”. (J57 23)

Apart from manner of speaking verbs (e.g. *shout*, *whisper*), which do not occur in the present sample, no reporting verb is specific to speaking (especially not the most neutral *say*).<sup>11</sup> For writing, however, there is a specific reporting verb, namely *write*, which does occur thirteen times in the modern data, as in (4). Notably it co-occurs with another reporting verb (*ask*), which specifies the speech act.

- (4) In March 1878 a group of twenty inhabitants **wrote** to the Mercers, **asking** that the schoolmaster, who was also vicar of the parish and so had little time to attend to the school, should be replaced, [...] (J37 175)

Other items which clearly specify the written context are nouns like *letter*, *memorandum*, *note*, *petition* as well as the title of a published work (occurring once each). Sometimes a spoken context is enforced by the formulation (even though the reference will presumably have been taken from a published work, e.g. the *Hansard*), such as by the prepositional phrase highlighted in (5).

- (5) Labour were “the masters of the moment and not only of the moment but for a very long time to come”, Sir Hartley Shawcross **told** them *from the government benches*. (J58 185)

Given this state of affairs, it is difficult to be absolutely sure as to what has been presented out of writing, out of speaking, or out of speaking mediated by writing. Going on contextual information as in (5) (though often less clear than in this case) and on the indirect evidence of oral or literate linguistic characteristics of the reported material, at least 65% of all presentation instances in *FLOB*-history are based on original or mediating writing. Why many instances are left superficially indeterminate is an interesting question, however, which I will return to again below.

---

<sup>11</sup> The specification *drily* in (3) is not necessarily medium-specific, as it can and does refer both to tone and to attitude.

6. *References to writing in medieval historiography*

With regard to medieval history texts, modern readers have fewer insights into both the generic practices and the contexts reported on. Therefore, what is not explicitly stated in the reporting frame is hard(er) to extract—and only such explicit references to writing or written texts have been accepted here for this category.

As has been stated above, the Middle Ages valued eyewitness evidence and thus, in a predominantly oral environment, spoken evidence. Nevertheless, the earliest historian included here, Bede, already made clear the great importance of written evidence and documentation in the preface to his Latin work, excerpts of which are quoted in English translation in (6):

- (6) [...] Nothelm himself later visited Rome, and obtained permission from the present Pope Gregory (II) to examine the archives of the holy Roman Church. He found there letters of Pope Gregory (I) and other Popes, and when he returned, the reverend father Albinus advised him to bring them to me for inclusion in this history. So from the period at which this volume begins until the time when the English nation received the Faith of Christ, I have drawn extensively on the works of earlier writers gathered from various source. [...] Also the most reverend Bishop Daniel of the West Saxons, who is still alive, sent to me in writing certain facts about the history of the Church in his province, [...] (Bede, preface, quoted from the Penguin edition 1968: 34)

Much of his authority and fame in the Middle Ages depends on this method of carefully collecting and quoting sources. However, according to a study by Guenther Discenza (2002) only very few, namely six, of the written documents quoted *verbatim* in the Latin original were retained in the Old English translation. Guenther Discenza (2002: 77) concludes from this that the authority of Bede himself is enhanced in the translation and that the whole outlook of the work is more decidedly English, as outside papal influence is reduced through omission of the original documents. Nevertheless, the English Bede still has the highest amount of writing presentation in the Old English data here (12 instances), compared with no such occurrences at all in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Ms. A) and only two in the *Peterborough Chronicle*. The following are two examples from Bede:

- (7) Is awriten in Sce Agustinus byrgenne þisses gemetes gewrit: Her resteoð domne Agustinus se æresta ærcebiscop Contwarena burge, se geara hider from þæm eadigan Gregoriæ þære Romaniscan burge biscope sendeð wæs, 7 from Gode mid wundra weorcnesse awreðeð wæs. [...] (Bede)<sup>12</sup>  
 [On St Augustine's tomb an inscription in this manner is written: Here rests the Lord Augustinus, the first archbishop of Canterbury, who was sent here by the blessed Gregory, bishop of Rome and who was supported by God with miraculous works.]<sup>13</sup>
- (8) Ða sende Scs Gregorius ærendgewrit him to, 7 heo trymede 7 lærde in þam gewrite *þæt* heo eaðmodlice ferde in þæt weorc þæs Godes wordes 7 getreowde in Godes fultum; [...] (Bede)  
 [Then sent St Gregory a letter to him, exhorting and instructing him in writing that he humbly continue in the work of God's word and trust in God's help.]

In (7) Bede quotes *verbatim* from the funeral monument of St. Augustine, which is not a document absolutely necessary as evidence, but one which is very important for the English church as it concerns its founding father. In (8) we see the introduction to and beginning of a letter of Pope Gregory to the missionaries to England. In contrast to the Latin version, where the original letter is quoted in full, here we find it paraphrased by indirect speech (cf. the highlighted *þæt*). In a strict sense of 'verbatim', a translation cannot be used in a direct quote, as the original words are not literally preserved (cf. also Moore 2011: 86 on Chaucer's *Troilus*) and while this may not be a problem in every case it could be seen as one in the case of highly authoritative writing such as papal statements. Retaining the *verbatim* Latin, in contrast, would presumably have defeated the purpose of the translation entirely. Example (8) is similar to (4) above in that it uses a more specific speech act verb, *lærde*, to make clear the nature of the written communication. The same procedure is found in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, here combining nominal *writ* and verbal *bebead*:

<sup>12</sup> Punctuation in all medieval examples is editorial and not representative of original texts, e.g. there were certainly no quotation marks in (11).

<sup>13</sup> The translations of examples are mine.

- (9) Þa hwile þa sende he his writ æfter þone abbod Ernulf of Burh. 7 bebead him þæt he efeostlice scolde to him cuman. forþi þæt he wolde sprecon mid him dærne sprece. (ASC-E)  
 [Meanwhile he sent a letter to the abbot Ernulf of Burh and asked him to come to him fast, because he wanted to speak to him in private.]

Nominal forms for writing reference as in (7)–(9) seem to be more common in these Old English texts than in modern ones (although accompanied also by verbal *write* in (8)), thus emphasizing the material nature of this communication type.

Such forms also commonly occur in the context of writing representation in Middle English texts, where we find *book*, *chronicle*, the *gospel*, and *letter*. The following are two references to epistolary communication, once giving the content in indirect speech (10) and once in direct speech, introduced by *in thes wordis* (11):

- (10) Ronewenne þe Quene sent priuely by lettre to Engist, *that* she hade enpoisenede Vortymer, and þat Vortyger her lorde aʒeyne bare þe croune and regnede, and *þat* he shulde come aʒeyne into þat lande, wel arraiede wiþ miche peple, forto avenge him vpon þe Britons, and to wynne his lande aʒeyne. (Brut)  
 [Queen Ronwen secretly sent a letter to Hengist that she had poisoned Vortimer, and that Vortigern, her lord, again had the crown and ruled, and that he should come again to that land, well equipped with many men, in order to get revenge from the Britons, and to win the land back again.]
- (11) by consail of his men, as the laste remedy of lyue, he sende his lettres to Reymond, ouer into Walis, in thes wordis: “As rath as ye haue sey thes lettres, ne lette not to come to socoure vs with good myght: and youre desyre of Basyle my Sustre, lawefully forto Spouse, anone at youre comynge, without fayl ye shall haue.” Whan Reymond hadd this herde, [...] (Conquest)  
 [on the advice of his men, as the last resort for survival, he sent letters to Raymond, over into Wales, in the following words: “As soon as you have seen these letters, delay not in coming to our relief with a good force; and your wish of lawfully marrying Basyle, my sister, will be fulfilled immediately and without fail on your arrival. When Raymond had heard this,...]

In these instances there is no accompanying reporting or speech act verb,<sup>14</sup> but the intended illocution needs to be extracted from linguistic clues within the writing presentation, namely *schulde* and the imperative *ne lette not* pointing to requests or orders. Of interest here is also the verb used for taking in the message, namely *hear*; I will come back to this below (Section 9). In (12), the fact that writing presentation is intended needs to be extracted from the agentive noun *writer*, whereas the reporting verb *seith* is indistinct as to medium.

- (12) wher-of arose a gret altercacion emong Writeres of þis mateer, pro & contra, which kan nat Accorde vnto þis day. one partie seith þat þe Counsel is Aboue þe Pope, þat oþer partie seith nay, but þe Pope is Aboue þe Counsel. (Brut)  
[about this there arose a great dispute among writers on this topic, for and against, who still cannot agree: one party says that the Council is above (= has more authority than) the Pope, the other party denies this and says the Pope is above the Council.]

The passage here summarizes in a nutshell the arguments relating to the power of councils and pope, not bothering to give the precise words of any specific writer. While the previous examples (7)–(12) all provide information within the narrative and bring this forward, (13) functions differently.

- (13) þe kyng committed þe destourbance of þe reawme to þe bisshop of Durham, *þat schulde more skilfulliche and semeliche occupie hym self in Goddis service þan in þe kynges service*. For þe gospel seiþ þat no man may serve eiþer lord at þe fulle as he schulde, þey þe bisshop wolde to dele hym self for to plese eiþer kyng of hevene and of erþe. (TPol)  
[The king transferred the governing of the kingdom to the Bishop of Durham, who should more appropriately and fittingly occupy himself in serving God rather than the king. For the Gospels say that no man may serve both equally well as he should, although the bishop would divided himself to please both the Lord and the king.]

<sup>14</sup> According to Moore (2011: 46), there are also 8% of quoted passages in Chaucer's *Troilus and Cryseide* which contain no verb of speaking. In Semino and Short's (2004: 108–109) data, cases without a reporting verb are realised as Free Indirect Writing or DW, as in their examples (12) and (13). This category does not apply to (10) or (11), however, because of *that*-embedding and nominal introductory phrase.

The presentation of gospel content serves to further comment on the information given in the preceding narrative; the writer has already given an assessment in the *that*-clause, to which the Biblical quote is to lend proof and authority. The writing presentation here thus works within an evaluative and argumentative context. What is also noteworthy is the text quoted, namely the Bible (in a context that is not biblical), which illustrates its pervasive influence on the perception also of secular events and on history writing (cf. Burrow 2009: 182–183; Kempshall 2011: 52–81).

What is also found are medieval correlates of modern referencing styles and meta-discussion of sources, as shown in (14)–(16).

- (14) And for þis enchesoun seynt Gregor sent seynt Austyne into Engeland, and xl. goode men wiþ him, þat were of gode lif, and holy men, to preche and teche, and to conuerte þe Englisshe peple, and ham turne to God: and þat was in þe vj zere þat seynt Gregor hade bene Pope, þat is to seyne, after þe Incarnacioun of oure Lorde Ihesu Crist, v. C. xxiiij and vij zere, as þe cronicles telleþ. (Brut)

[And for this reason St Gregory sent St. Augustine to England, and 11 good men with him, who were of good conduct and saintly, in order to preach and teach, and to convert the English people and turn them to God: and this was in the sixth year of St Gregory's papacy, that is in the year 531 AD, as the chronicles say.]

- (15) Kyng Henry is deed at Fontenbraud, and his sone Richard was kyng after hym, and regnede ten zere. Stephene of Canturbury discreved cleerliche his manere and his dedes, and for þis storye schulde not mysse þe noble dedes of so greet a duke, I have studied to take þe floures of Stevenes book. (TPol)  
[King Henry died at Fontainevrauld, and his son Richard became king after him, and reigned ten years. Stephen of Canterbury clearly described his personality and his deeds, and as this story should not lack the noble deeds of so great a lord, I have carefully extracted the best parts of Stephen's book.]

- (16) But þat he wente blynd aboute for to preche, þat he was i-ladde by fraude of his man for to preche to stones as it were to men, [...] þat he fonde þre R and þre F i-write, and expowned what it was to mene, I fynde it nouȝt i-write in bookes of auctorite. [...] But by pope Sergius his pistel þat was i-sent to abbot Colfridus it is i-knowe þat Beda was i-sent after and i-prayed for to come to Rome for to assoyle questionns þat were þere i-mevede. (TPol)

[But that he walked around blind preaching, that he was made to preach to stones as if to people by deceit of his man (...) that he found written three Rs and three Fs and explained what this meant, these things I do not find written in books of authority. (...) But through the letter of Pope Sergius to abbot Colfrid it is known that Bede was sent for and asked to come to Rome in order to solve questions that were disputed there.]

While in (14) only very unspecific sources are provided for the preceding information, (15) explicitly names an author, evaluates his work in a positive way and credits him for the information to be related. In both cases it is made clear that there is an external authority, or in other words evidence and proof, for the content the present writer provides. The concern with authority, here especially in the sense of trustworthiness, is clearly highlighted in (16), where the italicised passage is devalued by it not being supported by reliable sources. In contrast, the certainty (*i-knowe*) of other facts is ensured by being mentioned in a reputable source (a papal letter).

The indeterminacy between speech and writing, which we have seen above in modern writing, also applies to the medieval data. In (17), the king will have sent a messenger, who could have delivered either an oral message or a letter—as neither *send* nor *command* are specific as to the channel.

(17) Thay that fryst comen, haddyn full well y-Spede with-out any lette, yf the kyng ne hadd So hastely y-sende and comandid that no man ne sholde to ham come; and thay that were Into the londe y-come, sholde the londe lewe, and turne ayeyn, othyr to lese al that thay heldyn of the kyng in othyr londys. (Conquest)

[Those who came first would have made haste without any hindrance, if the king had not so quickly sent word and commanded that nobody should come to him, and those that had already come should leave the land, and return home, or otherwise to lose all that they held of the king in other lands.]

So what function does this indeterminacy serve, if any? Writers may in part rely on world or generic knowledge on the part of the reader. Readers of modern history writing may be expected to know that sources overwhelmingly exist in writing and drawing attention to this in every single instance would thus be superfluous and tediously repetitive. Readers of medieval texts (a small literate elite) might have known about the normal procedures of communication in the church, the nobility etc.

and need not be told about it. What is relevant from a linguistic perspective is that there is a wide range of medium-neutral communication verbs with which to express important distinctions and nuances concerning the type of communication. Writers may have valued the informative precision, stylistic effect (e.g. vividness) or variation provided by these verbs more than the need to specify the medium. Moreover, it may say something about the perceived (un)importance of the orality-literacy distinction in the eyes of contemporaries.<sup>15</sup> In this context it is also noteworthy that medieval writers apparently often opt for a nominal form to denote writing presentation, which still leaves them the option for the addition of a more descriptive verb, cf. *lærde* (8), *bebead* (9), and *discreven* (15) above.

On the whole, explicit writing presentation (i.e. exclusive of cases like (17)) is rare in the medieval vernacular historiography investigated here. Compared to modern historiography and on the evidence of explicit key words only, Old English history comes to only about a fifth, and Middle English history to a third of the modern instances. This may be accounted for in three ways. First, there was simply less writing available and it was harder to get to, as is visible in (6) above: Bede was lucky that another literate Anglo-Saxon had not only travelled to Rome, but had gained access to archives in order to bring back transcriptions. In most instances, historiographers probably simply had to make do with what was locally available. Furthermore, writing might often or usually not be in the vernacular, but in Latin or (after 1066) in French, which might inhibit quoting from it in a vernacular history—though this goes strictly speaking only for direct speech quoting.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, the concern with documents and the significance of investigating them carefully, which gained importance in the period of humanism and which became the hallmark of the academic discipline history from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, is obviously not a pervasive characteristic of premodern vernacular historiography. While there was a concern with authority, this aspect plays different roles depending on the genre. Chronicles,

---

<sup>15</sup> More detailed comparison between speech and writing presentation at various times would be necessary to tackle this issue, however.

<sup>16</sup> As stated above in the discussion of the Old English Bede, conflicting demands of remaining faithful to potentially authoritative texts and popularization-through-vernacularization may have prevented verbatim quotes to a certain extent.

especially of the annalistic type, can be said to be their own authority as first-hand (eye)witnesses of what they report. Thus, it is noteworthy that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the *Peterborough Chronicle* exhibit no or very little writing representation or referencing. Thirdly, it is likely also beyond the genre of chronicles that the combined valuation of eyewitness report and treatment of events, at least partly, temporally close to the historiographer may have further promoted non-written evidence and quoting. It is to the spoken form that I now turn.

### 7. *Speech presentation*

All instances not containing a key word signalling a written context will be included in this category for discussion. A first distinction here can be made between speech with a definite source and speech not clearly attributed to anybody. The latter may be a dubious category in the modern view, but one which may be salvaged by the wide medieval understanding of evidence noted in Section 3 above. Examples (18)–(19) are three such examples, which may have slightly different effects and functions:

- (18) *Secgað men þæt þæs weorodes wære twelf hund monna, & heora fiftig þurh fleam onweg losodon.* (Bede)  
[People say that this army consisted of 1200 men, and fifty of them survived by fleeing.]
- (19) *Kyng lohn deide at Newerk in þe flux [...] Bote þe comune fame telleþ þat he was i-poysned at Swyneshede, in þe abbay of white monkes. Me seiþ þat he swore þere at mete, þat þe loaf þat was þo [but] at an half peny schulde be worþ twelve pens wipynne þat gere gif he moste lyve.* (TPol)<sup>17</sup>  
[King John died at Newark of the flux. (...) But common rumour has it that he was poisoned at Swineshead, in the abbey of the white monks. It is said that he swore there at the meal that the loaf which cost but half a penny should be worth twelve pence within the year if he should live.]
- (20) *þe erthe ne bar nan corn. for þe land was al fordon. mid suilce dædes. 7 hi sæden openlice ðæt Crist slep. 7 his halechen.* (ASC-E)

---

<sup>17</sup> Note that this example also contains an instance of embedded speech presentation, as *he swore* is contained within a passage that is itself reported. See (26) for another example.

[The earth did not bear any fruit because the land was all devastated through such deeds. And it was openly said that Christ and his saints slept.]

Bede gives rather precise numerical information in (18), introducing it with the equivalent of modern “it is said that”. First-hand oral information can be excluded as he relates here events of 603 AD (writing in 731), so he may be referring to oral tradition. There is no overt indication that Bede intends to throw much doubt on the information given after this introduction; doubt might only be inferred in contrast to other passages where he goes out of his way to stress the reliability of sources. In contrast, the introductory items in (19) clearly mark false or dubious information, in particular as the information apparently considered correct by the author (John dying at Newark) precedes this speech presentation. It may be that the more elaborate formulation *comune fame* would have this doubtful effect even without the textual contrast. In the terms of appraisal theory, the quote from Bede is a case of non-endorsement, whereas the Polychronicon quote is one of disendorsement. Like *men* in (18), *hi* in (20) also has to be regarded as a generic case. It introduces not an account of (assumed) events like the previous two but an evaluation. This sentence is strictly speaking superfluous, both from a factual/reporting and from an evidential point of view. One may conclude therefore that the writer wanted to explicitly evaluate events but does so by aligning with others’ judgment (endorsement) in order to give it more general force.<sup>18</sup> A last and again different case of unspecified sourcing is found in (21):

- (21) But how he died, & in what maner, *þe certentie is nat knowen to me. Some said* he died for sorow; *some said* he was murthred bitwene ij federbeddes; *other said* þat an hote spytt was put in his foundement; & so, how he died, God knoweth, to whome is no thing hidd. (Brut)  
 [But how he died and in what manner is not known to me with certainty. Some said that he died out of grief; some said that he was murdered between two featherbeds; others said that a hot poker was inserted into his rectum, and so, how he died God only knows to whom nothing is hid.]

---

<sup>18</sup> In some respects this is similar to example (13) in writing presentation. Rissanen (1973: 74) mentions a similar case with the early modern English chronicler Edward Hall putting a critical view of Richard II’s deposition in a quotation, instead of voicing the criticism himself.

Here, the author quotes three different opinions, but does not align with any of them. Given the highly divergent suggestions, he decides to leave the question open for his readers, having at least made overt the doubtful nature of the event in question. Such indefinite speech attributions are not found at all in the modern *FLOB* material looked at here. There all instances of reporting are attributed to named persons or identifiable groups of people involved in the historical events described (e.g. “in a speech opposing Disraeli’s Reform Bill, Bright estimated [...] [J59 164]; “So that is over”, the chancellor told his wife in January 1861. [J57 119]).

In contrast to the previous medieval examples, the instances in (22)–(23) also name specific sources, thus clearly attempting to increase credibility.

(22) And þis same 3ere (as it was tolde & seyde of ham þat sawe hit) þere come out blood of þe tounge of Thomas, sumtyme Erl of Lancaster, as ffreshe as þat day þat he was done to þe deþe. (Brut)

[And in this same year (as it was told and said by them who saw it) there issued blood from the tomb of Thomas, earl of Lancaster, which was as fresh as on the day when he was killed.]

(23) [...] Þisses wundres endebyrdnesse nænig tweonde secgend, ac se getreowesta mæssepreost usse cirican, Cynemund hatte, me þis sægde; sægde he, he hit gehyrde from þæm seolfan Uttan mæssepreoste, in þæm 7 þurh þone þis wundor gefylled wæs. (Bede)

[The story of this wonder does not come from a doubtful speaker but from the most trustworthy priest of our church, named Cynemund, who told me that he had heard it from the priest Utta himself, on and through whom this miracle was performed.]

The credibility here is particularly linked to eyewitness status: note that (22) does not give any names of witnesses but simply specifies people “that saw” the event. Example (23) provides a small evidential chain from Bede via Cynemund to Utta, the ultimate witness who was directly involved in the action. Here the identifiability of the persons as well as the characterisation of the relayer of the information (*getreowesta*) emphasizes the authoritativeness and reliability of the information imparted.<sup>19</sup> Example (22) also shows a structural peculiarity, namely

<sup>19</sup> Camiciotti (2007: 289) points out that frames often serve the function of characterising the speaker in saints’ lives, to which this example is similar; in

doubling of reporting verb (*tell* and *say*) also found by Moore (2011: 58–59), who attributed it to the need of semantic support for colourless *seien* (and also *quethen*). Other examples of this are found in (24) and (25) below, which show the combinations *answer* and *say* (very common also in Moore’s Middle English data) and *frignan* and *ascian*.

Most examples presented so far are fairly different from the types identified by Nichols in Froissart and reported in Section 3 above. Uses like Froissart’s were also found in the present data, however. Example (24) contains a short speech by King Æðelbyrht (Ethelbert) of Kent to St. Augustine and his followers, giving them permission to preach and missionarize in his realm.

- (24) Þa ondswarede se cyning 7 þus cwæð: Fæger word þis syndon 7 gehat þe ge brohtan 7 us secgað. Ac forðon heo neowe syndon 7 uncuðe, ne magon we nu gen þæt þafian, þæt we forlæten þa wisan, þe we longre tide mid ealle Ongolþeode heoldon. Ac forðon þe ge hider feorran elþeodige cwomon ond, þæs þe me geþuht is 7 gesewen, þa þing, ða ðe soð 7 betst gelefdon, þæt eac swilce willadon us þa gemænsuman, nellað we forðon eow hefige beon. Ac we willað eow eac fremsumlice in gestliðnesse onfon, 7 eow ondlifen sellan 7 eowre þearfe forgifan. Ne we eow beweriað þæt ge ealle, ða þe ge mægen, þurh eowre lare to eowres geleafan æfæstnisse geðeode 7 gecyrre. (Bede)
- [Then the king answered in these words: These are fair words and promises that you bring and tell us. But as they are new and unknown, we cannot now allow that we give up the customs that we have adhered to a long time with all English people. But as you have come here as strangers from afar and, I think, I see that you want us to take part in what you believe to be true and the best; we will therefore not oppress you. But we will receive you kindly and with hospitality, and give you nourishment and supply your needs. We will not prevent you from converting all that you can to your religion by your teaching.]

This is thus a crucial event in the history of the christianization of England, marked by words spoken by the man who not only did not impede the missionaries (as he could easily have done), but also was the first English king to be baptized. Instead of a swift narration of the action, insertion of speech at this moment slows the action down and emphasizes the relevance of the moment more clearly. The passage also illustrates

---

other cases we find manner adverbs (e.g. *cleerliche* in (15), *pruely* in (10)), which can indirectly characterise speakers.

Nichols' second type in that it allows the reader to understand the character and the motivation of an important historical agent, here showing Ethelbert as a considerate and tolerant ruler. As Bede quotes verbatim (i.e. originally in Latin!) a speech delivered in 597 AD, we can fairly safely assume that this is a case of *sermocinatio* (see Section 3), with Bede putting suitable and appropriate words into King Ethelbert's mouth. Although the following example does not concern a specific and crucial historical event, it also serves to characterize important historical actors, namely the Plantagenet family, more precisely, the sons of Henry II, and indirectly their behaviour and deeds. Example (25) draws on the story ("this tale" mentioned by King Richard in (25)) of Henry II's mother, the Countess of Anjou, being an evil spirit (cf. the reference to the devil in (25)).

- (25) Afterward Richard kyng of Engelond tolde ofte þis tale, and saide þat hit was no wonder þoug þey þat comeþ of suche a kuynde greved everich oþer, as þey þat comeþ of þe devel and schulde goo to þe devel. Also in a tyme kyng Henry sente a clerk to his sone Gaufrede erle of Britayne forto refourme and make ful pees, and þe sone answered þe clerk in þis manere: "Why art þu come to desherite me of my rygt of my kynde burþe? knowest þou nougt þat hit longeþ to us propurliche by kynde, and hit is y-pygt uppon us by kynde of oure fore-fadres, þat noon of us schulde love oþer? þan travayle þou nougt an ydel to put away kynde." (TPol)  
 [Afterwards King Richard of England often told this tale and said that it was not surprising that those who came of such heritage should harm each other thus, as they who come of the devil, should go to the devil. Also, once King Henry sent a clerk to his son Geoffrey, earl of Brittany, in order to make an agreement and full peace, and the son answered the clerk in this way: "Why are you to disinherit me of my birthright? Do you not know that it properly belongs to us by blood, and it is settled on us through our forefathers, that none should love the other? Then try not in vain to change our nature."]

The family history serves as an explanation for the behaviour of its members, namely the familial in-fighting. What is further interesting here is that both Richard and Geoffrey are presented as showing not regret but something like pride in this background. This can be taken as a negative evaluation of the persons involved. Quotations that simply allow insights into characters and thus indirectly evaluate (e.g. "They have had a very hard time" was Churchill's magnanimous verdict on the electorate which

had turned him out of office. (FLOB J58 168)) are probably not very common in modern history writing, apart from in historical biography.

Nichols' fourth speech category, namely dialogue, is illustrated by (26) from Bede, which quotes the consultation of British bishops with a hermit over whether to trust and follow Augustine. It is also reminiscent of Nichols' third type, however, as a problem and a strategy for its solution is outlined in the dialogue.

(26) Frunnon heo hine 7 ahsodon, hwæðer heo sceoldon to Agustinus lare heora gesetenesse 7 heora þeawas forlæton. Ondswarede he him: Gif he Godes man sy, fylgað ge him. Cwædon heo to him: Be hwon magon we ðæt weotan, hwæðer he sy? Cwæð he: Drihten seolfa cwæð in his godspelle: Nimað ge min geoc ofer eow eac 7 leorniað æt me, þæt ic eom milde 7 eaðmodre heortan: 7 nu gif Agustinus is milde 7 eaðmodre heortan, þonne is he gelyfed þæt he Cristes geoc bere 7 eow lare to beorenne. Gif he þonne is unmilde & oferhygdig, þonne is þæt cuð þæt he nis of Gode, ne ge his worda gemað. Cwædon heo eft: Be hwon magon we þis gescead witon? Cwæð he: Foreseoð ge þætte he ærest mid his gefeum to þære seonoðstowe cume & gesitte. Ond gif he arise ongegnes eow þonne ge cuman, þonne witað ge þæt he bið Cristes þeow, & geeaðmodlice his word & his lare gehyrað. Gif he þonne eow eac forhogie & eow ne wille arisan togegnes, mid þy eower ma is, sy he þonne from eow forhogad. Hwæt heo dydon, swa swa he cwæð. (Bede)

[They asked him whether they should according to Augustine's teaching give up their own laws and customs. He answered them: If he is God's man, follow him. They said to him: How may we know whether he is? He said: The Lord himself says in the gospel: Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, that I am mild and humble at heart: and now if Augustine is mild and humble at heart, then is he shown to bear Christ's yoke and to offer it to you. If he is harsh and proud, then it is clear that he is not of God, and you should not heed his words. Then they said: How may we recognize this difference? He said: Take care that he and his companions arrive and take their places first at the meeting place. And if he gets up when you arrive, then you will know that he is God's servant, and humbly hear his words and his teaching. If he shows disrespect and does not rise for you, then you as the majority need not show him respect. They did as he had told them.]

The passage starts off with indirect speech and then immediately shifts into direct speech, the presentation being such that one could imagine it in a novel or drama. This makes for a very vivid depiction, drawing the reader closer to the historical persons and almost into their minds. While

the bishops come across as uncertain (evaluation being a side effect here), the hermit is presented as a wise man in control of the situation. Accordingly, the talk results in the bishops following his advice.

Vividness and drama, so to speak, account for the short pieces of speech presentation in (27), falling into Nichols' first group. No argument is developed here nor individual persons characterised, but the tension and atmosphere surrounding the siege of a town is presented (here during Henry V's campaigns in France).

(27) Chargyd hym to delyuer þe toun and his Castel, or ellis he wolde hit gete with streynth of hond. And þai answerd and sayd to him, *non of hym he toke, ne non þey wolde delyuer vnto hym.* [...] and anon þe Duk of Clarans had entyrd yn-to the toun, and slow3 doun ry3t til þat he come vnto þe King, and spared neþer man ne childe; and euyr þai cryed "*a Clarans, a Clarans, Seint George!*" (Brut)

[(He) charged them to surrender the town and castle, or else he would take it by force. And they answered and said to him, *none of them he took, nor none would they surrender to him.* (...) and at one the Duke of Clarence entered into the town and struck (men) down right until he came to the king, and he spared neither man nor child, and all the time they shouted "*for Clarence, for Clarence, Saint George!*"]

The refusal to surrender the town (here in indirect speech) is a crucial turning point in making the following siege inevitable, and the entering of the town by the besiegers marks a climatic point, here highlighted by the cheering quoted. This latter especially is superfluous for the bare telling of the story, but it adds immediacy and emotionality (cf. Tannen 2007: chap. 4).

A rather different case from all the previous examples is represented in (28). Here we find a speech act verb (*promise*), which is far less common in the data than such general verbs like *say*.

(28) The whyle that he there was, well oft he made to be redd the kynges lettres to-for the Pepyll; and largely he promysyd londys, and rentis, and othyr ryche yeftys, to them that hym wolde helpe. (Conquest)

[While he was there he often had the king's letters read out to the people; and he generously promised lands and revenues, and other rich gifts to those who would help.]

Furthermore, we find here neither direct nor indirect speech as in most examples above, but a summary of the topic(s) of the communication. In terms of speech reporting this is thus a case of narrative reporting of speech act (NRSA) with topic indication.

The link between prophecy (*witegung*) and history visible in (29) is of interest for the understanding of medieval historiography in general. Here, the annalist explicitly adds after the description of an event that this happened in fulfilment of a prophecy by St. Augustine.

- (29) And her Æðelfrið lædde his færde to Legercyestre, 7 ðar ofsloh unrim Walena. 7 swa wearþ gefyld Augustinus *witegunge. þe he cwæþ. Gif Wealas nellað sibbe wið us. hi sculan æt Seaxana handa farwurþan.* (ASC-A)  
 [And in this year Ethelfrith led his army to Leicester and slew off countless Welsh, and thus was fulfilled St Augustine's prophecy in which he said: *If the Welsh will not have peace with us, they shall perish through Saxon hands.*]

History in the medieval understanding is only the unfolding of God's preordained plan, thus prophecizing is 'history in the future', so to speak. But imparting past history equally means understanding God's plan behind it all—which is the task of the historiographer. An explicit link, as available here, makes the divine course of events transparent and gives meaning as well as positive evaluation to individual happenings. The quotation here thus serves as a reassurance of the reader about the order of the world.

In contrast to writing references and also in contrast to modern history writing, speech presentation is quite common in these medieval texts. Examples (24)–(27) illustrate the rhetorical and quasi-literary uses of speech, which are in line with the different orientation of medieval historiography (see Section 3). Cases like (18)–(20) and (23)–(23) are also alien to modern history writing, as the everyday and 'professional' preconditions have changed, namely older oral versus modern literate culture and changed views/conventions of what constitutes good proof. While the precise amount and nature of this feature in individual texts certainly needs more scrutiny, one striking difference stands out already: the two Anglo-Saxon Chronicle texts contain very little speech presentation in contrast to the others. While *Brut*, *Polychronicon* and *Conquest* are also chronicles or are based on a chronicle, they are characterised by longer stretches of coherent narrative. The Old English

chronicles, by contrast, are for the most part annalistic in nature, with often (very) short entries for the year and often not keeping to a single story line. Kempshall (2011: 90) quotes Gervase of Canterbury as characterising the treatment in chronicles as opposed to histories as simple, brief, to the point versus diffuse, elegant, embellished, delighting the reader, respectively. Clearly, speech presentation has a firm place in the latter scheme but not in the former.

#### *8. Functions: a summary*

The functions identified in the six medieval texts can be sorted along three lines, with potential overlaps between the categories: evidence and authority, evaluation, and narrative function.

*Evidence and authority:* The historiographer refers to others' writings or speech in order to provide proof for what he writes and to enhance his credibility. This need not always be accompanied by the reporting of the other's words immediately in the same context (e.g. (6), (15)). The reference is often (usually?) not as precise as in modern texts (e.g. (14), (15)) and can even extend to generic references, illustrating a different and wider understanding of evidence in the past. This is not to say that medieval writers are less critical with regard to their sources, as the dismissal of non-authoritative sources in (16), the explicit evaluation of personal witnesses in (23), or the presentation of diverging views as (21) shows. In our modern terminology it is both primary and secondary sources that are being referenced and/or quoted, e.g. the various letters mentioned as opposed to chronicles or "Steven's book". The content thus quoted can receive different degrees of (non)endorsement by the writer, which, in contrast to modern data, is not so much linked to the usage of different reporting verbs but to other contextual features. In terms of frequency this function does not seem to be very common and, as we have seen in the case of Bede, can also be diminished in translation. The questions that arise, therefore, are how far the texts investigated here are typical of the wider picture, and whether there is a difference between vernacular and Latin (more learned?) historiography with regard to this feature.

*Evaluation:* Historiographers can use quotations to express their own evaluations indirectly, to hide behind others, so to speak, as behind common contemporary opinion in (20). Alternatively, they can evaluate

directly, but then borrow authority for their assessment by a quotation from a reputable source, such as the Bible in (13). The prophecy quoted in (29) can be seen in the context of evaluation: if something happens in line with a Christian prophecy it cannot be bad.<sup>20</sup> Also, simply the fact that something is quoted at all (at some length) can be indirectly evaluative: it lends importance to it (cf. also Del Lungo Camiciotti's (2007: 296) foregrounding function for 'important voices'), e.g. Augustine's grave inscription (7), which does not otherwise have a role in the narration. This function is perhaps the hardest to nail down with any precision in individual instances, but it is a very important one for history writing. Every historian writes from a certain perspective and with an ideological aim (even if unconsciously), which needs to be teased out from the text. The overarching ideology in medieval historical writers is unsurprisingly a religious one, as we have seen in various examples above, but of course this is not the whole story.

*Narrative function:* Speech and writing presentation in this functional range is concerned with plot, characterisation, and style. Nichols' functions as found in Froissart belong in this group. While Nichols links his classification to type and length of speech reporting, it may be better to disregard this and look for overall effect. The present medieval data seems to offer four types of uses:

- (i) What is provided in the context of speech or writing presentation gives 'plot' information, e.g. it forms part of the actions of characters moving history forward ((10), (24), (28)) or it describes a historical situation more closely, e.g. the diverging views narrated in (12). Del Lungo Camiciotti (2000: 154) called this a "plot advancing device" in the context of Margery Kempe's spiritual biography.
- (ii) Quoted material gives readers insights into the character of historical persons, as in (25). Of course, this can often be an additional effect of instances from group (i), e.g. (24).
- (iii) Inserted speech and writing presentation can slow down the progress of the historical action, thus focusing on a particular place, event, or person, as in (26). In this way, it can function as a highlighting device, both indicating the importance of the highlighted item and drawing the reader more deeply into the text (note that there is a link to implicit evaluation here), cf. also Moore (2011: 119).

---

<sup>20</sup> Alternatively, this could be seen as evidential, in a sense quoting God/Augustine as a reference.

- (iv) Greater involvement of the reader is also the aim of the last function. Some presentations of speech (not so much of writing, probably) serve to make the reporting more vivid, more dramatic and thus to have a greater emotive effect (e.g. (26), (27)). This is certainly the most literary of all the functions identified here and the one least likely in modern history writing. But it is in line with the interpersonal functions Del Lungo Camiciotti (2000: 155, 2007: 297) identified for late medieval saints' lives and (auto)biography, namely manipulating the audience's emotions and creating involvement via dramatization.

Three of these functions are mentioned by Semino and Short (2004: 98–90) for fiction, namely plot advancement (i), characterization (ii), and vividness/dramatization/involvement (iv). Both Nichols (1964) and Moore (2011) have stressed the narrative function as important for medieval historiography and not mentioned the evidential function. Whether the difference in perspective is due to generic and/or temporal changes in the Middle Ages and in how far the three-fold functional profile suggested here is typical and characterizing of history writing vis-à-vis other genres needs further investigation.

### 9. The significance of hearing

In Section 6, examples (10) and (11), the verb *hear* was encountered, in the context of letter content. In an oral context, as applicable in the Middle Ages, it is necessary to consider the fact that even written information may have been received through the auditory channel. Also, hearing is the necessary correlate of any speech event, highlighting the recipient perspective—and thus it is also usable to switch the narrative perspective in history writing. Searching only for words denoting speaking and writing might thus not cover the full range of quoting (in the widest sense) in medieval texts. While sometimes there is a double introductory/reporting form including hearing and saying, as in (30), the other three instances only have hearing. Such cases are of interest, however, where content is included, which is only found here as the equivalent of indirect speech, as in (31)–(33):

- (30) But he herde telle þat Berwyk was i-take, and come a3en, and delyvered Berwyk of þe power of þe Scottes. (TPol)

[But he heard it said that Berwick was taken, and he came back and delivered Berwick from the hands of the Scots.]

- (31) þa ða se cyng Melcolm gehyrde *þæt hine man mid fyrde secean wolde*. he for mid his fyrde ut of Scotlande into Loðene on Englaland 7 þær abad. (ASC-E)

[Then King Malcolm heard that he should be attacked by an army. He moved out of Scotland with his army into Lothen in England and remained there.]

- (32) Oconnoghoure saw and herde of his messyngers, *that he myght nat in suche maner spede*, and that he moste with streynth do that, that he myght not with fayre speche. (Conquest)

[Oconnoghoure saw and heard from his messengers that he could not succeed in this way, and that he had to do with force that which he could not achieve with fair words.]

- (33) the kynge herde *that the pepil of the londe was of vnclen lyfe, and ayeyn godd and holy churche*. he thought that he wolde bryng the pepil Into bettyr lyfe; and mych desyr had therto. (Conquest)

[The king heard that the people of the land were of immoral conduct and against God and the holy church. He intended to lead the people to a better life; he desired this very much.]

The italicised passages contain what must have been the message spoken (or read) by one or more speaker(s), who are only mentioned and indicated in (32), as *messengers*. In (30), (31) and (33) the speakers are suppressed, yielding a hearsay impression, although one can of course assume that at least (30) and (31) also refer to a messenger context. As this is presumably a well-known context when talking about medieval rulers and nobles, *hear*-formulations help in not having to specify understood and also largely irrelevant information. Also, it seems from (30)–(33) that the perspective is intentionally put fully on the hearer, as what he hears serves as the motivation and cause for a following action—which is narrated immediately after. While speech, especially longer stretches, lets the reader see the character and the mind of a person in more detail, hearing focuses on causal chains of action and thus moves the narrative forwards more forcefully.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Semino and Short (2004: 81) mention the use of reversed-perspective verbs (*hear, learn*) “in a few cases”. Interestingly, *hear* only occurs in autobiography,

### 10. Conclusion

Which voices then do we ‘hear’ or read in the medieval texts investigated? We find the voice of the writer, the voices (or at least presence) of other historians, those of historical persons, as well as the voice of disembodied ‘common opinion’. The first two we are familiar with from modern history writing and the procedures of academic referencing. But the realisations here are nevertheless different to the modern practice. The voices of historical persons also occur in both older and modern historiography, but while in the past the *personal* aspect is prominent, historical witnesses tend to turn up as less individualized primary sources in modern history writing. To a certain extent this correlates with the distinction between literary and academic, scholarly writing. The ‘common-opinion’ voice finally is specific to older writing, at least in its explicitness. While modern writing might also be influenced by such generic opinions, it would not present this as overtly as the medieval texts, illustrating the changed attitudes to their status as evidence.

There are also differences between the individual medieval texts. The more annalistic Old English chronicles stand out as having the least speech and next to no writing presentation. The Brut also exhibits little quoting from writing, which may be connected with the fact that (from a modern perspective) it is the most literary, fictionalised work of those looked at here. Interestingly, in each period the works translated from Latin and the one probably with the most ‘academic’ outlook (Bede, *Polychronicon*) have the highest amount of speech and writing reporting. This is connected with the evidential and authoritative function of quoting, certainly in the case of Bede, and at least to some extent for the *Polychronicon*.

### References

#### Primary sources

*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* – online text: <http://asc.jebbo.co.uk/> (© Tony Jebson). Last accessed: February 2016.

---

where it probably does not change the perspective, but helps to keep it firmly with the autobiographer. Such verbs are only listed for indirect speech by Semino and Short, which is in line with the examples here.

- Babington, Churchill (ed.). 1865. *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis. Together with the English Translations of John Trevisa and of an Unknown Writer of the Fifteenth Century*. London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green.
- Bately, Janet M. (ed.). 1986. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Vol. 3: *MS A*. Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer.
- Bede. 1968. *A History of the English Church and People*. Transl. & introd. Leo Sherley-Price, revised R. E. Latham. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Brie, Friedrich W. D. (ed.). 1906. *The Brut or The Chronicles of England*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. (Early English Text Society O.S. 181).
- FLOB = *Freiburg-LOB Corpus*. 1991. Compiled by Christian Mair et al.
- Furnivall, Frederick J. (ed.). 1896. *The English Conquest of Ireland*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. (Early English Text Society O.S. 107).
- HC = *The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*. 1991. Compiled by Matti Rissanen (Project leader), Merja Kytö (Project secretary); Leena Kahlas-Tarkka, Matti Kilpiö (Old English); Saara Nevanlinna, Irma Taavitsainen (Middle English); Terttu Nevalainen, Helena Raumolin-Brunberg (Early Modern English). Department of Modern Languages, University of Helsinki.
- Irvine, Susan (ed.). 1983. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Vol. 7: *MS E*. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer.
- Miller, Thomas (ed.). 1890 (reprint 1978). *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of The English People*. Oxford.
- Scott, Mike. 2010. *WordSmith Tools Version 5*. Liverpool: Lexical Analysis Software.

*Secondary sources*

- Baynham, Mike. 1999. "Double-voicing and the Scholarly 'I': On Incorporating the Words of Others in Academic Discourse." *Text* 19(4): 485–504.
- Bednarek, Monika. 2006. *Evaluation in Media Discourse*. New York: Continuum.
- Burrow, John. 2009. *A History of Histories*. London: Penguin.

- Chafe, Wallace. 1986. "Evidentiality in English Conversation and Academic Writing." *Evidentiality: The Linguistic Coding of Epistemology*. Eds. Wallace Chafe and Johanna Nichols. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex. 261–272.
- Del Lungo Camiciotti, Gabriella. 2000. "Orality and Written texts: The Representation of Discourse in the *Book of Margery Kempe*." *English Diachronic Pragmatics*. Eds. Gabriella Di Martino and Maria Lima. Naples: CUEN. 143–157.
- Del Lungo Camiciotti, Gabriella. 2007. "Discoursal Aspects of the *Legends of Holy Women* by Osbern Bokenham." *Methods in Historical Pragmatics*. Eds. Susan Fitzmaurice and Irma Taavitsainen. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 285–305.
- Given-Wilson, Chris. 2004. *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England*. London/New York: Hambledon & London.
- Gransden, Antonia. 1990. "The Chronicles of Medieval England and Scotland, Part I." *Journal of Medieval History* 16: 129–150.
- Grund, Peter. 2012. "The Nature of Knowledge: Evidence and Evidentiality in the Witness Depositions from the Salem Witch Trials." *American Speech* 87(1): 7–38.
- Guenther Discenza, Nicole. 2002. "The Old English Bede and the Construction of Anglo-Saxon Authority." *Anglo-Saxon England* 31: 69–80.
- Hundt, Marianne, Andrea Sand and Rainer Siemund. 1998. *Manual of Information to Accompany The Freiburg-LOB Corpus of British English ('FLOB')*. Freiburg: Department of English. Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg.
- Hyland, Ken. 1999. "Academic Attribution: Citation and the Construction of Disciplinary Knowledge." *Applied Linguistics* 20(3): 341–367.
- Kempshall, Matthew. 2011. *Rhetoric and the Writing of History*. Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press.
- Leech, Geoffrey and Mick Short. 1981. *Style in Fiction*. London: Longman.
- Matheson, Lister M. 1998. *The Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*. Tempe, Arizona: Arizona State University.
- Matheson, Lister M. 2012. "Vernacular Chronicles and Narrative Sources of History in Medieval England." *Understanding Medieval Primary Sources*. Ed. Joel T. Rosenthal. London: Routledge. 24–42.

- Moore, Colette. 2011. *Quoting Speech in Early English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nichols, Stephen G. 1964. "Discourse in Froissart's Chroniques." *Speculum* 39(2): 279–287.
- Oxford Historical Thesaurus*: <http://www.oed.com/>.
- Rissanen, Matti. 1973. *Studies in the Style and Narrative Technique of Edward Hall's Chronicle*. Helsinki: Societé Néophilologique.
- Roberts, Jane and Christian Kay, with Lynne Grundy. 2000. *A Thesaurus of Old English*. Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi.
- Semino, Elena and Mick Short. 2004. *Corpus Stylistics: Speech, Writing and Thought Presentation in a Corpus of English Writing*. London: Routledge.
- Swales, John. 1990. *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tannen, Deborah. 2007. *Talking Voices. Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- White, P. R. R. 2001–. The Appraisal Website: The Language of Attitude, Arguability and Intertextual Positioning. <http://www.grammatics.com/appraisal/> (Last update: 27/12/2015).