

Lecture 4: Medieval Concepts of Authorship (Guest Lecture: Dr. Fritz Kemmler, Tübingen)

Structure:

Background: The Classical Tradition and its Beneficiaries (Isidor of Seville)

Anglo-Latin Authors (Bede)

Evolution of a Literary Standard in the Old English Period (Ælfric)

The Academic Tradition

Evolution of a Literary Standard in the Middle English Period (Mannyng, Chaucer, Henryson)

Bibliography:

Curtius, E. R. *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, 9. Auflage (Bern und München, 1978).

Jauss, H. R. "The Alterity and Modernity of Medieval Literature", *New Literary History*, 10 (1979), 385-390.

Minnis, A. J. *Medieval Theory of Authorship. Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1984).

Minnis, A. J. and Scott, A. B., eds. *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100-c. 1375. The Commentary Tradition* (Oxford, 1988).

Partridge, S. and Kwakkel, E., eds. *Author, Reader, Book: Medieval Authorship in Theory and Practice* (Toronto, 2012).

Texts:

Isidorus Hispalensis Episcopi, *Etymologiarum sive Originum libri* XX

Liber primus, de Grammatica

Caput XL. *De fabula.*

1. Fabulas poetae a *fando* nominaverunt, quia non sunt res factae, sed tantum loquendo fictae. Quae ideo sunt inductae, ut ficto mutorum animalium inter se colloquio imago quaedam vitae hominum nosceretur. Has primus invenisse traditur Alcmaeon Crotoniensis, appellanturque Aesopicae, quia is apud Phrygas in hac re polluit. [...]

3. Fabulas poetae quasdam delectandi causa finxerunt, quasdam ad naturam rerum, nonnullas ad mores hominum interpretati sunt. Delectandi causa fictae, ut eae quas vulgo dicunt, vel quales Plautus et Terentius composuerunt. [...]

Caput XLI. *De historia.*

1. Historia est narratio rei gestae, per quam ea quae in praeterito facta sunt dignoscuntur. Dicta autem Graece *historia* [...] id est, *videre*, vel *cognoscere*. Apud veteres enim nemo conscribebat historiam, nisi is qui interfuisset, et ea quae conscribenda essent vidisset. Melius enim oculis quae fiunt deprehendimus, quam quae auditione colligimus.

2. Quae enim videntur sine mendacio proferuntur. Haec disciplina ad grammaticam pertinet, quia quidquid dignum memoria est, litteris mandatur. Historiae autem ideo *monumenta* dicuntur, quod memoriam tribuunt rerum gestarum. *Series* autem dicta per translationem a *sertis* factorum invicem comprehensorum.

Caput XLII. *De primis auctoribus historiarum.*

1. Historiam autem primus apud nos Moyses de initio mundi conscripsit. Apud gentiles vero primus Dares Phrygius de Graecis et Trojanis historiam edidit, quam in foliis palmarum ab eo conscriptam esse ferunt.

2. Post Daretem autem in Graecia Herodotus primus historicus habitus est. Post quem Pherecydes claruit iis temporibus quibus Esdras legem scripsit.

Caput XLIII. *De utilitate historiae.*

1. Historiae gentium non impediunt legentes in iis quae utilia dixerunt. Multi enim sapientes praeterita hominum gesta ad institutionem praesentium historiis indiderunt.

2. Si quidem et per historiam summa retro temporum annorumque supputatio comprehenditur, et per consulum regumque successum multa necessaria perscrutantur.

Caput XLIV. *De generibus historiae.*

1. Genus Historiae triplex est. Ephemeris namque appellatur unius diei gestio. Hoc apud nos *diarium* vocatur. Nam quod Latini *diarium*, Graeci *ephemerida* dicunt.
2. Kalendaria appellantur quae in menses singulos digeruntur.
3. Annales sunt res singulorum annorum. Quaecunque enim digna memoriae domi militiaeque, mari ac terra, per annos in commentariis acta sunt, ab anniversariis gestis annales nominaverunt.
4. Historia autem multorum annorum vel temporum est; cujus diligentia annui commentarii in libris delati sunt. Inter historiam autem et annales hoc interest, quod historia est eorum temporum quae vidimus, annales vero sunt eorum annorum quos aetas nostra non novit. Unde Sallustius ex historia; Livius, Eusebius et Hieronymus ex annalibus et historia constant.
5. Inter historiam, et argumentum, et fabulam interest. Nam historiae sunt res verae, quae factae sunt. Argumenta sunt quae, etsi facta non sunt, fieri tamen possunt. Fabulae vero sunt quae nec facta sunt, nec fieri possunt, quia contra naturam sunt.

Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi

Etymologiarum sive Originum Liber VIII: De Ecclesia et Sectis

Quidam autem poetae Theologici dicti sunt, quoniam de diis carmina faciebant. Officium autem poetae in eo est ut ea, quae vere gesta sunt, in alias species obliquis figurationibus cum decore aliquo conversa transducant. Unde et Lucanus ideo in numero poetarum non ponitur, quia videtur historias conposuisse, non poema. Apud poetas autem tres characteres esse dicendi: unum, in quo tantum poeta loquitur, ut est in libris Vergilii Georgicorum: alium dramaticum, in quo nusquam poeta loquitur, ut est in comoediis et tragoediis: tertium mixtum, ut est in Aeneide. Nam poeta illic et introductae personae loquuntur.

[7th century]

Beda Venerabilis, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* [early 8th century]

Book IV

CHAPTER XXIV

THERE WAS IN THE SAME MONASTERY A BROTHER, ON WHOM THE GIFT OF WRITING VERSES WAS BESTOWED BY HEAVEN.

[A. D. 680]

THERE was in this abbess's [i.e. Hilda] monastery a certain brother, particularly remarkable for the grace of God, who was wont to make pious and religious verses, so that whatever was interpreted to him out of Scripture, he soon after put the same into poetical expressions of much sweetness and humility, in English, which was his 5 native language. By his verses the minds of many were often excited to despise the world, and to aspire to heaven. Others after him attempted, in the English nation, to compose religious poems, but none could ever compare with him, for he did not learn the art of poetry from men, but from God; for which reason he never could compose any trivial or vain poem, but only those which relate to religion suited his 10 religious tongue; for having lived in a secular habit till he was well advanced in years, he had never learned anything of versifying; for which reason being sometimes at entertainments, when it was agreed for the sake of mirth that all present should sing in their turns, when he saw the instrument come towards him, he rose up from table and returned home.

15 Having done so at a certain time, and gone out of the house where the entertainment was, to the stable, where he had to take care of the horses that night, he there composed himself to rest at the proper time; a person appeared to him in his sleep, and saluting him by his name, said, "Caedmon, sing some song to me." He answered, "I cannot sing; for that was the reason why I left the entertainment, and 20 retired to this place because I could not sing." The other who talked to him, replied, "However, you shall sing." "What shall I sing?" rejoined he. "Sing the beginning of created beings," said the other. Hereupon he presently began to sing verses to the praise of God, which he had never heard, the purport whereof was thus: We are now to praise the Maker of the heavenly kingdom, the power of the Creator 25 and his counsel, the deeds of the Father of glory. How He, being the eternal God, became the author of all miracles, who first, as almighty preserver of the human race, created heaven for the sons of men as the roof of the house, and next the earth. This is the sense, but not the words in order as he sang them in his sleep; for verses, though never so well composed, cannot be literally translated out of one 30 language into another, without losing much of their beauty and loftiness. Awaking from his sleep, he remembered all that he had sung in his dream, and soon added much more to the same effect in verse worthy of the Deity.

In the morning he came to the steward, his superior, and having acquainted him with the gift he had received, was conducted to the abbess, by whom he was ordered, in 35 the presence of many learned men, to tell his dream, and repeat the verses, that

they might all give their judgment what it was, and whence his verse proceeded. They all concluded, that heavenly grace had been conferred on him by our Lord. They expounded to him a passage in holy writ, either historical, or doctrinal, ordering him, if he could, to put the same into verse. Having undertaken it, he went away, and
40 returning the next morning, gave it to them composed in most excellent verse; whereupon the abbess, embracing the grace of God in the 'man, instructed him to quit the secular habit, and take upon him the monastic life; which being accordingly done, she associated him to the rest of the brethren in her monastery, and ordered that he should be taught the whole series of sacred history. Thus Caedmon ' keeping
45 in mind all he heard, and as it were chewing the cud, converted the same into most harmonious verse; and sweetly repeating the same, made his masters in their turn his hearers. He sang the creation of the world, the origin of man, and all the history of Genesis : and made many verses on the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and their entering into the land of promise, with many other histories
50 from holy writ; the incarnation, passion, resurrection of our Lord, and his ascension into heaven; the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the preaching of the apostles ; also the terror of future judgment, the horror of the pains of hell, and the delights of heaven; besides many more about the Divine benefits and judgments, by which he endeavoured to turn away all men from the love of vice, and to excite in
55 them the love of, and application to, good actions; for he was a very religious man, humbly submissive to regular discipline, but full of zeal against those who behaved themselves otherwise; for which reason he ended his life happily.

For when the time of his departure drew near, he laboured for the space of fourteen days under a bodily infirmity which seemed to prepare the way, yet so moderate that
60 he could talk and walk the whole time. In his neighbourhood was the house to which those that were sick, and like shortly to die, were carried. He desired the person that attended him, in the evening, as the night came on in which he was to depart this life, to make ready a place there for him to take his rest. This person, wondering why he should desire it, because there was as yet no sign of his dying
65 soon, did what he had ordered. He accordingly went there, 60 and conversing pleasantly in a joyful manner with the rest that were in the house before, when it was past midnight, he asked them, whether they had the Eucharist there? They answered, "What need of the Eucharist? for you are not likely to die, since you talk so merrily with us, as if you were in perfect health." " However," said he, "bring me the
70 Eucharist." Having received the same into his hand, he asked, whether they were all in charity with him, and without any enmity or rancour? They answered, that they were all in perfect charity, and free from anger; and in their turn asked him, whether he was in the same mind towards them? He answered, "I am in charity, my children, with all the servants of God." Then strengthening himself with the heavenly viaticum,
75 he prepared for the entrance into another life, and asked, how near the time was when the brothers were to be awakened to sing the nocturnal praises of our Lord? They answered, "It is not far off." Then he said, "Well, let us wait that hour; " and signing himself with the sign of the cross, he laid his head on the pillow, and falling into a slumber, ended his life so in silence.

80 Thus it came to pass, that as he had served God with a simple and pure mind, and undisturbed devotion, so he now departed to his presence, leaving the world by a quiet death; and that tongue, which had composed so many holy words in praise of the Creator, uttered its last words whilst he was in the act of signing himself with the

cross, and recommending himself into his hands, and by what has been here said, he seems to have had foreknowledge of his death.

Source: Medieval Sourcebook <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/bede-book4.asp>>

Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, "Preface" [late 10th / early 11th century]

I, Ælfric, monk and mass-priest, although more weakly than for such orders is fitting, was sent, in king Æthelred's day, from bishop Ælfheah, Æthelwold's successor, to a minster which is called Cernel, at the prayer of Æthelmære the thane, whose birth and goodness are known everywhere. Then it occurred to my mind, I trust through God's grace, that I would turn this book from the Latin language into the English tongue; not from confidence of great learning, but because I have seen and heard of much error in many English books, which unlearned men, through their simplicity, have esteemed as great wisdom: and I regretted that they knew not nor had not the evangelical doctrines among their writings, those men only excepted who knew Latin, and those books excepted which king Ælfred wisely turned from Latin into English, which are to be had. For this cause I presumed, trusting in God, to undertake this task, and also because men have need of good instruction, especially at this time, which is the ending of this world, and there will be many calamities among mankind before the end cometh.... Everyone may the more easily withstand the future temptation, through God's support, if he is strengthened by book learning, for they shall be preserved who continue in faith to the end. [...] Our Lord commanded his disciples that they should instruct and teach all people the things which he had himself taught to them; but of those there are too few who will well teach and well exemplify. [...] From such commands it appeared to me that I should not be guiltless before God, if I would not declare to other men, by tongue or by writings, the evangelical truth, which he himself spake, and afterwards to holy teachers revealed. Very many I know in this country more learned than I am, but God manifests his wonders through whom he will. As an almighty worker he works his work through his chosen, not because he has need of our aid, but that we may earn eternal life by the performance of his work. Paul the apostle said, "We are God's assistants," [Rom. 6:22] and yet we do nothing for God without the assistance of God. Now I desire and beseech, in God's name, if anyone will transcribe this book, that he carefully correct it by the copy, lest we be blamed through careless writers. He does great evil who writes false, unless he correct it; it is as though he turn true doctrine to false error; therefore should everyone make that straight which he before bent crooked, if he will be guiltless at God's doom.

Source: Aelfric. *Sermones Catholici*. Ed. B. Thorpe (London, 1844)

Ælfric, *Prefatio to Genesis*

Ælfric munuc gret Æðelwærd ealdormann eadmodlice. Þu bæde me leof þæt ic sceolde ðe awendan of Lydene on Englisc þa boc Genesis.

Ða þuhte me hefigtime þe to tīpienne þæs, and þu cwæde þa þæt ic ne þorfte na mare awendan þære bec, buton to Isaace, Abrahames suna, for þam þe sum oðer man þe hæfde awend from Isaace þa boc op ende. [...]

Ða ungelæredan preostas, gif hi hwæt litles understandað of þam Lydenbocum, þonne þingð him sona þæt hi magon mære lareowas beon, ac hie ne cunnon swa þeah þæt gastlice* andgit þærto and hu seo ealde æ wæs getacnung towardra þinga, opþe hu seo niwe gecyþnis æfter Cristes menniscnisse wæs gefillednys ealra þæra þinga þe seo ealde gecðnis getacnode towarde, be Criste and be hys gecorenum. [...]

We secgað eac foran to, þæt seo boc is swiþe deop gastlice* to understandenne and we ne writap na mare buton þa nacedan gerecednisse. Þonne þinþ þam ungelæredum þæt eall þæt andgit beo belocen on þære anfealdan gerecednisse ac hit ys swiþe feor þam. [...]

Nu is seo foresæde boc on manegum stowum swiþe nærolice gesett, and þeah swiðe deoplice on þam gastlicum* andgite. And heo is swa geendeburd swa swa God silf hig gedihte þam writere Moise, and we ne durron na mare awritan on Englisc þonne þæt Liden hæfþ, ne þa endebirdnisse awendan, butan þam anum þæt þæt Leden and þæt English nabbað na ane wisan on þære spræce fadunge. Æfre se þe awent opþe se þe tæcþ of Ledene on Englisc, æfre he sceal gefadian hit swa þæt þæt Englisc hæbbe his agene wisan, elles hit biþ swiþe gedwolsum to rædenne, þam þe þæs Ledenes wisan ne can. [...]

Ich bidde nu on Godes naman, gif hwa þas boc awritan wylle, þæt he hig gerihte wel be þære bysne, for þan þe ic nah geweald, þeah þe hig hwa to wo gebringe þurh lease witeras, and hit byð þonne his pleoh na min. Mycel yfel deð se unwritere, gif he nele hys woh gerihten.

Source: *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*. Ed. R. Marsden. EETS O.S. 330 (Oxford, 2008)

* The fourfold sense of of the scriptures:
Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria,
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas, anagogia.

The Literal teaches deeds, what you believe Allegory,
Moral how you act, where you are going anagogical.

Guibert of Nogent, *Commentary on Genesis*

There are four ways of interpreting Scripture . . . The first is history, which speaks of actual events as they occurred; the second is allegory, in which one thing stands for something else; the third is tropology, or moral instruction, which treats of the ordering and arranging of one's life; and the last is ascetics, or spiritual enlightenment, through which we who are about to treat of lofty and heavenly topics are led to a higher way of life. For example, the word Jerusalem: historically, it represents a specific city; in allegory it represents holy Church; tropologically or morally, it is the soul of every faithful man who longs for the vision of eternal peace; and anagogically it refers to the life of the heavenly citizens, who already see the God of Gods, revealed in all His glory in Sion.

quoted from Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, p. 34

Adademic Criticism

Prologues:

Titulus libri; nomen auctoris; intentio auctoris (intentio scribentis), materia libri, modus agendi (modus scribendi, modus tractandi), ordo libri, utilitas, cui parti philosophiae supponitur

Causa efficientis (= auctor), causa materialis (= materia), causa formalis (= form, approach), causa finalis (= intention)

Accessus ad auctores

Homer wrote two books in Greek, the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. Virgil imitates both these books of Homer. In the first six books [of the *Aeneid*] he imitates the *Odyssey* - this is a laudatory poem, for *ode* means 'praise'. For just as Homer showed Ulysses overcoming the dangers of the sea in his book, so Virgil showed Aeneas doing likewise in his. Virgil imitates the *Iliad* in his last six books. The *Iliad* is the tale (*fabula*) of the destruction of Troy. Here again Virgil imitates Homer in writing about the war between Turnus and Aeneas. But because Virgil did not describe all the action fully, a certain Latin Homer imitates the Greek Homer in that part, and his [i.e. the Latin Homer's] intention is either to imitate this Greek Homer or to describe the Trojan War. His [i.e. the Latin Homer's] subject-matter is Troy or Greece; the usefulness of his work is to give us a knowledge of the Trojan War. Or, alternatively, his subject-matter is drawn from those who, as a result of an illicit union, caused the war. His intention, then, is to dissuade anyone from such an illicit union, as a result of which he may incur the wrath of the gods, as did Paris, Helen, and the more courageous among their relatives who perished along with Troy in that war. The usefulness is that, having witnessed the destruction of the guilty, we may be afraid to

offend the majesty of the gods by any offence, be it slight or serious. It pertains to ethics. He divides the poem into three parts: the statement of his purpose (*propositio*), the invocation (*invocatio*), and the narrative (*narratio*). He combines the statement of his purpose and the invocation. He begins the narrative where he says FOR HE MADE.

Accessus ad auctores, quoted from Minnis/Scott, eds., p. 16-17

Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne* (c. 1303) [Prologue]

Fadyr, and Sone & holy goste, / Þat art o god of myȝtes moste,
At þy wurschyp shul we bygynne, / To shame þe fende & shew oure synne;
Synne to shewe, vs to frame, / God to wurschyp, þe fende to shame.
Shameful synne ys gode to lete, / Al þat men do, boþe smale & grete: 5
þe grete, withoutyn pryuyte, / That ben commune to me & the,
Of hem wyl y telle ȝow need / As y haue herde & red yn dede.

Of þyse þan ys my sawe, / Þe commaundementys of the olde lawe,
þyse ten were fyrst vs ȝeuyn, / And fyrst we wylyn of hem be shreuyng,
Yn what poyntys þat we falle / Yn opon synne aȝen hem alle.

And syþen of þe seuene synnes, / In what þyng þe fende vs wynnes; 10
And syþen of synne of sacrylege, / Þat ys to holy chyrche outrage;
And of þe sacramentys seuene / Þat techyn vs to þe blys of heuene;

Sypyn of þe twelue poyntes of shryfte, / And of þe twelue gracys of here ȝyfte;
Al þat toucheþ dedly synne, / In any spyce þat we falle ynne; 15
þat ys oponly seen or wrouȝt.

Of pryuytes speke y ryȝt nouȝt; / Þe pryuytes wyl y nat name
For none þarefore shulde me blame; / Leuer ys me þat þey be hydde,
þan for me were oponly kydde. / Nopeles þey mote be shreuyng
ȝyf ȝyfte of grace shal be ȝeuyn. /

Of þys clerkys wyl y nouȝt seye; / To greue hem y haue grete eye, 20
For þey wote þat ys to wetyn, / And se hyt wel before hem wrytyn.

Þat may be weyl on englyssh tolde, / To telle ȝow þat, y may be bolde;
For lewde men y vndyr-toke / On englyssh tunge to make þys boke.
For many ben of swyche manere, / Þat talys and rymys wyl bleþly here;
Yn gamys, & festys, & at þe ale, / Loue men to lestene troteuale: 25

What can be told well in English / I may readily tell you /
For lewed men I have undertaken / to compose this book in English /
For there are many / who are fond of listening to tales and poems; /
In games, feasts and at the ale / people are fond of listening to idle tales.

þat may falle ofte to vylanye, / To dedly synne, or oper folye;
For swyche men haue y made þis ryme / þat þey may weyl dyspende here tyme,
And þere-yn sumwhat for to here, / To leue al swyche foul manere,
And for to kunne knowe þerynne / þat þey wene no synne be ynne.

This may often result in bad behaviour, / may lead to deadly sins or other
follies. /
Precisely for those I have made this rhyme / so that they can use their time
better /
And find therein something to hear / so that they will be able to give up such
foul behaviour
And also that they will be able to understand / what they think might be without
sin.

To alle crystyn men vndir sunne, / And to gode men of Brunne, 30
And speciali, alle be name, / Þe felaushepe of Symprynghame,
Robert of Brunne greteþ ʒow / In al godenesse þat may to prow.
Of Brunnewake yn Kesteuene, / Syxe myle be-syde Sympryngham euene,
Y dwelled yn þe pryorye / Fyftene ʒere yn cumpanye,
In þe tyme of gode dane lone / Of Camelton, þat now ys gone: 35
In hys tyme was y þere ten ʒeres, / And knewe and herd of hys maneres;
Sybyn with dane lone of Clyntone, / Fyue wyntyr wyþ hym gan y wone;
Dane Felyp was mayster þat tyme / Þat y began þys englyssh ryme.
Þe ʒeres of grace fyl þan to be / A þousynd & þre hundred ^& þre.
In þat tyme turnede y þys / On englyssh tunge out of frankys, 40
Of a boke as y fonde ynne; Men clepyþ þe boke "handlyng synne."
In frenshe þer a clerk hyt sees, / He clepyþ hyt "manuel de pecches."
'Manuel' ys 'handlyng with honde;' / 'Peches' ys 'synne,' y vndyrstonde.
Þese twey wurdys þat beyn otwynne, / Do hem to gedyr, ys "handlyng synne."
And weyl ys clepyd, for þys skyle; / And as y wote, ʒow shew y wyle. 45
We handel synne euery day; / In wurde and dede, al we may,
Lytyl or mochel, synne we do, / Þe fend and oure flesh tysyn vs þerto;
Ffor þys skyle hyt may be seyde, / 'Handlyng synne' for oure mysbreyde;
Ffor euery day & euery oure / We synne þat shal we bye ful soure.
Anoper handlyng þer shuld be, / Wyþ shryfte of moupe to clense þe. 50
Handyl þy synne yn þy þouʒt, / Lytyl & mochel, what þou hast wroght;
Handyl þy synne to haue drede; / Nobyng but peyn ys þarfore mede.
Handyl þy synnes, & weyl hem gesse, / How þey fordo al þy godenesse.
Handyl þy synnes, & weyl hem euene, / Elles forbarre þey þe blys of heuene.
Handyl hem at onys euerychone, / Noght one by hym self alone. 55
Handyl so to ryse from alle, / Þat none make þe efte falle,
With shryfte of moupe, & wyl of herte, / And a party, with penaunce smerte;
Þys ys a skyl þat hyt may be tolde / Handlyng synne many a folde.
Handlyng yn speche ys as weyl / As handlyng yn dede euery deyl.
On þys manere handyl þy dedys, / And lestene and lerne whan any hem redys. 60
Þou darst neuer recche where þou bygynne, / For euery-whare ys bygynnyng of
synne;
Whedyr þou wylt opon þe boke, / Þou shalt fynde begynnyng oueral to loke;
Oueral ys bygynnyng, oueral ys ende; / Hou þat þou wylt turne or wende,
Many þyngys mayst þou þeryn here; / With oft redyng, mayst þou lere;
Þou mayst nat, with onys redyng, / Knowe þe soþe of euery þyng. 65
Handyl, hyt behouep, oft sybys, / To many maner synnes hyt wrypys.
Talys shalt þou fynde þerynne, / And chauncys þat hap happed for synne;
Meruelys, some as y fonde wrytyn, / And oper þat haue be seyn ^& wetyn;
None ben þare-yn, more ne lesse, / But þat y founde wryte, or had wytnesse.

Parefore may hyt, & gode skyl why, / 'Handlyng synne' be clepyd oponly; 70
For hyt toucheþ no priuite, / But opyn synne þat called may be.
Begynne we þan to telle in hast, / With fadyr and sone and holy gost,
And yn wurschyp of oure lady, / And al þe halewys þat beyn hem by:
Þey ʒeue vs grace ryȝt so to deme, / Vs to profyt, and god to queme.

Source: Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, ed. J. F. Furnivall, EETS O.S. 119, 123
(London, 1901)

Robert Mannyng, *The Story of England* (c. 1330)

Prologue

Lordynges þat be now here, / If ʒe wille listene & lere
Alle þe story of Inglande / Als Robert Mannyng wryten it fand
& on Inglisch has it schewed, / Not for þe lerid bot for þe lewed,
Ffor þo þat in þis land won / Þat þe Latyn no Frankys con,
Ffor to haf solace & gamen / In felawschip when þai sitt samen. 5
And it is wisdom forto wyttē / Þe state of þe land & haf it wryten:
What manere of folk first it wan / & of what kynde it first began.
And gude it is for many thynges / For to here þe dedis of kynges,
Whilk were foles & whilk were wyse, / & whilk of þam couth mast quantyse,
And whilk did wrong & whilk ryght, / & whilk mayntend pes & fyght. 10
Of þare dedes salle be my sawe, / & what tyme & of what lawe,
I salle ʒow schewe fro gre to gre / Sen þe tyme of sir Noe,

In order to have pleasure and joy / when they sit together in company. /
And it constitutes knowledge to be familiar / with the state of the country and
have it written down /
What people were those who first conquered the country / and what is their
genealogy /
And it is good in many respects / to hear about the deeds of kings, /
Which of them were fools and which were wise / and which of them were the
sliest, /
Which of them performed bad deeds and which of them good deeds, / And
which of them maintained the peace and waged wars /
My story will be about their deeds / and their times and their laws /
And I will show you this step by step, / Ever since the days of Noah.

Ffro Noe vnto Eneas, / & what betwix þam was.
And fro Eneas tille Brutus tyme, / Þat kynde he telles in þis ryme,
Ffro Brutus tille Cadwaladres, / Þe last Bryton þat þis lande lees. 15
Alle þat kynde & alle þe frute / Þat come of Brutus, þat is þe Brute.
And þe ryght Brute is told nomore / Þan þe Brytons tyme wore.
After þe Bretons þe Inglis camen, / Þe lordschip of þis lande þai namen.
South & north, west & est, / Þat calle men now þe Inglis gest.

When þai first among þe Bretons / Þat now ere Inglis, þan were Saxons. 20
 Saxons, Inglis hight alle oliche, / Þai aryued vp at Sandwyche
 In þe kynges tyme Vortogerne / Þat þe lande walde þam not werne,
 Þat were maysters of alle þe topire. / Hengist he hight, & Hors his bropire,
 Þes were hede, als we fynde, / Where of is comen oure Inglis kynde.
 A hundreth & fifty ȝere þai com / Or þai receyued cristendom, 25
 So lang woned þai þis lande in / Or þai herde out of Saynt Austyn.
 Among þe Bretons with mykelle wo, / In sclaudire, in threte, & in thro,
 Þes Inglis dedes ȝe may here / As Pers [Pierre Langtoft] telles alle þe manere.
 One mayster Wace þe Ffrankes telles / Þe Brute, alle þat þe Latyn spellen
 Ffro Eneas tille Cadwaladre. / Þis mayster Wace þer leues he, 30
 And ryght as mayster Wace says, / I telle myn Inglis þe same ways,
 Ffor mayster Wace þe Latyn alle rymes / Þat Pers ouerhippis many tymes.
 Mayster Wace þe Brute alle redes, / & Pers tellis alle þe Inglis dedes;
 Þer Mayster Wace of þe Brute left, / Ryght begynnes Pers eft
 And tellis forth þe Inglis story, / & as he says þan say I. 35
 Als þai haf wryten & sayd / Haf I alle in myn Inglis layd
 In symple speche as I couth / Þat is lightest in mannes mouth.
 I mad noght for no disours, / Ne for no seggers, no harpours,
 Bot for þe luf of symple men / Þat strange Inglis can not ken.
 Ffor many it ere þat strange Inglis / In ryme wate neuer what it is. 40
 And bot þai wist what it mente, / Ellis me thoght it were alle schente.
 I made it not forto be praysed, / Bot at þe lewed men were aysed.
 If it were made in ryme couwee, / Or in strangere or enterlace,
 Þat rede Inglis it ere inowe / Þat couthe not haf coppled a kowe;
 Þat outhere in couwee or in baston, / Som suld haf ben fordon, 45
 So þat fele men þat it herde / Suld not witte howe þat it ferde.
 I see in song, in sedgeyng tale / Of Erceldoun & of Kendale:
 Non þam says as þai þam wroght, / & in þer sayng it semes noght.
 Þat may þou here in sir Tristrem, / Ouer gestes it has þe steem
 Ouer alle þat is or was, / If men it sayd as made Thomas. 50
 Bot I here it no man so say / Þat of som cople, som is away.
 So þare fayre sayng here befor / Is þare trauayle nere forlorn;
 Þai sayd it for pride & nobleye / Þat non were suylyk as þei,
 And alle þat þai wild ouerwhere, / Alle þat ilk wille now forfare.
 Þai sayd in so quante Inglis / Þat manyone wate not what it is; 55
 þefore heuyed wele þe more / In strange ryme to trauayle sore,
 And my witte was oure thynne, / So strange speche to trauayle in.
 And forsoth I couth noght, / So strange Inglis as þai wroght.
 And men besoght me many a tyme / To turne it bot in light ryme;
 Þai sayd if I in strange it turne, / To here it manyon suld skurne, 60
 Ffor it ere names fulle selcouth / Þat ere not vsed now in mouth.
 And þefore for þe comonalte / Þat blythely wild listen to me,
 On light lange I it began / For luf of þe lewed man,
 To telle þam þe chaunces bolde / Þat here before was don & tolde.
 Ffor þis making I wille no mede / Bot gude prayere when ȝe it rede. 65
 þefore ȝe lordes lewed / Ffor wham I haf þis Inglis schewed,
 Prayes to God he gyf me grace: / I trauayled for ȝour solace.
 Of Brunne I am if any me blame, / Robert Mannyng is my name.
 Blissid be he of God of heuen / Þat me, Robert, with gude wille neuen.

In þe thrid Edwardes [1327-1377] tyme was I / When I wrote alle þis story. In þe hous of Sixille I was a throwe; / Danȝ Robert of Malton þat ȝe know Did it wryte for felawes sake / When þai wild solace make. Dares þe Freson of Troie first wrote / & putt it in buke þat we now wote; He was a clerk & a gude knyght. / When Troie was lorn, he sawe þat fight. Alle þe barons wele he knewe: / He tellis þer stature & þer hewe, Long or schorte, whyte or blak, / Alle he telles gude or lak. Alle þer lymmes how þai besemed, / In his buke has Dares demed, Both of Troie & of Grece, / Whatkyns schappe was ilka pece. Of manyon he reknes & sayes, / Both of Troiens & of Gregeis, þat it were oure long to telle; / & many wald not þerin duelle þare names alle forto here, / Bot þe Latyn is fayre to lere. Geffrey Arthure of Minumue / Fro Breton speche he did remue & made it alle in Latyn / þat clerkes haf now knawyng in. In Gloucestre was fonden a buke / þat þe Inglis couthe not rede no luke. On þat langage þai knew no herde, / Bot an erle þat hyght Roberde, He prayed þat ilk clerk Geffrey / To turne it fro þat speche away In to Latyn as it mente / þat þe Inglis mot know þe entente. Ffor Geffrey knew þe langage wele, / In Latyn he broght it ilka dele. Sipen com a clerk, Mayster Wace, / To make Romance had he grace, & turned it fro Latyne / & rymed it in Frankis fyne Vnto þe Cadwaladres, / No forer: þer makes he ses. Als Geffrey in Latyn sayd, / So Mayster Wace in Frankis layd. þe date of Criste was þan þis lyue, / A thousand ȝere fifty & fyue. Than com out of Brydlyngton, / Pers of Langtoft, a chanon. Als Mayster Wace þe same he says, / Bot he rymed it oþer ways. He begynnes at Eneas: / Of alle þe Brute he tellis þe pas, & sipen alle þe Inglis dedis; / Feyrere langage non ne redis. After þe Inglis kynges, he says þer pris / þat alle in metir fulle wele lys. And I, Robert, fulle fayn wald bringe / In Ynglis tonge þer faire saiynge. God gyf me grace wele to spede, / þis ryme on Inglis forto rede.	70 75 80 85 90 95 100
---	---

Source: Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *The Chronicle*. Ed. Idelle Sullens. *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, 153. New York, 1996

Geoffrey Chaucer, [late 14th century]

Troilus and Criseyde (l.393-399)

And of his song naught only the sentence,
As writ myn auctour called Lollius,
But plainly, save oure tonges difference,
I dar wel seyn, in al, that Troilus
Seyde in his song, loo, every word right thus
As I shal seyn; and whoso list it here,
Loo, next this vers he may it fynden here.

II.8-28

O lady myn, that called art Cleo,
Thow be my speed fro this forth, and my Muse,
To ryme wel this book til I have do;
Me nedeth here noon other art to use.
Forwhi to every lovere I me excuse,
That of no sentement I this endite,
But out of Latyn in my tonge it write.

Wherfore I nyl have neither thank ne blame
Of al this werk, but prey yow mekely,
Disblameth me if any word be lame,
For as myn auctour seyde, so sey I.
Ek though I speeke of love unfelyngly,
No wondre is, for it nothyng of newe is;
A blynd man kan nat juggen wel in hewis.

Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is change
Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
And spedde as wel in love as men now do;
Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
In sondry londes, sondry ben usages.

II.43-49

Ek scarsly ben ther in this place thre
That have in love seid lik, and don, in al;
For to thi purpos this may liken the,
And the right nought; yet al is seid or schal;
Ek som men grave in tree, some in ston wal,
As it bitit. But syn I have bigonne,
Myn auctour shal I folwen, if I konne.

II. 694-700

And, Lord! So she gan in hire thought argue
In this matere of which I have yow told,
And what to doone best were, and what eschue,
That plited she ful ofte in many fold.
Now was hire herte warm, now was it cold;
And what she thoughte somewhat shal I write,
As to myn auctour listeth for t'endite.

III.575-581

Nought list myn auctour fully to declare
What that she thoughte whan he seyde so,
That Troilus was out of towne yfare,
As if he seyde therof soth or no;
But that, withowten await, with hym to go,
She graunted hym, sith he hire that bisoughte
And, as his nece, obeyed as hire oughte.

III.1191-1197

What myghte or may the sely larke seye,
Whan that the sperhauk hath it in his foot?
I kan namore; but of thise ilke tweye -
To whom this tale sucre be or soot -
Though that I tarie a yer, somtyme I moot,
After myn auctour, tellen hire gladnesse,
As wel as I have told hire hevynesse.

V.1086-1092

But trewely, how longe it was bytwene
That she forsok hym for this Diomede,
Ther is non auctour telleth it, I wene.
Take every man now to his bokes heede,
He shal no terme fynden, out of drede.
For though that he bigan to wowe hire soone,
Er he hire wan, yet was ther more to doone.

Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*

The Nun's Priest's Tale (VII.3230-3266)

O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe
That thou into that yerd flaugh fro the bemes!

Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes
That thilke day was perilous to thee;
But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee, 5
After the opinioun of certein clerkis.
Witnesse on hym that any parfit clerk is,
That in scole is greet altercacioun
In this mateere, and greet disputisoun,
And hath been of an hundred thousand men. 10
But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren
As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,
Or Boece, or the Bisshop Bradwardyn,
Wheither that Goddes worthy forwityng
Streyneth me nedely for to doon a thyng - 15
"Nedely" clepe I symple necessitee -
Or elles, if free choys be graunted me
To do that same thyng, or do it noght,
Though God forwoot it er that I was wroght;
Or if his wityng streyneth never a deel 20
But by necessitee condicioneel.
I wol nat han to do of swich mateere;
My tale is of a cok, as ye may heere,
That tok his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
To walken in the yerd upon that morwe 25
That he hadde met that dreem that I yow tolde.
Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde;
Wommannes conseil broghte us first to wo
And made Adam fro Paradys to go,
Ther as he was ful myrie and wel at ese. 30
But for I noot to whom it myght displese,
If I conseil of wommen wolde blame,
Passe over, for I seyde it in my game.
Rede auctours, where they trete of swich mateere,
And what they seyn of wommen ye may heere. 35
Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne;
I kan noon harm of no womman divyne.

Source: *The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. L. D. Benson. 3rd edition (New York, 1987)

Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid* [late 15th century]

I mend the fyre and beikit me about,
Than tuik ane drink, my spreitis to comfort,
And armit me weill fra the cauld thairout.
To cut the winter nicht and mak it schort.
I tuik ane quair - and left all vther sport - 5
Writtin be worthie Chaucer glorious
Of fair Cresseid and worthie Troylus.

And thair I fand, efter that Diomeid
Ressaut had that lady bricht of hew,
How Troilus neir out of wit abraid, 10
And weipit soir with visage pail of hew;
For quhilk wanhope his teiris can renew,
Quhill esperance reioisit him agane;
Thus quhyle in ioy he leuit, quhyle in pane.

Of hir behest he had greit comforting, 15
Traisting to Troy that scho suld mak retour,
Quhilk he desyrit maist of eirdly thing,
For quhy scho was his only paramour.
Bot quhen he saw passit baith day and hour
Of hir ganecome, than sorrow can oppress 20
His wofull hart in cair and heuines.

Of his distres me neidis nocht reheirs,
For worthie Chauceir in the samin buik,
In gudolie termis and in ioly veirs
Compylit hes his cairis, quha will luik. 25
To brek my sleip ane vther quair I tuik,
In quhilk I fand the fatall destenie
Of fair Cresseid, that endit wretchitlie.

unusual interweaving of words and thoughts; and thus it veils truth in a fair and fitting garment of fiction.

Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, Chapter vii: The Definition of Poetry, its Origin and Function (quoted from Minnis/Scott, eds., p. 420)

These enemies of poetry further utter the taunt that poets are liars. This position they try to maintain by the hackneyed objection that poets write lies in their narratives, to wit, that a human being was turned into a stone - a statement in every aspect contrary to the truth.

They urge besides that poets lie in asserting that there are many gods, though it is established in all certainty that there is but One - the True and Omnipotent.

Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, Chapter Chapter xiii: Poets are not Liars (quoted from Minnis/Scott, eds., p. 413)

Only the Poet disdeining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect into another nature: in making things either better then nature bringeth foorth, or quite a new, formes such as never were in nature: as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chymeras, Furies, and such like; so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely raunging within the Zodiack of his owne wit. Nature never set foorth the earth in so rich Tapistry as diverse Poets have done, neither with so pleasaunt rivers, fruitfull trees, sweete smelling flowers, nor whatsoever els may make the too much loved earth more lovely: her world is brasen, the Poets only deliver a golden.

Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy* (1595)

<<http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/defence.html>>