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SPEECH REPRESENTATION IN ROBERT MANNYNG'S *HANDLYNG SYNNE* AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL

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Abstract: With his translation of *Manuel des péchés*, Robert Mannyng wanted to guide both a lay and a clerical audience in their understanding of sin and engagement with confession. To do so he had to navigate various contrasting demands, such as exposing clerical shortcomings without driving parishioners away from their religious leaders, or teaching on sins of the tongue without inciting his audience to commit them. This paper shows that *Handlyng Synne*, Mannyng's carefully constructed penitential text, achieves its aims, to a great extent, by employing different modes of speech representation, which allow him to foreground or background information as required. The discussion explores how the varied representation of speech facilitates the audience's strong emotional connection with the text, as well as the delivery of Mannyng's pedagogical message and the avoidance of potential pitfalls. Reaching a novel understanding of the functions of speech representation in the text is made possible by the application of a specially adapted framework for the study of the many different ways in which speech could be reproduced in medieval texts. With this comprehensive approach, this paper moves beyond the narrower focus—common in previous scholarly work on the text—on direct speech as a narrative technique simply aimed at making the text more appealing to a lay audience used to being entertained by oral narratives.

Key Words: Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, speech representation, medieval confession

Introduction

By translating into early Middle English the Anglo-Norman penitential text *Manuel des péchés* (ca. 1260; hereafter *Manuel*),¹ conventionally attributed to William of Waddington, the Gilbertine canon Robert Mannyng of Brunne intended to provide his audience with guidance about how best to approach confession. Both its source and Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* (ca. 1330) refer to a wide range of sins and their complex connections, as well as the process of carrying out a full and honest confession led by repentance. This message generally stems from the aims of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) to improve clerical and lay education, and to further regulate the interaction between the individual and the Church,² although it is important to bear in mind that the degree of application of the Council's exact mandates at a local level remains unclear.³

Mannyng kept the overall structure of his source, with pastoral comments further elaborated and developed by *exempla*—short tales presenting examples of good or bad practices mostly in everyday life.⁴ However, unlike the only other known Middle English translation of *Manuel*, *Of Shrifte and Penance* (hereafter *Shrifte*),⁵ Mannyng's work did not simply follow the Anglo-Norman text, but expanded both the commentary and the tales, by adding new ones and

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¹ On the likely date of composition of *Manuel*, see E. J. Arnould, *Le Manuel des Péchés: Étude de littérature religieuse anglo-normande (xiiième siècle)* (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1940), 253–56. On the date of *Handlyng Synne*, see Ralph Hanna, "Robert Manning: Some Textual—and Biographical—Emendations," *Notes and Queries* 66 (2019): 26–28.

² On the Fourth Lateran Council and its aims, see further Marion Gibbs and Jane Lang, *Bishops and Reform, 1215–1272, with Special Reference to the Lateran Council of 1215* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), particularly Part III; and Carol Ann Sibson, "'Pys tale rymeth hou men in senne beh': A Study of Vernacular Verse *Pastoralia* for the English Laity, c.1240 – c.1330" (PhD diss., Queen Mary, University of London, 2013), Chapter 1.

³ See Jeffrey M. Wayno, "Rethinking the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215," *Speculum* 93 (2018): 611–37.

⁴ For an overview of Mannyng's *exempla* in terms of their cultural background, sources and formal features, see Fritz Kemmler, *'Exempla' in Context: A Historical and Critical Study of Robert Mannyng of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne'* (Tübingen: Narr, 1984). On the role of *exempla* in medieval narratives more broadly, see Tony Davenport, *Medieval Narrative: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Chapter 3. On the terms that Mannyng uses to refer to these tales and their closer association with secular narratives than religious *exempla*, see Ryan Perry, "Robert Mannyng and the Imagined Reading Communities of *Handlyng Synne*," in *Pastoral Care in Medieval England Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Peter Clarke and Sarah James (London: Routledge, 2019), 159–81, at 164, with references.

⁵ References to *Shrifte* in this paper follow this edition and are given in terms of its page and line number(s): *Of Shrifte and Penance: The ME Prose Translation of Le Manuel des Péchés, ed. from St John's College, Cambridge, MS G. 30*, ed. Klaus Bitterling (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1998).

making those already in the source more explicit in their teaching and, to a great extent, more appealing to the audience.⁶ After all, Mannyng had to make sure that a text originally intended to edify and educate—not entertain—a general clerical audience was appropriate for a wider audience of both clerics and laymen, who were used to having a good time with idle tales (ME *trotevāle*) in the midst of games, festivities and drinking:⁷

For lewed men y vndyr toke
On englyssh tonge to make þys boke.
For many beyn of swyche manere,
Pat talys & rymys wyle bleþly here;
Yn gamys, yn festys, & at þe ale,
Loue men to lestene trowthale (ll. 43–48).

[For the sake of unlearned men, I set about to write this book in the English language. For many are of such disposition that will gladly hear tales and rhymes; in games, feasts and at their drink, men love to listen to idle tales].⁸

Given this statement, it might be tempting to see the use of tales as a way to simplify the doctrine for a rowdy and uneducated audience, but this would be a misinterpretation. Just a few lines below (ll. 119–24), Mannyng urges his audience to open the book at any point, as a way of taking the first steps into understanding the multifaceted nature of sin and how to root it out from their lives through confession. Therefore, tales and commentary alike must provide the audience with the spiritual guidance needed.⁹ The tales help to make theological discussions relevant to each reader, asking them to recognize themselves in the stories' characters and moving them (by tapping into a wide range of emotions) to engage with the teaching so that they can understand the difference between right and wrong; can remember essential truths; can use all this information to make good decisions; and can fully engage with the sacrament of confession when they do not manage to uphold the Church's expectations, or when they have to administer it, in the case of the clergy.¹⁰

⁶ Mannyng left out six of the tales included in *Manuel* and added more than ten; see S. A. Sullivan, "A Study of Robert Mannyng of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne* and Its Relation to Other Instructional Works, in Order to Establish the Place of the Poem in Its Genre" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1978), 153–87; Kemmler, 'Exempla', 93–121; Carl Lindhal, "The Re-Oralised Legends of Robert Mannyn's *Handlyng Synne*," *Contemporary Legends* n.s. 2 (1999): 34–62, at 37; and Susan E. Phillips, *Transforming Talk: The Problem with Gossip in Late Medieval England* (Pennsylvania State University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 39, n. 70.

⁷ On the mainly clerical audience of *Manuel*, see Matthew Sullivan, "The Original and Subsequent Audiences of the *Manuel des Pêchés* and Its Middle English Descendants" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1990); and Matthew Sullivan, "Readers of the *Manuel des Pêches*," *Romania* 113 (1992–95): 233–42. Scholars tend to focus on Mannyng's lay audience: e.g. Kemmler, 'Exempla', 15; Mark Miller, "Displaced Souls, Idle Talk, Spectacular Scenes: *Handlyng Synne* and the Perspective of Agency," *Speculum* 71 (1996): 606–32, at 609; Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 46–59; and Perry, "Robert Mannyng". However, some have also highlighted the significance of his clerical audience: e.g. Kate Greenspan, "Lessons for the Priest, Lessons for the People: Robert Mannyng of Brunne's Audiences for *Handlyng Synne*," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 21 (2015): 109–21; and Lynneth Miller Renberg, "Priests, Cursed Carolers, and Pastoral Care in *Handlyng Synne*, *Of Shrifte and Penance*, and *Instructions to His Son*," in *The Cursed Carolers in Context*, ed. Lynneth Miller Renberg and Bradley Phillis (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 91–108. On specific groups, see Joyce Coleman, "Handling Pilgrims: Robert Mannyng and the Gilbertine Cult," *Philological Quarterly* 81 (2002): 311–26, who hypothesizes that his lay audience may have been mainly pilgrims using Mannyng's priory as a guesthouse during their trip to the shrine of St Gilbert; and Cynthia Ho, "Dichotomize and Conquer: 'Womman Handlyng' in *Handlyng Synne*," *Philological Quarterly* 72 (1993): 383–401, who discusses Mannyng's portrayal of women and its connection with a mixed male and female audience. For an overview of the various suggestions that have been made about Mannyng's audience, see Sibson, "'Pys tale rymeth hou men in senne beb'," 143–46, with references.

⁸ Unless otherwise stated, references to and quotations from *Handlyng Synne* are based on *Robert Mannyng: Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idelle Sullens (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1983). All translations in the chapter are my own.

⁹ The tales were also extracted from their context and circulated by themselves; that is the case, for instance, of 'The Tale of the Forgiving/Merciful Knight' (ll. 3801ff) in the miscellaneous Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61.

¹⁰ See Anne M. Scott, "The Role of Exempla in Educating through Emotion: The Deadly Sin of 'Lechery' in Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne*," in *Authority, Gender and Emotions in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 34–50.

Speech representation is most often discussed in the context of Mannyng's reworking of his source in order to achieve the effective story-telling needed to engage the lay members of his audience. Direct speech takes centre stage and its use is generally noted amongst the various other techniques that Mannyng uses to make the stories appealing and relevant to the here and now of his East Midland audience:¹¹ e.g. metrical form and lexical choices typical of romances; concrete and visualizable imagery; references to contemporary social practices, recent events, and well-known locations and figures;¹² and the nativization of foreign saints.¹³ However, scholars recognize that it is precisely this attempt to make the tales relevant to his audience that forces him to tread a very careful line between, on the one hand, providing entertainment for the sake of pastoral guidance and, on the other, engaging in *trotevāle*, gossip and backbiting, that is, many of the oral activities that are condemned, and often severely punished, in the text.¹⁴

In spite of the general recognition of the general significance of speech in the text and the possible problems it entails, scholarly discussions have remained fairly narrow, focusing mainly on the role that direct speech has in making the tales appealing to a broad audience. This article explores instead the various ways in which reliance on different modes of speech representation helps Mannyng to achieve his pedagogical agenda. In order to do so, the next section introduces the nuanced framework for the study of speech representation—especially adapted for the analysis of medieval texts—that forms the methodological backbone of the paper. In the analysis enabled by this innovative methodological approach, the discussion first addresses the central role that direct speech plays in helping the audience to become emotionally invested in the tales, identify with their characters and fully open their hearts and minds to process the work's message. The focus then moves to the handling of that message, with particular attention to the impact of speech on one's spiritual life, in terms of sinful behaviour and confession. The deployment of a wide range of modes of speech representation to discuss these doctrinal issues is shown to be a key tool that allows Mannyng to guide his audience through the intricacies of his pastoral instruction, to navigate his way through potentially dangerous uses of his tales and to juggle the conflicting demands of exposing bad clerical behaviour while pressing his lay audience to place their trust in the clergy.

Methodological framework

There are various factors that might lead us to think that medieval speakers had a conception of the relationship between direct speech and other modes of speech representation that differs significantly from contemporary views. For instance, medieval scribes did not tend to mark formally direct speech in any clear or consistent way.¹⁵ Moreover, medieval texts present transitions, sometimes referred to as *slipping*, in and out of direct speech in somewhat unexpected points within a sentence, without any lexical warning. For instance, in the account of a dead man from Suffolk who asks his wife to have masses sung for him so that he can make his way out of purgatory and into heaven, we find these lines

¹¹ Lindhal, "Re-Oralist Legends," 42, offers some helpful data to understand the significance of Mannyng's reliability on direct speech: the first twenty tales of *Manuel* include 295 lines of direct speech, while those in *Handlyng Synne* have 534, an increase of more than 80%; thus, in Mannyng's tales, direct speech represents 35% of the lines while in *Manuel* it only accounts for 24%.

¹² In the tales that Mannyng added we find references to important locations for his own life (e.g. Kesteven and Cambridgeshire: ll. 57–68, 6175 and 6379) as well as other areas in Eastern England, some vague (e.g. Norfolk: l. 8673) and some more specific (e.g. Sudbury in Suffolk: ll. 10405–06). Mannyng even anglicizes the town of Colbeck, located in Saxony, in his recount of the well-known story of 'The Cursed Carolers of Colbeck' (see ll. 9016 and 9022). On Mannyng's life, see Ruth Crosby, "Robert Mannyng of Brunne: A New Biography," *PMLA* 57 (1942): 15–28; Michael Stephenson, "Further Biographical Notes on Robert Mannyng of Brunne," *Notes and Queries* 45 (1998): 284–85; and Andrew W. Taubman, "New Biographical Notes on Robert Mannyng of Brunne," *Notes and Queries* 56 (2009): 197–201.

¹³ See e.g. Chloe McKeefrey Usis, "The Narrative and Homiletical Technique of Robert Mannyng" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1950), Chapter 7; Graham Platts, "Robert Mannyng of Bourne's 'Handlyng Synne' and South Lincolnshire Society," *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 14 (1979): 23–29; Piero Boitani, *English Medieval Narrative in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, trans. Joan Krakover Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 23–26; Lindhal, "Re-Oralist Legends"; and Kate Greenspan, "Englising the Saints in Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne*," in *Sanctity as Literature in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. Eva von Contzen and Anke Bernau (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 60–79.

¹⁴ Phillips, *Transforming Talk*, 33–42.

¹⁵ See Collette Moore, *Quoting Speech in Early English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Chapter

as part of the reported dialogue between the woman and the head of the religious house where she seeks help:

And preyde hym of socour.
Ȝyf he had any broþer,
þat he hoped were better þan ouþer,
'þat wyl synge me a messe
For a man þat ded ys,
And at myn ese he shal haue
To a pytaunce þat he wyl craue' (ll. 10448–54)

[And [she] asked him for help: If he had any brother, whom he knew to be better than any other 'who will sing me a mass for a man who is dead, and, he shall have, at my pleasure, any gift that he would like to ask for'].

The transition from indirect to direct speech takes place at the beginning of a relative clause which depends on another relative clause that is part of the indirect speech. Such a transition point is much less common than that between two coordinated clauses, even if the quotative verb is omitted, as in the following lines from the same tale:

He bad þe womman home to wende,
'And, whan þou more eft heres,
Cum and sey to oure freres' (ll. 10466–68).

[He bade the woman to go home, 'and, when you hear more afterwards, come and say it to our brothers'].

These features could be taken as indicators that medieval authors were not fully aware of the differences between direct speech and other modes of speech representation, and therefore were not in full control of their use or effects. However, reaching that conclusion would be mistaken. Indeed, unexpected transitions between the different modes are often stylistically and pragmatically motivated.¹⁶ For instance, the Church's financial gain from having masses bought for the sake of one's soul is one of Mannyng's key practical concerns in *Handlyng Synne*; ll. 10448–54 reflect this through the sudden transition to direct speech when addressing this topic, while indirect speech presents instead known information (the request for a priest who leads a righteous life by the woman's dead husband is quoted twice before in direct speech: ll. 10439–42 and 10444, where it is presented as a habitual request; see further below).¹⁷

Recent work has also shown that medieval authors were attuned to the different stylistic and narratorial effects of the various modes of speech representation, even though this is not something that was directly discussed in the rhetoric manuals available to them.¹⁸ However, these studies tend to focus mainly on the contrast between direct and indirect speech, not taking full advantage of the more nuanced approach developed by Leech and Short for the analysis of modern texts.¹⁹ Thus, in my study of speech representation in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,²⁰ I put forward a classification that takes as its starting point Leech and Short's typology, with the modifications suggested by Short,

¹⁶ See Gerald Richman, "Artful Slipping in Old English," *Neophilologus* 70 (1986): 279–90.

¹⁷ Cf. ll. 8967–70, where we see a similar change from indirect to direct speech when it comes to referring to the Church's profit from having people praying for one's soul. The corresponding lines in *Manuel* are missing from *Le Manuel dé Pechez*, ed. R. W. Russell (Oxford: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2019); however, in ll. 6905–08 of the French text reconstructed in *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1901–03), 282, the sacrilegious couple's words about giving money to the Church are given as indirect speech, like the rest of their response to their punishment. On Mannyng's concern about the Church's finances, see further Coleman, "Handling Pilgrims," 319.

¹⁸ E.g. Lucy Perry, "'þus heo hit speken': Direct and Indirect Speech in the Two Versions of Lazamon's *Brut*," *Neophilologus* 92 (2008): 523–43; and Moore, *Quoting Speech*, Chapter 3.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short, *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, 2nd ed. (Harlow: Pearson, 2007; first ed. 1981), Chapter 10.

²⁰ Sara M. Pons-Sanz, "Speech Representation as a Narrative Technique in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Review of English Studies* 70 (2019): 209–30.

Semino and Culpeper, and Semino and Short.²¹ Short and his collaborators understand the different ways in which speech can be represented as a continuum of categories in relation to the narrator's control of the speech event. Their categories, with increasing control, are (free) direct speech, free indirect speech, indirect speech, narrator's representation of speech act and narrator's representation of voice. Importantly, Spearing has shown that the modern distinction between the author and the narrator (as a distinct, consistent and stable subjectivity behind the narrative) is not fully applicable to medieval texts.²² As such, references to a *narrator* are removed from the discussion, but the categories of speech representation in themselves offer a very helpful starting point because medieval authors, like their modern counterparts, had different choices about how to present speech as part of the story-telling process. As far as I know, my framework, further explained below, is the only one that adapts the various categories to account for the differences between medieval and modern representations of speech. It comprises the following categories: direct speech (including individual direct speech, collective direct speech and internal direct speech), mixed speech, indirect speech and narrated speech (including representation of speech act and representation of voice).

Direct and indirect speech are commonly distinguished according to whether the reported words are supposed to be those uttered verbatim by the character and in terms of the linguistic features in use. Even though the first factor has been shown to be problematic, it can be used to differentiate between (a) direct speech that *could* represent what an individual character might have said in a situation; (b) collective direct speech, where it is unlikely that the words uttered would have been said by anyone in particular but rather represent the opinions of a group of people; and (c) internal direct speech. The latter is equivalent to Leech and Short's direct thought but it is categorized here as speech on the basis that the quotative verb refers to speech rather than thought (e.g. "Þe munk repentyd hym þan & þoghte, 'Allas,' he seyde, 'what have y wroghte...'" ; the monk repented then and thought 'Alas,' he said, 'what have I done?'; ll. 251–52).²³ Given the common representation of direct thought in this respect in medieval texts, it should not be interpreted as an uncommon (or stylistically marked) representation of thought, where consciousness is foregrounded, as is the case in modern texts,²⁴ but rather as the common (or stylistically unmarked) representation of internal monologue.²⁵ These three types of direct speech can be presented with or without a quotative clause (see e.g. ll. 2315–24 for the alternation between the presence and absence of a quotative clause).

As noted above, direct and indirect speech also differ formally: the linguistic features (particularly deictic markers) in direct speech are appropriate to the communicative situation where the speech is (supposed to have been) uttered (e.g. first and second person pronouns, verbal forms and adverbs referring to the here and now of the speaker), while those in indirect speech belong instead to the situation where speech is reported. The distinction between these two modes can be seen in ll. 191–92 as recorded in two different manuscripts of the text:²⁶

London, British Library, Harley MS 1701 (indirect speech)
 The munkë seyð he graunted weyl
 Aftyр hys maumette to do eуery deyl

[The monk said he that he agreed fully to do everything in accordance with his idol]

London, Dulwich College Library, MS 24 (direct speech)
 The monk seide I graunt wel

²¹ Mick Short, Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpeper, "Using a Corpus for Stylistics Research: Speech and Thought Presentation," in *Using Corpora for Language Research: Studies in Honour of Geoffrey Leech*, ed. Jenny Thomas and Mick Short (London: Longman, 1996), 110–31; Elena Semino and Mick Short, *Corpus Stylistics: Speech, Writing and Thought Presentation in a Corpus of English Writing* (London: Routledge, 2004).

²² A. C. Spearing, "What is a Narrator: Narrator Theory and Medieval Narratives," *Digital Philology* 4 (2015): 59–105, with references.

²³ Cf. Monika Fludernik, "1050–1500 Through a Glass Darkly: Or, the Emergence of Mind in Medieval Narrative," in *The Emergence of Mind: Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English*, ed. David Herman (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 69–100.

²⁴ See Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction*, 275–77.

²⁵ Pons-Sanz, "Speech Representation," 4.

²⁶ These lines are quoted from *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Furnivall. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 415, the base text in *Robert Mannyng*, ed. Sullens, also records the text as indirect speech.

After þi mamett do euery deyl
[The monk said, ‘I agree fully to do everything in accordance with your idol’].

In modern narratives, free indirect speech is said to be a mixture of direct and indirect speech, as some linguistic traits could be said to be associated with the speaker rather than the narrator. However, the presence of this mode of speech representation in medieval texts is controversial, to a great extent because of the paucity of texts where linguistic variation is clearly used for the sake of characterization and the absence of those features that are typical of this mode in modern examples (e.g. the mixture of deictic markers that can be associated with the communicative situations where the speech is reported and is uttered: e.g. the presence of “tomorrow” instead of “the day after” in “He would see her tomorrow, he said”).²⁷ Therefore, I do not recognize this as a category suitable for medieval texts; I speak instead about *mixed speech* for those contexts where either it is not possible to distinguish between direct and indirect speech, or where we might find an example of proto-free indirect speech.

The distinction between the representation of speech acts and the representation of voice lies in the fact that the former reports the illocutionary force of the utterance, while the latter simply indicates that someone has spoken, with a possible short mention of the topic: “And askyde cunseyll of swyche a dede” (and he asked for advice on such an act; l. 194) vs. “As þey spake of many what...” (as they spoke about many things; l. 5589). Given that at times it is difficult to differentiate between indirect speech and the representation of a speech act, I follow Semino and Short, and McIntyre and Walker in adopting a syntactic distinction:²⁸ “indirect speech consists of an *inquit* clause and a subordinate reported clause (which can be finite or non-finite), while the [...] representation of speech act consists of a single clause”.²⁹ I use the term *narrated speech* to refer to those contexts where it is not necessary to distinguish between the representation of speech act and the representation of voice, the main point being that the report of the speech event is significantly reduced and backgrounded.

This study also relies on a number of methodological decisions associated with the source text(s). It is not clear which version of *Manuel Mannyng* followed for his translation. Furnivall created a composite text of the Anglo-Norman text as a companion text for his edition of *Handlyng Synne* on the basis of London, British Library, Harley MSS 273 and 4657.³⁰ Russell has recently published the first part of his edition of *Manuel* based on Cambridge, University Library, MS Mm.6.4 (up to l. 6464).³¹ Given that Furnivall’s handling of the two versions is not fully transparent, unless otherwise stated, references to *Manuel* in this paper follow Russell’s edition. Furnivall’s edition is referred to in those cases where there is disparity between the manuscripts or where Russell’s edition does not extend to the relevant lines. Additionally, since *Shrifte* is generally accepted to be a very close translation of the Anglo-Norman text, extracts from this text are also quoted below for general comparative purposes so as to facilitate comprehension.

These methodological decisions allow us to explore the various facets of Mannyng’s reliance on speech representation as a pedagogical tool. As explained in the Introduction, the discussion starts with the role that direct speech has in the development of strong emotional connections between the audience and the text, as an important step for them to open up their hearts to its message. It then moves on to analyse how reliance on the whole array of modes of speech representation is fundamental for Mannyng to navigate through the different—at times seemingly conflicting—demands that the text poses.

Emotional connection

Louivot argues that the presence in direct speech of linguistic features that are appropriate to the here and now of the speaker rather than the story-teller is the key factor to account direct speech’s ability

²⁷ See Monika Fludernik, *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction: The Linguistic Representation of Speech and Consciousness* (London: Routledge, 1993).

²⁸ Semino and Short, *Corpus Stylistics*, 11; and Dan McIntyre and Brian Walker, “Discourse Presentation in Early Modern English Writing,” *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 16 (2011): 101–30, at 112–13.

²⁹ Pons-Sanz, “Speech Representation,” 8.

³⁰ *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Furnivall.

³¹ *Manuel dé Pechez*, ed. Russell.

to actualize speech (i.e. give it a reality effect), and hence the sense of vividness and dramatic immediacy that it transmits.³² Approaching the topic from a different angle, Griswold suggests that direct speech and other modes of speech representation give different indications on the “aboutness” of the story:³³ while direct speech highlights that a point in the story is about the character whose speech is reported, with the story-teller being able to depict desired aspects of their personality or their stance towards the events,³⁴ other forms of speech representation suggest instead that the main point of the story lies elsewhere and that the characters’ behaviour is secondary to (or an illustration of) the story’s main point.

The effects of direct speech are particularly important in oral narratives, where, as Martínez Pizarro points out, the story-teller “tries to become transparent, to vanish from the scene or from the listeners’ awareness; by appealing primarily to their dramatic imagination, he invites them to follow an action that does not include him as a judge, critic or interpreter”.³⁵ While Mannyng cannot be said to avoid judgement, criticism or interpretation in the commentary and instruction that accompany the exempla, his attitude in the tales themselves, where we hear the characters speak, is closer to that role. Moreover, the complex interaction between orality and literacy is prominent in *Handlyng Synne*, in terms of both its composition (the text frequently feels like a written record of an orally delivered text) and its transmission (Mannyng encourages his diverse audience to “handle” the physical copy of the book and read it, possibly privately, as well as listen to its contents at a social gathering, in a public reading or recital; see e.g. ll. 117–28).³⁶

When these points are brought together, it is easy to see why scholars often mention direct speech as one of the narrative techniques that Mannyng relied on to enable his audience to feel more involved in the story and identify with the characters in his tales. Yet, besides focusing our attention on the characters themselves and their take on events, direct speech helps us to experience the wide range of emotions that Mannyng’s characters exhibit, at the centre of which lie the Church and its representatives. After all, as Scott makes clear, the tales play a key role in Mannyng’s attempt to educate his audience and their success relies on the audience’s emotional engagement.³⁷ Here are some examples:

a) Fear: this is one of the main emotions through which Mannyng aims to ensure that his audience pay attention to his teaching and mend their ways. Even though medieval commentators identified *timor filialis* (one’s fear of God the Father arising from one’s pure love for him and one’s recognition of his superiority) as the type of spiritual fear that should lead one to follow God’s commandments, the type of fear that is most common in the work is *timor servilis* (one’s fear of eternal suffering and pain after death).³⁸ Thus, we hear the characters speak in terror of their punishment in the afterlife: e.g. a squire who keeps on putting repentance off until it is too late gives a hair-raising account of the vision that

³² Elise Louviot, *Direct Speech in Beowulf and Other Old English Narrative Poems* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2016), 11–15.

³³ Olga Griswold, “Center Stage: Direct and Indirect Reported Speech in Conversational Storytelling,” *Issues in Applied Linguistics* 20 (2016): 73–90, at 73.

³⁴ Cf. Herbert Clark and Richard J. Gerrig, “Quotations as Demonstrations,” *Language* 66 (1990): 764–805, who distinguish between direct speech as demonstrative and indirect speech as descriptive.

³⁵ Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, *A Rhetoric of the Scene: Dramatic Narrative in the Early Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 55–56.

³⁶ On the interaction between orality, literacy and auralty in the text, see, for instance, Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 66 and 83–85; and Perry, “Robert Mannyng,” 164–69 and 174.

³⁷ See Scott, “Role of Exempla,” 38–41. For a discussion of the role of direct speech in the transmission of emotions in medieval narratives, see also Elizabeth Archibald, “Some Uses of Direct Speech in the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* and Malory,” *Arthuriana* 28, no. 3 (2018): 66–85. On the importance of affective engagement in medieval rhetoric, see Rita Copeland, *Emotion and the History of Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), Chapters 2 and 3.

³⁸ On the significance of fear in *Handlyng Synne*, see Robert Hasenfratz, “Terror and Pastoral Care in *Handlyng Synne*,” in *Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care: Essays in Honour of Bella Millett*, ed. Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker (York: Medieval Press, 2009), 132–48; and Lara Farina, “Get a Grip? The Tactile Object of *Handlyng Synne*,” in *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions through History*, ed. Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway and Sarah Randles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 97–113. On the medieval conceptualization of fear, see also Sara M. Pons-Sanz, “Medieval Multilingualism and the Expression of Emotion: FEAR in the *Gawain*-Poet’s Texts,” *English Language and Linguistics* 26 (2022): 361–98, with references.

he has about the punishment awaiting him after his imminent death (although the change from past to present hints at the fact that he might be suffering already as he speaks):

Be toon þurgh myn hed smote
Wyþ þe knyf þat was so hote.
Be touþer smote me yn to þe fete
þat almost to gedyr þe strokes mete.
But whan þey are to gedyr ycome,
And haue my herte betwyxe hem nome,
þan shal y deye and henne wende
Wyþ þese to helle wyþ outen ende (ll. 4493–500)

[One of them struck through my head with a knife that was very hot. The other struck me on the feet, so that the strokes almost clashed together. But when they have come together and have taken my heart between them, then I shall die and depart with them from here to hell without end].

In *Manuel* a shorter description of the punishment itself is also given in direct speech (ll. 3999–4002) and this is retained by *Shrifte*: “Þorw myn herte þey have put a knyfe. Nevere I nel crye mercy. Ichave do to lytul gode, þat [I] se wel” (They have put a knife through my heart. I will never cry for mercy. I have done too little good; that I see well’; 76.10–12). However, in these two texts, this is embedded in an account of the vision which is provided as a narrative within the frame of indirect speech, and this limits the audience’s invitation to identify themselves with the squire.

While the adults understand the implications of eternal damnation, children might not, and it is therefore appropriate for their fear to be presented as *timor naturalis* (one’s inherent fear of harm or death) instead. Thus, a child who is accustomed to swearing because his father has not done anything to correct this hideous habit gives this explanation to his father to account for the terror he experiences:

Be chyld seyde, ‘blake men, blake,
Are aboute, me to take
Me wyþ hem wyl þey lede.
Y ne shal skape for no neede’ (ll. 4887–90)

[The child said, ‘Black men, black, are around, to take me; they will lead me away with them. I shall not escape by any means’].

Like a hypocritical monk from Tangabaton Abbey (see ll. 3185–92; see further below), the child sees that he is about to be taken away but, unlike the monk, he does not understand who these black figures might be. His father and the audience do, though, and hearing the child speak not only foregrounds his terror but also helps to instil in the audience a mixture of impotence, frustration and anger at the father’s behaviour.³⁹ The extent of direct speech that Mannyng would have found in his source in this context is not clear, for there is some disparity amongst the different versions of *Manuel*. The equivalent lines in Russell’s edition present a switch from indirect to direct speech.⁴⁰

L’enfant au pere respondy
Ke neirs hummes vindrent pur ly:
‘Prendre me volent e amener,
Pur rien ne lur pus eschaper!’ (ll. 4289–92)

[The child replied to his father that black men had come after him: ‘They want to take me and lead me away; by no means can I escape from them!’].

³⁹ Cf. ll. 4945–46, where collective direct speech highlights the harm that one causes to society as a whole by not bringing one’s children up properly and not chastising them when necessary. After all, as Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, 49, notes, Mannyng is particularly “concerned with sin as a cause of social evil”.

⁴⁰ *Manuel dé Pechez*, ed. Russell.

In Furnivall's edition, on the other hand, the account seems to be presented mainly through indirect speech, although the presence of "me" in l. 4503 also suggests some direct speech (cf. mixed speech).⁴¹

L'enfant sun pere respundi,
 Qe neirs homes vindrent pur li;
 Prendre me veillent, & amener;
 En nule manere les pet eschaper (ll. 4501–04)

[The child replied to his father that black men had come after him: 'They want to take me and lead me away'; by no means can he escape from them].

b) Suffering and anxiety: direct speech is also used to foreground suffering and anxiety, often in connection with the speaker's own feelings: e.g. the Suffolk's man request that his wife find a priest leading a pure life to say a mass for his soul leaves the audience in no doubt about his desperation to leave purgatory and the urgency of the situation: "Ofte he seyde to hys wyff / 'A prest, a prest of clene lyff!'" (Often he said to his wife, 'A priest, a priest of righteous life!'; ll. 10443–44). Similarly, ll. 2870–76, which retain the biblical choice of direct speech (see Judges 11.37–38), draw to the forefront the anxiety that Jephthah's daughter experiences because she is going to die a virgin and hence will never have the chance to beget children much more clearly than the equivalent lines in *Manuel* (ll. 2867–74; cf. *Shrifte* 64.28–31), where the request is given in indirect speech.⁴²

Equally, if not more moving, are those cases where a speaker expresses suffering or concern for someone else's sake. This is seen very clearly in a tale—not shared with *Manuel* but with parallels elsewhere—that brings the performative nature of speech, i.e. its ability to affect and effect reality,⁴³ to the extreme by depicting in much gory detail the effects of swearing by Christ's bodily parts (ll. 687–757; see further below).⁴⁴ A rich man prone to swearing false oaths *per membra* immediately repents from his sins and promises not only to leave his old ways behind but also to actively engage with others so that they do the same when he is faced the vision of a woman holding a child whose body is covered in blood and almost completely dismembered, and with the child's mother's reprimand for his behaviour and threat not to pray for him:

'What art þou womman, þat makyst swych cry?
 Ho haþ made þy chyld so bloody?'
 'Þou,' she seyde, 'hast hym so shent,
 And with þyn oþys al to rent.
 Þus hast þou drawen my dere chylde
 With þyn oþys wykkyd & wyld.
 And þou makest me sore to grete,
 Þat þou þyn oþys wylt nat lete (ll. 709–16)

['Who are you, woman, who makes such outcry? Who has made your child so bloody?'
 'You,' she said, 'have harmed him in this way, and with your oaths torn [him] to pieces. Thus, you have drawn my dear child asunder with your wicked and rush oaths, and you hurt me greatly in that you will not abandon your oaths'].]

⁴¹ *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Furnivall. Indirect speech is the only mode in *Shrifte* 79.9–11: "An he answered to hys fadur þat blake men come to him þat wolde take hym and lede hym, he myȝhte nat scape hem in no manere".

⁴² For a comparison of Mannyng's and Gower's retelling of the story (the latter in *Confessio Amantis*), see Kemmler, 'Exempla', 113–21. For a comparison of the account in *Handlyng Synne* and its late Middle English adaptation, Peter Idley's *Instructions to His Son*, see Spencer Strub, "Oaths and Everyday Life in Peter Idley's Instructions," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 119 (2020): 190–219, at 212–16.

⁴³ On the performativity of language, see J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962). On the exploration of this concept in medieval literature, see David Coley, *The Wheel of Language: Representing Speech in Middle English Poetry, 1377–1422* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2012); and Sara M. Pons-Sanz, "Fights and Games: Terms for Speech in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 119 (2020): 353–79.

⁴⁴ Mannyng's tale can be compared, for instance, with the account included in the English version of the *Gesta Romanorum*; see *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, ed. Sidney J. Herrtage (London, 1879), 409–11.

[...] ‘ȝyf hyt be þy wylle,
 Helpe me, lady, þat y ne spylle.
 For al men seyyn, o þou lady,
 Þat þou art modyr of mercy!’ (735–38)

[‘If it be your will, Lady, help me so that I am not damned. For all men say, oh Lady, that you are the mother of mercy!’].

The dialogue between the man and the mother, which stretches for 45 lines (almost 65% of the tale), strengthens the pragmatic effect that Mannyng is trying to achieve: to move his audience, through their shared experience of suffering, pity and shame, so that they identify with the rich man and make his decision their own.⁴⁵ As such, the characterization of the Virgin, in turn, as “stern and austere toward the unrepentant, gentle and forgiving to the penitent, and loving, sorrowful, and humble toward her Son”, which Usis identifies as the dialogue’s main aim,⁴⁶ can be seen instead as part of a broader agenda.

c) Anger: Mannyng discusses anger in relation to the second deadly sin (ll. 3705ff), and exemplifies its effects and how pity can overcome them with a tale focussing on a knight who is able to contain his anger towards his father’s killer (once the latter has asked for forgiveness) and show him mercy. While *Manuel* only reports in direct speech the aggrieved knight’s forgiveness (ll. 3615–16; cf. *Shrifte* 72.7–8), in *Handlyng Synne* their whole conversation is given in direct speech, with the expression of the knight’s anger towards the killer as the opening lines:

And seyde, ‘treytur, now shalt þou deye
 And my fadyr deþ ful dere abeye.
 No wrldys gode ne shal þe saue,
 Þat þou þe deþ of me shalt haue’ (ll. 3837–40)

[And [he] said, ‘Traitor, now you shall die and pay very dearly for my father’s death. No worldly fortune shall save you; you shall have your death from me’].

These lines are in clear contrast to the understated report of the knight’s intentions in *Manuel* (ll. 3601–2; cf. *Shrifte* 72.2: “He þowhte to kylle hym anone, for hys power was þe grettere”; He decided to kill him immediately, for his power was greater).

Hearing the appeal for mercy by his father’s killer, who refers to Christ’s own forgiveness of those who condemned him to death, the knight decides to leave his anger aside and follow on Christ’s footsteps:

And seyde, ‘syn þu hast me besoghte
 For Ihu loue that dere us boghte,
 And for hys moder loue so dere,
 For hem y graunte þe my pes here.’ (ll. 3855–58)

[And [he] said, ‘Since you have begged me for Jesus’s love, who paid dearly for us and for his mother’s love so heartily, for them I grant you my peace here’].

Through the use of direct speech, Mannyng invites his audience to put themselves in the knight’s shoes, and to be led, like him, not by anger or the forgiveness that comes from receiving monetary compensation, but by the mercy that one feels because of one’s love for Christ and one’s appreciation of his sacrifice for humanity’s sake.

d) Love and friendship: love is often presented as an important trigger of good behaviour, particularly, albeit not solely, in connection with the offering of masses for the salvation of one’s soul, a key aspect of Christian life and, as noted above, the Church’s financial stability. For instance, the audience have a direct insight into the tenderness shared by the aforementioned Suffolk man and his wife when he carefully addresses her at night so as not to shock her, whispering—we assume—“slepest þou?” (are

⁴⁵ Cf. Kemmler, ‘*Exempla*’, 141–43.

⁴⁶ Usis, “Narrative and Homiletical Technique,” 111; see also 220–26.

you asleep?; ll. 10430 and 10470). Direct speech is also chosen to express the gratitude of those who benefit from the rightful behaviour of their loved ones: e.g. see ll. 10471–86 for the words of the Suffolk man; ll. 10631–44 for the words of Iumna, a captive knight whose fetters fall every night thanks to his brother's masses; and ll. 10779–84, where a miner acknowledges that he is alive after having spent a year buried under rubble, thanks to his wife's alms-giving-turned-food.⁴⁷

In the tale on the friendship that develops between Florence (a hermit) and a bear, love helps the audience instead to understand the devastating effect of envy (also foregrounded through direct speech; see ll. 4081–90) and the punishment that comes to those who commit that deadly sin. The report of Florence's words to the bear highlight the instant connection that he feels with the animal, knowing that he has been sent by God after his prayer:

He bad þe bere þat he schulde go
 And dryue hys shepe to and fro,
 'And kepe hem weyl þat noun hem dere,
 And þou shalt be my gode bere.'
 Þe bere hym loutede with semblant glad,
 For to do as Florence hym bad.
 To þe bere he seyde hys auys,
 'Euery day whan y ete twyys,
 Come þou hom at hygh vnderne
 And no lenger yn þe feld soirne.
 And eury day, whan y faste,
 Come at þe none home at þe laste' (ll. 4053–64)

[He bade the bear to go and drive his sheep to and fro, 'and keep them well so that no one hurts them, and you shall be my good bear'. The bear bowed to him with a happy expression, to do as Florence asked. He said his decision to the bear: 'Every day when I eat twice, come home at mid-morning and do not stay longer in the field. And every day when I fast, come home at noon at the latest'].

We see here the alternation between indirect speech to refer to those tasks that have nothing to do with their relationship and direct speech for references to Florence's keenness on their special relationship and his requests for the bear to come back to him so that they can keep each other company.⁴⁸ In *Manuel* (ll. 3745–56) Florence's words are only reported in indirect speech and there is no reference to his desire to establish a special bond with the animal: cf. "He comaunded þe bere to kepe hem, and the bere made semblant to grante hyt. [...] Whanne Florence ete twyus a day, he bad hym he schulde come home wyth his scheppe at vnderne. But wanne he dede faste, he bad hym þat he schulde come home at none" (He commanded the bear to keep them and the bear made an expression to grant it. [...] When Florence ate twice a day, he bade him to come home with his sheep at mid-morning but, when he fasted, he bade him to come home at noon; *Shrifte* 73.25–30).

Thus, the alternation between direct speech and other modes of speech representation is a key narrative technique to ensure the audience's emotional involvement with the text. Direct speech helps the audience to sympathise with the characters and experience, with them, a broad range of emotions; this in turn, enables them to open their hearts to the text's message on rightful behaviour. In that respect, this section has departed from common approaches to Mannyng's use of direct speech as a narrative technique simply aimed at making the text more palatable for a mixed audience; the argument presented here has explained instead its significance for his project's ultimate success and, thus, its role beyond the stylistic appeal of the text. In the next two sections departure from previous criticism takes the form of an analysis of Mannyng's reliance on a wide range of modes of speech representation—not just direct speech—in order to achieve fundamental pedagogical purposes: to

⁴⁷ There are no equivalent tales in *Manuel* for those of the Suffolk man, and Iumna and his brother Tumna, but its account of the miner's story gives the explanation of his survival in indirect speech; see ll. 7655–64 in *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Furnivall (cf. *Shrifte* 108.9–11).

⁴⁸ *Robert Mannyng*, ed. Sullens, includes l. 4055 in the direct speech. *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Furnivall; and Susan Schultz A., "An Edition of Robert Mannyng of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*" (PhD diss., New York University, 1973), in her edition of the fragmentary text in New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS Osborn a2, give the equivalent line as part of the indirect speech that precedes the direct speech (see ll. 4053 and 1403, respectively).

teach about the dangers of misuses of speech without, at the same time, engaging in or encouraging others to engage in such sinful behaviour; and to drive home the core message of the text: the importance of honest, full and timely confession. The discussion below also shows how speech representation helps Mannyng to juggle two aims whose interaction poses some difficulties: to expose problematic clerical behaviour to ensure that the reform sought by the Fourth Lateran Council could be carried through and, at the same time, to convince his lay audience of their need to respect priests, regardless of how sinful they might be.

Ethical correction

Handlyng Synne refers to a large number of the twenty-four sins of the tongue identified by William Peraldus (ca. 1200–71) in Tractatus IX of his *Summa de Vitiis* (i.e. *De Peccato Linguae*), a highly influential penitential treatise written in response to the Fourth Lateran Council.⁴⁹ For instance, blasphemy (together with lying and swearing *per membra*) is discussed in connection with the second commandment (“Swere nat goddess name in ydylnes”; Do not swear by God’s name in vain), where we find the aforementioned tale of the rich man who would often “grete opys swere” (swear solemn oaths; l. 690) falsely by referring to Christ’s bodily parts.⁵⁰ The connection between blasphemy and sloth, the fourth deadly sin, is presented as part of the aforementioned tale on the five-year-old child who often “cursede goddys name wiþ yl” (cursed God’s name with ill will; l. 4874) because his father could not be bothered to punish him. Other tales also discuss the devastating effects of cursing: e.g. the tale of the mother who cursed her daughter because she did not have her clothes ready, as the mother had initially requested (ll. 1251ff), is discussed in connection with the fourth commandment (“Þou shalt wrshepe þy fadyr & modyr”; You shall honour your father and mother); the story of Robert, a priest who cursed a group of carollers who kept on interrupting his mass and, in doing so, cursed his daughter as well (ll. 9011ff), is part of the section on sacrilege (see further below). Jephthah’s rash promise to sacrifice the first thing that he encounters on his way home if God grants him victory (ll. 2847–50) and the behaviour of a backbiting monk who was “wnt to seye wykkede sawes / Behynde þe bak of hys felawes” (accustomed to say wicked words behind his companions’ back; ll. 3559–60; cf. ll. 3605–08) have a similarly devastating effect. In this respect, the discussion of idle talk and gossiping stands out, because it has centre stage in a humorous vignette depicting a devil who dramatically failed to keep track of women’s prattle while they “iangled” (chattered; l. 9283).⁵¹

Narrated speech—mainly representation of speech act—is Mannyng’s common choice to stay on safe ground and not to incite these types of behaviour in his audience; by representing speech in this way he can provide only the most basic information about his characters’ behaviour, without adding any juicy or unnecessary details, as the quotations in the previous paragraph exemplify. This succinct approach is fully in keeping with the recommendation that Peraldus gives at the end of his

⁴⁹ See the edition included here as part of Richard Newhauser et al.’s work on the text: <http://www.public.asu.edu/~rnewhaus/peraldus/> (accessed on 16/10/2021). On the context and impact of Peraldus’s work, see Bettina Lindorfer, “*Peccatum Linguae* and the Punishment of Speech Violations in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times,” in *Speaking in the Medieval World*, ed. Jean E. Godsall-Myers (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 23–42. See also Joan Heiges Blythe, “Sins of the Tongue and Rhetorical Prudence in ‘Piers Plowman’,” in *Literature and Religion in the Later Middle Ages: Philological Studies in Honor of Siegfried Wenzel*, ed. Richard G. Newhauser and John A. Alford (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1995), 119–42, where Peraldus’s work is discussed in relation to its likely impact on the treatment of sins of the tongue in *Piers Plowman*.

⁵⁰ Edwin D. Craun, “‘Inordinata Locutio’: Blasphemy in Pastoral Literature 1200–1500,” *Traditio* 39 (1983): 135–62, at 158, explains that medieval writers, following Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae* (II–II.13.1), understood blasphemy as the misrepresentation in speech of God’s nature, be it by attributing to him traits that are not appropriate to him or by denying him traits that are part of his nature. Insulting God, calling upon him (who is absolute and complete goodness and truth) as a witness to a statement that is not true or swearing *per membra* and, in so doing, denying him the quality of transcendent reality and attributing instead a corporeal nature, are at the very centre of the blasphemous behaviour that Christians must avoid. For Aquinas’s text, see *Summa Theologiae*, ed. and trans. Thomas Gilby et al., 60 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964–81). On swearing *per membra* as blasphemy, see also Melissa Mohr, *Holy Sh*t: A Brief History of Swearing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Chapter 3. On the connection between swearing *per membra* and the Eucharist, see Garrison, “Mediated Piety,” 917–19. On the relationship between blasphemy and other sins of the tongue, see Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapters 1–2; and Lindorfer, “*Peccatum Linguae*”.

⁵¹ For an in-depth discussion of this episode, see John M. Ganim, “The Devil’s Writing Lesson,” in *Oral Poetics in Middle English Poetry*, ed. Mark Amodio (New York: Garland, 1994), 109–24.

explanation on the *peccata linguae*: to use prudence and few words as ways to avoid sinful behaviour. It is also internally justified, as one of the tales makes us ponder about the eternal punishment of a nun who “was of dedys chaste / But [...] spake wrdys waste” (was chaste in deeds, but spoke pointless words) and “made many of here felawys / Benke on synne for here sawys” (made many of her companions think of sins because of her words; ll. 1551–54). Accordingly, we encounter narrated speech not only when sins of the tongue are reported, but also in the handling of other problematic uses of speech, such as a witch’s spell to get a bag-turned-milking-machine going and the bishop’s attempt to repeat her feat in a tale absent from *Manuel*: we are told that she “sygaldryd [...] bys bagbely” (enchanted [...] this bulging bag; l. 503) and that he, after asking a clerk to write down “[a]l þat she seyde, mochyl & lyte” (all that she said, much or little; l. 528), “began þe charme to rede” (began to read the charm; l. 533) and “seyde and dede euerydeyl” (said and did everything; l. 535). Despite his effort, the bishop is not able to make the bag work because, as the witch points out, it is not enough to say specific words; one has to believe in the power of magic (ll. 543–56) for it to work.

This general trend to background the actual words spoken by the various characters is in clear contrast to those cases where the words that one utters are, to some extent, even more important than one’s true belief or sentiment because they are used to highlight the power of language—and speech in particular—to shape the world around us. In these cases, the words uttered by the speaker tend to be presented in direct speech, even if that was not the case in *Manuel*. For instance, the use of direct speech is one of the techniques that Mannyng uses to show lack of sympathy for Jephthah or the mother who curses her daughter simply because she does not have her clothes ready. In Jephthah’s case Mannyng departs from his exemplar (cf. *Manuel* ll. 2845–50) and goes back to the biblical use of direct speech for the promise (see Judges 11.30–31). In the case of the cursing mother he retains his exemplar’s use of direct speech (see *Handlyng Synne* ll. 1269–70, *Manuel* l. 1657 and *Shrifte* 53.10), but expands her initial instruction, her curse and the devil’s response, using ME *rēdī* (ready, prepared) in each case; by doing this, he can tie everything to—and hence shed the spotlight on—the mother’s anger about something rather unimportant in comparison with losing one’s child. In both cases, direct speech brings to the forefront the rashness of the speakers’ actions and what they lose because of them.

This explanation might seem to be at odds with the fact that the equally rash prayer by the aforementioned priest Robert for God to punish the sacrilegious carollers is given in indirect speech because, in this case, as in the case of the parents discussed above, his action has dire consequences for his family. The answer might lie in the fact that Robert’s standing as a priest is here contrasted with his paternal ties, which are in clear contravention of the requirement for clerical celibacy, reiterated in Canon 14 of the Fourth Lateran Council.⁵² Notably, his initial request / invitation to the carollers to stop their behaviour and join the mass is expressed in direct speech (ll. 9070–770), while *Manuel* uses indirect speech in both contexts: ll. 6944–48 and 6951–56 in Furnivall’s edition (cf. *Shrifte* 102.9–13).⁵³ Robert’s request to the carollers is a first step in his fulfilment of his duty of pastoral care towards his lay community, in keeping with the Council’s Canon 7, which admonishes prelates to ensure that they correct their community’s offences and improve their subjects’ morality.⁵⁴ However, his rash request for their punishment, with his anger possibly intensified by the presence of his own daughter amongst the dancers (see ll. 9039–46), is less in keeping with his expected behaviour. Like the existence of his two children,⁵⁵ his prayer characterizes him as someone who cannot fully control his urges and emotions and, because of that, cannot fulfil his duty to ensure that his parishioners are given plenty opportunities for confession and penance. He is hardly a good role model for local priests.⁵⁶ While his request is heard because, after all, the carollers’ sacrilege is

⁵² See *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1: *Nicaea I to Lateran V*, ed. and trans. Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed & Ward, and Georgetown University Press, 1990), 242. See Wayno, “Rethinking the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215,” 626, for variation in the local implementation of the Council’s views and language on clerical celibacy.

⁵³ *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Furnivall.

⁵⁴ See *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Tanner, 237.

⁵⁵ Notably, his request that his son save his daughter from having the same punishment as the carollers (a further representation of his immorality) is also presented in indirect speech (ll. 9097–99), while his son’s reproach that her loss is the result of his curse—this is the first time it is referred to as such, not as a prayer—is foregrounded through direct speech (ll. 9116–23). *Manuel* has no equivalent lines for the interaction between Robert and his son.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of this *exemplum* and its attack on priests who do not fulfil their pastoral obligations and vow of celibacy, see Miller, “Displaced Souls,” 619–25; Laura Varnam, “‘Synne to shewe, vs to frame’: Representing the Church in

unacceptable and because it also brings about punishment for Robert's own impious behaviour, speech representation exposes what is at stake in the gaps between speech, selves, and expectations.

The significance of uttering the right words is even more clearly highlighted in a midwife's failed attempt to baptize a new-born child because of the use of the wrong formula in another tale with no equivalent in *Manuel*. Given the importance of the exact words, her invocation of God and St John is quoted twice through direct speech (ll. 9635–36 and 9647–48), even though narrated speech or, at the very least, indirect speech might otherwise have been expected for the second context because we are dealing with known information. Mannyng points out in the explanation that follows the tale that the midwife should have invoked the Trinity instead (l. 9667; cf. Matthew 28.19).⁵⁷ The use of direct speech for the priest's response and recrimination ("god & seynt Iame / Ȝyue þe boþe sorowe & shame..."; may God and Saint James give you both sorrow and shame...; ll. 9649ff) emphasizes the seriousness of the situation because, due to her mistake, the child has not been duly baptized and cannot be buried in the churchyard. However, his sarcasm and his lack of clarification on the correct formula contrasts with Mannyng's more measured and helpful response and, in that respect, the audience is led to wonder whether her ignorance is partly the priest's fault for not having ensured that she knew the right formula for the sacrament.

Modelling confession

Boyle explains that the Fourth Lateran Council brought about a "heightening of interest in the care of souls" and that, to achieve this, much more emphasis was placed in having "a better-educated clergy who would bring the laity to a reasonable understanding of the essentials of Christian belief and practice".⁵⁸ Confession is one of such essentials and, indeed, Canon 21 of the Council established that all Christians should confess their sins privately to their priest at least once a year.⁵⁹ Thus, *Manuel* and its translations, *Handlyng Synne* and *Shrifte*, had at the very core of their pedagogical aims to instruct their audience about how to conduct and / or engage in full and honest confession. Not surprisingly, many of the tales focus on this key element of penance, providing both good and bad examples, and speech representation helps Mannyng to put his message across, with direct speech being his common choice to make the audience ponder about the most important aspects, and to provide practical examples about how both clergy and lay people should engage with the process. There is much less consistency in *Manuel* in this respect.

The first step has to be one's willingness ("gode wyl"; l. 11360) to confess one's sins promptly ("hastely"; l. 11382). The dire consequences of one's unwillingness to do that are the focus of two tales. Mannyng casts the spotlight on their protagonists' (a squire who would do anything to acquire riches and a priest's concubine) determination not to behave appropriately by presenting their refusal to repent quickly from their sins in direct speech (see ll. 4397–4412 and 8016–20), while *Manuel* prefers the backgrounding effect of indirect speech in both cases (see ll. 3957–66 and 6071–74). The next step has to be one's openness about the nature of one's sins ("Opunly þyn herte vp lyfte"; Lift up your heart openly; l. 11410) and one's contrition for one's sinful behaviour ("sorowe of hert / Þat oghte to be byttyr and smert"; sorrow of heart that ought to be bitter and painful; ll. 11525–26). Direct speech again highlights the significance of these feelings. For instance, in the first tale of *Handlyng Synne* we encounter a monk who is tempted to marry a Muslim woman; while the actual confession of his sins is presented first as representation of speech act ("shrof hym of hys synne astyte"; confessed his sin immediately; l. 264) and then through indirect speech, with the content of the proposition much reduced because the audience already know what his sins are ("tolde hym how þat he hadde doun, / Forsakyn god and hys relygyun"; told him how he had done it, forsaken God and

Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne*," *Leeds Studies in English* 48 (2017): 89–104; and, mainly, Renberg, "Priests," who explores in great detail the problematic nature of Robert's curse in the wider context of curses for excommunication.

⁵⁷ On the significance of uttering the right formula at the right time and in keeping with the general expectations of the rite of baptism, cf. *St Erkenwald*, ll. 318–19; for an edition of this poem, see *A Book of Middle English*, ed. J. A. Burrow, and Thorlac Turville-Petre, 4th ed. (Chichester: Wiley, 2021), 233–46. On the baptismal rite in early and late medieval England (and Europe), see further Brian D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From the New Testament to the Council of Trent* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), Chapters 6–7.

⁵⁸ L. E. Boyle, "The *Oculus Sacerdotis* and Some Other Works of William of Pagula," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5 (1955): 81–110, at 81.

⁵⁹ See *Decrees on the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Tanner, 245.

his religion; l. 265–66), internal direct speech draws attention to his repentance of the sins for which he seeks confession (“Þe munk rependyd hym þan and þoghte, / ‘Alas,’ he seyde, ‘what haue y wroghte...’”; The monk then repented and thought, ‘Alas,’ he said, ‘what have I done?’; ll. 252ff). *Manuel* presents contrition through indirect thought (“pursensé”; considered; l. 946; cf. “bypowhte” in *Shrifte* 45.21) and confession through indirect speech (ll. 951–54; cf. *Shrifte* 45.23–25). On the other hand, both *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne* report in direct speech a devil’s lack of contrition about the wide range of sins that he has committed and led others to commit (*Handlyng Synne* ll. 12582–84; cf. *Shrifte* 123.37–38).⁶⁰

During the confession, it is fundamental that one admits to all his / her sins (l.11827), without amplifying, reducing or masking them (ll. 11707–08 and l. 11769), or without referring to anyone else’s faults (l. 11622); that all this is done with humility or “mekenes” (l.11459); and that one is ready to accept whatever penance is given (ll. 11786–87).⁶¹ The tales offer many examples of those who are happy to follow these directives. As with other aspects associated with confession, Mannyng tends to represent them in direct speech, regardless of whether his source uses direct (e.g. the confession of the hypocritical monk of Tangabaton Abbey: ll. 3177–92; cf. *Manuel* 3101–12 and *Shrifte* 66.36–67.5) or indirect speech (e.g. St John Chrysostom’s deacon confession that his infatuation with one of the church-goers is the reason for the absence of the dove that normally comes during the Eucharist: ll. 8865–76; cf. *Manuel* ll. 6839–48 in Furnivall’s edition and *Shrifte* 100.12–15).⁶²

These examples offer the audience models to follow in their own confession and / or to ponder on.⁶³ However, it was equally important for Mannyng’s purposes to provide examples for the clergy about how to conduct the process properly: just as one should not seek confession from different people in search for the response and penance that one would like to receive (see ll. 11491–524), it is also necessary that confession is done with “a wys man / Þat þy shrifte vndyrstonde kan” (a wise man, who can understand your confession; ll. 11585–86) and not with “one þat hap no wyt / of vndyrstanding of holy wryt” (one that has no mental ability to understand the holy script; ll. 11587–88). As Murray points out, medieval manuals on confession make abundantly clear that knowledge, sympathy and piety were identified as fundamental qualities for the confessor. However, he also notes that, for the average priest, with limited access to formal training, it was very important to have clear models of good practice because the fact that confession had to be attuned to the needs of each penitent made it necessarily unscripted and, therefore, it was difficult for the confessor to plan ahead.⁶⁴

Various tales engage with specific aspects of the behaviour that the Church expected from confessors. At times, Mannyng’s sources already use speech representation helpfully in order to highlight important exchanges through the use of direct speech and our text simply follows suit: e.g. the guidance on how to call people out on their lying in the biblical account of Ananias and Sapphira (cf. Acts 5.1–11, *Handlyng Synne* ll. 11711ff, *Manuel* ll. 10171ff in Furnivall’s edition and *Shrifte* 115.9ff).⁶⁵ More interesting for our purposes are those cases where Mannyng intervenes with changes aimed at guiding the audience’s allegiance through the foregrounding or backgrounding effects of the various modes of speech representation. This is the case in a tale focusing on the disastrous consequences of a confessor’s failure to exhibit wisdom and empathy. Its core message is that everyone is a sinner, and it is precisely the experience of being tempted to sin and fighting against such temptations that helps confessors to develop their practice in this sacrament, as noted by various

⁶⁰ This tale is not part of *Manuel dé Pechez*, ed. Russell, but see ll. 9542–44 of the composite French text in *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Furnivall.

⁶¹ On these directives and their relationship to those given in confessional manuals issued before the composition of *Manuel* and *Handlyng Synne*, see Kemmler, ‘*Exempla*’, Chapter 1.

⁶² *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Furnivall.

⁶³ Miller, “Displaced Souls,” 614–15, shows that the hypocritical monk’s confession is a good example of Mannyng’s argument against an atomistic understanding of sinful behaviour: while confessing his hypocrisy, the monk is actually exhibiting his pridefulness through the pleasure he finds in seeing others’ reactions to his exaggerated self-representation as a hypocrite because of two minor violations.

⁶⁴ See Alexander Murray, “Counselling in Medieval Confession,” in *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Biller and A. J. Minnis (York: York Medieval Press, 1998), 63–77. See also Jill Marie Sirko, “Models of Confession: Penitential Writing in Late Medieval England” (PhD diss., Duke University, 2011), 30–41.

⁶⁵ *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Furnivall.

confessional manuals.⁶⁶ This is the story: a hermit suffered “gret tempting” (strong temptation; l. 8447), sought an old man (a fellow hermit) and “told hym all, vp & down / Of hys gret temptacyoun” (told him everything, back and forth, about his strong temptation; ll. 8451–52). The old man showed no sympathy and “seyde to hym astyte / He was nat wyrpy to be an ermyte” (said to him immediately that he was not worthy of being a hermit; l. 8454). This left the hermit devastated because “hys gode hope was al yn doute” (his good hope was fully in doubt; l. 8458) and he thought that it would be best for him to leave behind his previous life. Abbot Apollo, a “ful wys man” (really wise man; l. 8466), could tell from his expression that there was something very seriously wrong; after some prodding, the hermit told him his sin (“‘Y am,’ he seyde, ‘broght al down / Wyþ flesshely temptacyoun’”; ‘I have been,’ he said, ‘completely overcome by bodily temptation’; ll. 8473–74) and how badly he felt about his previous confession (“he comforted me so yl”; he comforted me very badly; l. 8481). Apollo responded that “[p]e old man wyst nat what was to do” (the old man did not know what should be done; l. 8486), that he had experienced similar temptations himself but had never acted on them, and that the hermit should be kind to himself and continue to fight against any other temptations (“fonde azens þy flesshe to fight / And late hyt nat haue al þe might”; try to fight against your flesh, and let it not have all the power; ll. 8499–500). While the hermit returned to his cell, Apollo prayed that the old man would experience similar temptations; when he was sure that the latter had been afflicted by them, Apollo looked for him to admonish him for his behaviour and for thinking that he was morally superior to anyone else.

The tale presents two alternatives for the confessor’s handling of the same sin and speech representation helps to present a clear contrast between them. As the quotations given above indicate, the first one, clearly flawed and hardly a model to follow, is backgrounded through the use of representation of voice for the actual confession and indirect speech for the confessor’s reaction. The second one, on the other hand, is played out fully in direct speech, even though we might have expected the hermit’s part of the conversation to be reported otherwise because it is known information. Direct speech foregrounds the behaviour that should be modelled by confessors, and helps to channel the audience’s sympathy for the hermit and admiration for Apollo. While there is consistency in the various versions of *Manuel* about the handling of the initial confession in modes other than direct speech (cf. ll. 6579–84 of the French text in Furnivall’s edition, ll. 6369–74 in Russell’s edition, and *Shrifte* 98.27–29),⁶⁷ the situation is less clear when it comes to the wording that Mannyng might have encountered in his source for the report of the second confession, although all the versions agree in having a much shorter account of Apollo’s response about his own fight against temptation. The version of *Manuel* reconstructed by Furnivall (ll. 6597–607) reports the whole exchange in indirect speech.⁶⁸ Russell’s text alternates between different modes.⁶⁹ it reports the hermit’s confession of his sin through representation of speech act (“‘Si li dist en confession / De cele graunt temptaciun’”; So he told him in confession about this strong temptation; ll. 6391–92), his report on the response of his previous confessor and its impact on his mental state is given in direct speech (ll. 6393–96), Apollo’s admonition about his behaviour is given in indirect speech (“‘Apollo l’ad mut amonesté / Ke a sa celle fust returné’”; Apollo strongly instructed him that he should go back to his cell; ll. 6397–98) and direct speech is used to report Apollo’s acknowledgement of his own temptations (“‘Kar je suy,’ dist, ‘un treviel hum / E ne suy pas sons temptesun’”; ‘Because I am,’ he said, ‘a very old man and I am not without temptation’; ll. 6399–400). In *Shrifte* 98.34–99.4, the only part of the second confession that is reported in direct speech is the hermit’s account of the old man’s response and its impact on him.

Conclusion

While keeping the overall structure and general pedagogical aims of his source, Mannyng tried to create a work which took a much more nuanced approach to its pastoral care agenda. On the one hand, by making it relevant to both a clerical and a lay audience, he had to make sure that his appealing story-telling helped rather than hindered his audience’s path towards spiritual purity and

⁶⁶ See Murray, “Counselling,” 72–73.

⁶⁷ *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Furnivall; *Manuel dé Pechez*, ed. Russell.

⁶⁸ *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Furnivall.

⁶⁹ *Manuel dé Pechez*, ed. Russell.

that his different, at times seemingly irreconcilable, messages to his diverse audience could profitably come together in a single text. On the other, he was particularly keen to show the pitfalls involved in taking facile approaches to one's spiritual life and not considering it in holistic terms, where the close interactions and multifaceted aspects of sinful behaviour are "handled". This article has demonstrated that his use of the different modes of speech representation is a key factor in his engagement with such difficult—even contradictory—demands.

Speech representation, in its wide-ranging nature, was not just a stylistic nicety developed as a result of the text's mixed audience, but rather a key pedagogical tool in Mannyng's agenda. Previous scholarship on *Handlyng Synne* has emphasized the role of direct speech in improving the story-telling quality of a source that was much less interested in this narratorial aspect. However, the discussion here demonstrates that, while direct speech was clearly very helpful in making his tales appealing, its ability to put the spotlight on the character whose speech is reported, thus facilitating the audience's emotional engagement with his / her account, was equally (if not more) important in terms of the audience's approach to Mannyng's teaching. Furthermore, by discussing the whole array of modes of speech representation available to Mannyng through a novel framework for the study of medieval texts, this paper has illustrated how he carefully enlisted the help of speech representation in order to foreground (through direct speech) or background (through indirect or narrated speech) particular pieces of information. Mannyng had to do this in order to navigate his way through various types of sinful or problematic uses of speech without engaging with them himself or inciting others to do so; provide good models of behaviour for his diverse audience; and ensure that he improved the spiritual life of his clerical audience without, at the same time, pushing his lay audience away from their spiritual leaders, regardless of how deficient some of their qualities might have been.

This finding has implications for a number of issues. In the first instance, it throws further light on Mannyng as a stylist conscientiously reworking his sources. In setting out Mannyng's nuanced engagement with various modes of speech representation, we see the text engage with and respond to the complex views on speech in late medieval penitential works. There, as in *Handlyng Synne*, the well-established focus on the sins of the tongue and the generally pernicious effects of speech is contrasted with a more positive view on the fully transformative capabilities of speech through its appropriate use in preaching and the seven sacraments, key tenets of the Fourth Lateran Council. Mannyng's approach to speech representation can also be linked with views on the interaction between orality, aurality and literacy regarding the text's transmission. The differing effects of the various modes of speech representation in terms of engaging the audience, and foregrounding or backgrounding information become particularly prominent in approaches to the text where the audience's ears are appealed to—and where the possibility of different voice affectations is left open.

However, as noted at various points throughout this study (e.g. notes 18 and 37), *Handlyng Synne* is by no means the only medieval text where the choices for speech representation are given very careful consideration and, in that respect, gaining further insights into the authors' understanding and use of this narrative technique has broader implications for our views on pastoral rhetorical tools and Middle English literature more broadly. Accordingly, this paper can be taken as a case study to show that there is much to be gained from the adaptation of a stylistic framework initially developed for modern texts to the analysis of medieval works, so long as the differences between modern and medieval ways of representing speech (and constructing narratives) are duly acknowledged. This investigation can take different forms, such as the painstaking analysis of the (narratorial, stylistic, pragmatic, etc.) implications of different modes of speech representation in a single work, as is the case in this study; texts that show deep interest in the nature and power of language and speech in particular (e.g. *Piers Plowman*, see note 49; *St Erkenwald*, see note 57) would give us a good starting point. A quantitative analysis of a larger corpus, along the lines presented by Menon in connection with nineteenth-century British novels,⁷⁰ offers a complementary approach, as this type of work would enable us to establish more general patterns in medieval compositions (e.g. in terms of generic, chronological or sociolinguistic variation), given that the typology presented here facilitates cross-

⁷⁰ Tara Menon, "Keeping Count: Direct Speech in the Nineteenth-Century British Novel," *Narrative* 27 (2019): 160–81.

textual comparisons, not only in relation to medieval texts but also between medieval and modern texts.

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