Authorising History

Authorising History:
Gestures of Authorship in Fourteenth-Century English Historiography

By

Nicole Nyffenegger

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Dedicated to
Lucien, Jules, Michelle,
and Rolf

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PREFACE

Writing the preface to a book that is almost finished is an exciting moment: Finally, one gets to express one's gratitude to all the people who helped along the way. I am grateful to my Ph.D. supervisor Margaret Bridges and to my teachers, advisors, and colleagues at the University of Berne for their ungoing support and encouragement: Annette Kern-Stähler, Virginia Richter, Christian Hesse, Rainer C. Schwinges. I received invaluable feedback in the Ph.D. colloquium at the English Department: Philipp Schweighauser, Matt Kimmich, Kellie Goncalves, and from my students—thank you all very much. My special thanks go to Kathrin Jost and Miriam Locher for many years of friendship and support. I also want to thank Tim Machan for his encouragement. Apart from being an inspring scholar, he made some truly insightful comments on the challenges of juggling family and academic commitments when we met on a riding tour in Iceland.

The team of Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Thank you for your work on this book. I am grateful to the Inner Temple library for giving me permission to reproduce a page from Robert Mannyng's chronicle on the cover, and I thank Michael Frost and Ian Jones for organising and providing the photograph. There are more people who read parts of this book at earlier stages and provided helpful comments; I want to thank them all, including C.P. and A.R. for the time they invested in this project. For their work on the manuscript at different stages, I thank Eva Grädel, Xenia Netos and John B.

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Fig. 1: Inner Temple Library Petyt Ms.511 vol. 7, f. 1r. Reproduced by permission of the Masters of the Bench of the Inner Temple. Photograph © Ian B. Jones
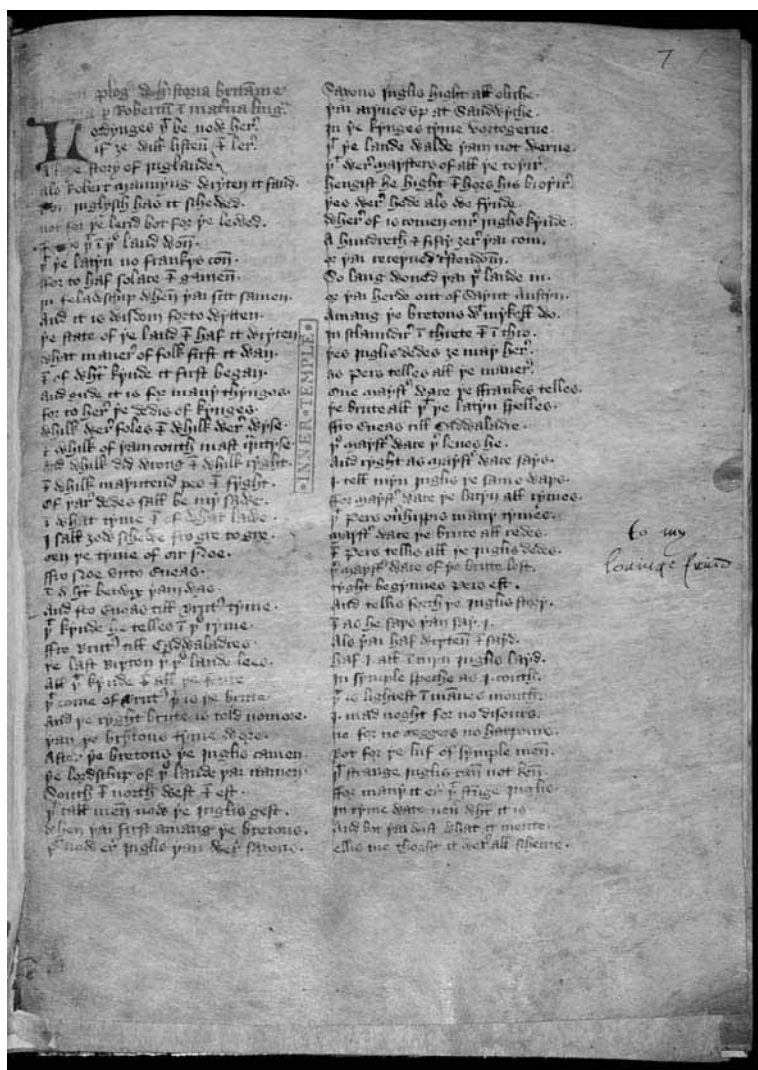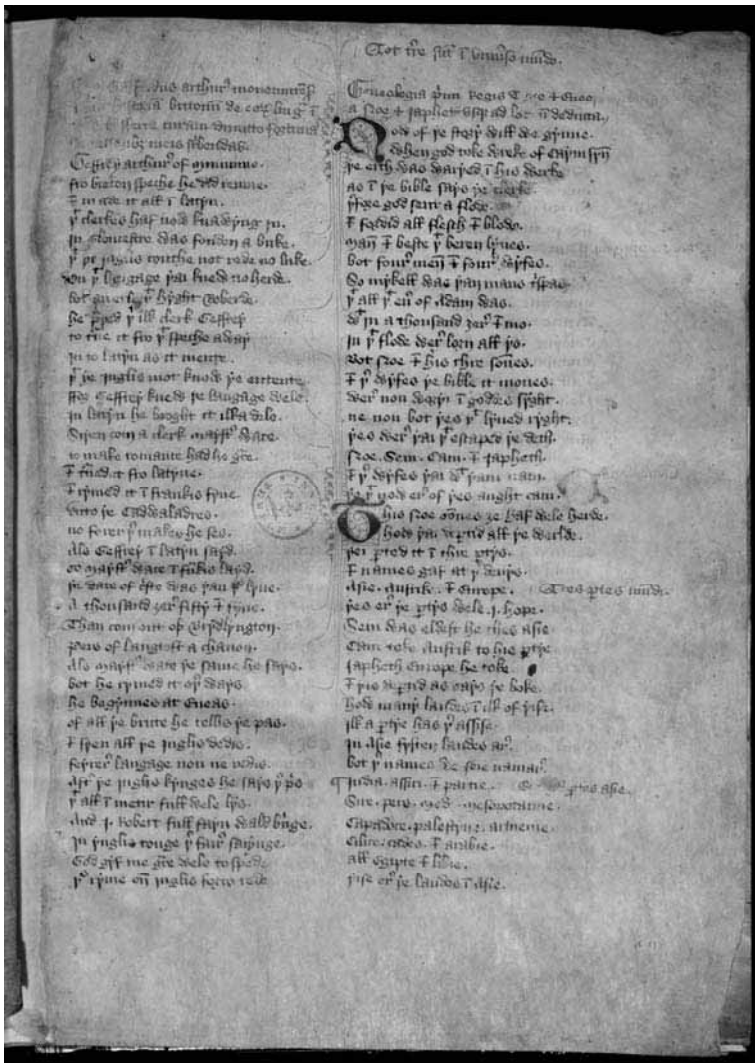
Fig. 2: Inner Temple Library Petyt Ms.511 vol. 7, f. 2r. Reproduced by permission of the Masters of the Bench of the Inner Temple. Photograph © Ian B. Jones

INTRODUCTION

> Suich was þe morþre of einesham uor bataile non it nas
> & þerwiþ Iesu crist wel vuele ipaied was
> As he ssewede bi tokninge grisliche & gode
> As it vel of him sulue þo he deide on þe rode
> Þat þoru al þe middelerd derkhede þer was inou
> Al so þe wule þe godemen at euesham me slou
> As in þe norþwest a derk weder þer aros
> So demliche suart inou þat mani man agros
> & ouer caste it þoʒte al þut lond þat me miʒte vnneþe ise
> Grisloker weder þan it was ne miʒte anerþe be
> An vewe dropes of reine þer velle grete inou
> Þis tokninge vel in þis lond þo me þis men slou
> Vor þretti mile þanne þis isei *roberd*
> Þat verst þis boc made & was wel sore aferd
> (Robert of Gloucester 11,736-49, my emphasis).

When Robert of Gloucester describes the fear-inspiring darkness that overshadows the slaughter of "good men" at the battle of Evesham in 1265 (the dramatic climax of the "Second Barons' War"), he *authorises history* in that he inscribes himself into the scene. The internal focaliser "roberd," who at that particular moment in the past witnessed the darkness and "was wel sore aferd," however, is also the external focaliser who enunciates the account. Robert the author, who "first made this book," and whose view goes beyond the spatial and temporal limits of his past self, aligns this darkness with the darkness at Christ's crucifixion. Robert's authorising thus consists of two elements: his witnessing (the atmosphere if not the events) and his authoring. What we see in this passage are different gestures of authorship. The first one of these is to put his name, "roberd," into the text. The second is to present himself as a contemporary, perhaps eyewitness, of the events. Doing so, he makes this passage *his* history rather than that of some other, older *auctor*. The third gesture of authorship is to present himself, consequently, as the one who "first made this book." He thus clearly fashions himself as an author rather than a compiler or translator of the relevant *auctores*, as would be typical for so many medieval writers. Gestures of authorship hence range from different strategies of self-inscription to implicit and explicit negotiations with the *auctoritates*.

    In this book, I propose to investigate the diverse gestures of authorship
in historiographical works as a way of authorising history. English
historiography and questions of authorship have all too seldom been
brought together in medieval scholarship. I will do so for a number of
important vernacular historiographical works of the fourteenth century:
The chronicles of Robert of Gloucester and Robert Mannyng of Brunne,
and the Northern and Southern versions of the *Cursor Mundi*.[1] The
anonymous poets of the two versions of the *Cursor Mundi* and Robert of
Gloucester and Robert Mannyng have up to date only rarely been
discussed as writers who write themselves into their works and who
employ specific strategies of authorising their works and themselves. The
underlying assumption of this study is that, in the case of these
historiographers, gestures of authorship function both in ways similar to
other types of medieval narratives and in ways specific to the writing of
English vernacular history in the fourteenth century. These historiographers, I
will argue, inscribe themselves into their works in relation to and as a
reflection of their conception of (the writing of) history. The outcome of
their authorising history is the multi-layered construct of the historiographer's
authorial persona.[2] The authorial persona is the same construct that has
variously been called "narrating ego,"[3] "textual persona,"[4] "the author's

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[1] Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *The Chronicle*, ed. and introd. Idelle Sullens,
Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 153 (Binghampton, NY: Center for
Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1996), hereafter referred to as "Robert
Mannyng's chronicle" or RM I (first book, based on Wace) and RM II (second
book, based on Pierre de Langtoft) respectively and line numbers; Robert of
Gloucester, *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. William A.
Wright, Rolls Series 86 (1887; repr., 2 vols., London: Kraus Reprint, 1965),
hereafter referred to as "Robert of Gloucester's chronicle" or RG and line
numbers; *Cursor Mundi*, ed. Richard Morris, Early English Text Society 57, 59,
62, 66, 68, 99, 101, 7 vols. (1874-1893, London: Kraus Reprint 1961-1966),
hereafter referred to as "Northern *Cursor Mundi*" or NCM and line numbers; *The
Southern Version of the Cursor Mundi*, ed. Sarah M. Horrall et al., 5 vols. (Ottawa:
University of Ottawa Press, 1978-2000), hereafter referred to as "Southern *Cursor
Mundi*" or SCM and line numbers.
[2] I use this term along the same lines as Peter Damian-Grint in his discussion of
Anglo-Norman historiographers: Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the
Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge:
Boydell Press, 1999): ix, 41-42, 170.
[3] Suzanne Fleischman, "On the Representation of History and Fiction in the
Middle Ages," *History and Theory* 22 (1983): 292, 295-96.

author,"[5] or "l'homme dans le texte." By the latter, Paul Zumthor refers to the author *in* the text that must not be confounded with "l'homme comme tel," the author (*of* the text) but that may nevertheless coincide with him.[6]

The four works of my corpus (I treat the two versions of the *Cursor Mundi* as different works here) have been discussed as a group before. Thorlac Turville-Petre has argued his case for "England the Nation" based on the explicit discussion contained in these works of the choice of the English vernacular as opposed to Latin or Anglo-Norman.[7] The four authors certainly do construct a collective self by means of this language discourse; whether that collective self should indeed be termed a "national" one has been questioned.[8] What has hitherto not been given sufficient scholarly attention however, is the fact that the construction of a collective self simultaneously produces an authorial persona. If these historiographers hence claim that those who live in England and speak English need historiography in the English language, they each also present themselves as the one writer to have realised that and to provide such a text. In this way, they authorise themselves as writers of English historiography in the vernacular.

There were forerunners, of course. Most importantly, Laȝamon's *Brut* was written in the vernacular more than half a centry before. In contrast to

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[4] This is Philip Bennett's translation of Paul Zumthor's "l'homme dans le texte." Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 44.

[5] Lee W. Patterson, "The Historiography of Romance and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 13.1 (1983): 10.

[6] Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique medievale* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), 69. Bennett translates "author as textual persona" and "author as extratextual being." Zumthor, *Medieval Poetics*, 44.

[7] Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation. Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Thorlac Turville-Petre, "Politics and Poetry in the Early Fourteenth Century: The Case of Robert Manning's Chronicle," *Review of English Studies* 39.153 (1988).

[8] Edward D. Kennedy raises the question in his review "as to whether such sentiments might not, during this period, also have been adequately expressed in languages other than English." Edward D. Kennedy, review of *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340*, by Thorlac Turville-Petre, *Speculum* 73.02 (1998). See also Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al., eds., *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999); Derek Pearsall, "Before-Chaucer Evidences of an English Literary Vernacular with a Standardizing Tendency," in *The Beginnings of Standardization*, ed. Ursula Schaefer (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2006), 29.

Laȝamon, however, who follows Wace and ends his account with the downfall of Briton rule, Robert Mannyng, Robert of Gloucester and, in a way, the two *Cursor Mundi* poets all take their histories up to (almost) their own present day. This has an influence on these historiographers' perceptions of history and of their own role in the transmission of knowledge. In other words, these historiographers distinctively look at the past "from out of the context of contemporary, late thirteenth- [and early fourteenth-]century England."[9] Middle English vernacular historiography, in turn, had its antecedent in the Anglo-Norman vernacular historiography of England and Normandy 150 years earlier and in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, although that influence should probably not be overrated.[10] Peter Damian-Grint argues that Anglo-Norman historiographers such as Wace, Geffrei Gaimar, and Benoît de Sainte-Maure had to devise their very own strategies for establishing a specifically vernacular authority against the pre-eminence of the Latin *auctores*.[11] Tim William Machan, by contrast, has pointed out that the general strategy of vernacular writers was "not to attempt to establish a different kind of authority for the vernacular but to appropriate for Middle English literary authority as it was conventionally defined."[12] To approach these questions from the angle of gestures of authorship, as I will do here, has the advantage of taking away the focus from the success or failure of the project of vernacular authority. Instead, I will investigate how different contemporary historiographers

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[9] Sarah Mitchell claims this to be true for Robert of Gloucester in her "Kings, Constitution and Crisis: 'Robert of Gloucester' and the Anglo-Saxon Remedy," in *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxons from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Donald Scragg and Carole Weinberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 40.

[10] Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, 16; Antonia Gransden, "Prologues in the Historiography of Twelfth-Century England," in *Legends, Traditions and History in Medieval England* (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1992).

[11] Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, 85-171; see also 141: "While some elements of Latin historiography can also be found in vernacular works, the vernacular authors' approach to their task is distinct: not only are the major Latin concerns of *veritas* and providential history completely absent, but the key elements of vernacular historiography—scholarly self-authorisation and the emphasis on sources—are similarly lacking in Latin historiography."

[12] Tim William Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 133; see also Tim William Machan, "Editing, Orality, and Late Middle English Texts," in *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. Alger N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 234.

make gestures of authorship and how these produce different authorial personae. The gestures of authorship vary from one historiographer to the other not just in terms of quality but also, and very notably, in terms of quantity. Consequently, they produce authorial personae that cover a great range, from the almost completely effaced one of the Southern *Cursor* poet to the fully-fledged authorial self fashioned by Robert Mannyng.[13] Consequently, Robert Mannyng is the historiographer that is discussed most intensively in this study, while Robert of Gloucester (whose authorial persona is an effaced one aside from the quote at the beginning of this book) serves as a counterpart against which Mannyng's construction of the authorial persona is measured. In the discussion of the two versions of the *Cursor Mundi*, I will focus on what I (in contrast to John J. Thompson) think is the conscious suppression in the Southern version of the authorial gestures apparent in its Northern source.[14]

The quality of the diverse gestures of authorship employed by the historiographers of this corpus varies greatly. The most straightforward one is explicit self-naming which can occur either as a first-person reference ("Robert Mannyng is my name") or as a third-person reference ("roberd þat verst þis boc made"). These two different types of self-naming authorise a text in different ways. In the case of a first-person reference, the inscription of the name into the text creates an authorial presence. Such authorial presence gained particular importance when literature largely ceased to be orally presented by the author himself. It was still, however, just as often received in aural prelection[15] as in private

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[13] For Mannyng only, I use the term "self-fashioning" that Stephen Greenblatt has so influentially defined for the Renaissance as an overt and "deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity." Self-fashioning, as Stephen Greenblatt acknowledges on the same page, does not "spring up from nowhere when 1499 becomes 1500." Stephen Jay Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1.

[14] John J. Thompson claims that what he terms "the blurring of the 'I'-narrator" in the Southern version should be attributed to careless scribal copying. I will argue differently here. John J. Thompson, *The* Cursor Mundi: *Poem*, *Texts and Contexts*, Medium Aevum Monographs, New Series XIX (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 1998), 51.

[15] Joyce Coleman defines "aural prelection" as "the reading aloud of a written text to one or a group of listeners." Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 28, 229-230.

reading (Zumthor's *oralité seconde*).[16] The authorial presence created by self-naming in the first person ("Robert Mannyng is my name") prevented a possible later prelector from appropriating both the role of the author and his claim to authority. The third-person reference, by contrast, authorises a text because it implies that someone else is referring to the author. This happens in the same way as a reference to other, particularly Latin, authorities would happen. As Damian-Grint states:

> In the context of an oral delivery of a work, there is no way in which the audience can distinguish a reference to "si cum dit Ambroise" from "com lison en Isidorus;" the phrase works as an implicit self-authorisation of the author, and the narrative voice here becomes that of the author-as-authority.[17]

According to medieval literary theory, one of the defining features of an *auctor* was that his name was known.[18] Thus, the mere presence of the author's name in his work is authorising in that it aligns him with his Latin *auctores*. As a "signature" (which, sometimes together with additional information, establishes personal deixis)[19] both types of self-naming historicise the work, strengthen its credibility and present it as *historia* rather than as *fabula*.[20] Since extratextual evidence is usually lacking, the question remains whether that name in the text is indeed that of the author or, perhaps, that of a fictitiously named narrator. However, Machan states that fictitiously named narrators are rare in Middle English and that "so far

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[16] Paul Zumthor defines *oralité seconde* as follows: "quand elle se recompose à partir de l'écriture au sein d'un milieu où celle-ci tend à exténuer les valeurs de la voix dans l'usage et dans l'imaginaire." Paul Zumthor, *La lettre et la voix. De la "littérature" médiévale* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), 18-19, 109. See also such concepts as "semiliteracy" (Ong) or "craft literacy" (Havelock) as discussed in Walter J. Ong, "Orality, Literacy, and Medieval Textualization," *New Literary History* 16.1 (1984): 5.

[17] Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, 170.

[18] Machan, *Textual Criticism*, 99.

[19] Fleischman, "Representation of History and Fiction," 292. On the functions of the author's name see also Michael Foucault, "What Is an Author?" *Partisan Review* 42 (1975): 606-608.

[20] Machan, *Textual Criticism*, 101-102; see also Monika Otter, "Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing," in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy Partner (London: Hodder Education, 2005), 109-114.

as we can tell the name of the narrator typically seems to be that of the writer as well."[21]

The use of the first person singular pronoun "I" as a gesture of authorship is more problematic. Even within a text containing an authorial signature by name, the "I" can be what has been termed an "institutional I." In his discussion of "narrative impersonality," Zumthor defines such instances of "I" in historically oriented texts as follows:

> the *I* is hardly more than a representative of the universal. A constant oscillation between moral reflection and event destroys the *I*'s individuality every time it begins to take substance. The destiny of the *I* becomes one with the collective fate of man and the world.[22]

At most, such an "I" serves as a vehicle for the audience's emotional responses, as Machan points out. He adds that "while it creates immediacy, it does not specify itself or its own authority."[23] Conversely, it has been argued that the referential framework of "I" may include an authorial persona beyond the narrator, and that even anonymous texts can contain instances of personal authorial "I."[24] Monika Otter points to the interrelation between fictionality and the "je," which can be, in more "written" genres, "that of the author, absent but dramatized as a fictional persona:"

> In traditional narrative, orally transmitted, or, even when written down, dependent on performance (*chanson de geste*), the speaking subject, the "je," is that of the current reciter, in the *roman*, the first truly "written" vernacular genre, the "je" is that of the author, absent but dramatized as a fictional persona.[25]

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[21] Machan, *Textual Criticism*, 102.

[22] Zumthor, *Medieval Poetics*, 130-131, see also 131: "It [the "I"] is a sort of extreme extension of the regular technique of reporting a character's words in the body of the story." Despite the fact that Zumthor here explicitly refers to prose texts, this is a valid definition of one of the forms the "I" can take also in verse historiography.

[23] Machan, *Textual Criticism*, 99-100.

[24] Bella Millett makes this claim for the earliest versions of the *Ancrene Wisse* in her online tutorial: Bella Millett, *What Is Mouvance?*" Last accessed November 2012, http://www.southampton.ac.uk/~wpwt/mouvance/mouvance.htm; see also Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, 170.

[25] Monika Otter, *Inventiones. Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 15.

These arguments should be read in conjunction with the fact that the narrator's name need not be the author's but nonetheless often is. Robert Mannyng, for example, seems to be aware of the potential impersonality of the "I." Consequently, he connects it closely to his name in the prologue. Along the lines proposed by A. C. Spearing, I suggest that the "I" (and, by extension, other first person singular pronouns such as the possessive "my") should be understood as textual deixis. Textual deixis, Spearing claims, effects textual subjectivity: "not how the poems express or represent individual subjectivities, whether of their writers or of fictional characters, but how subjectivity is encoded in them as a textual phenomenon."[26] The subjectivity thus expressed in the "I" is that of the historiographer's authorial persona, the construct in and of the text that may (as Spearing also seems to suggest) or may not coincide with the "real" author.

Interjections are another gesture of authorship. They take different forms, ranging from short exclamations such as "Allas!" to extensive metatextual comments. Damian-Grint proposes a taxonomy of such interjections. He describes three types: rhetorical, narrative and authorising interjections. Rhetorical interjections (e.g. the *audite* topos: "Listen!") use an immediate voice to evoke an oral presentation/aural prelection and, according to Damian-Grint, express the persona of the narrator rather than of the author. Narrative interjections (e.g. "I will tell you . . .") impose shape on the narrative and use an authorial voice although they also primarily purport an oral stance. Authorising interjections (e.g. self-naming), finally, "underscore the role of the author as provider of *auctoritas*."[27] I find this taxonomy helpful primarily because it assigns different types of interjections to different levels of the text. However, I don't think that rhetorical interjections ("Listen!") can completely be detached from an authorial presence just as the narrative interjections ("I will tell you . . .") cannot. Instead, the three types of interjections described here work as gestures of authorship to different degrees. Rhetorical interjections contribute least to the construction of the authorial persona, authorising interjections most.

The gestures of authorship discussed so far are common to most medieval narratives. They will reappear throughout this book. There are, however, also those gestures of authorship that are specific to historiography. In historiographical works, I will suggest in chapters one

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[26] A. C. Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity: The Encoding of Subjectivity in Medieval Narratives and Lyrics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1.
[27] Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, 171.

and two, the writer is also inscribed into the text in relation to and as a reflection of his conception of (the writing of) history. However, to start with the assumption of a kind of professional consciousness of medieval historiographers would be anachronistic. The writing of history, in the Middle Ages, was not a profession, did not, in theory, require any specialist training and history itself was not part of the university curriculum.[28] Instead, it was generally seen as a branch of rhetoric, and the writing of history was thus often no more than a literary exercise.[29] As chronicles were often written within and for monastic communities, the writing of history may not even have been a voluntary choice, but was, instead, just another duty of the monastery's record keeper.[30] Nevertheless, many historiographers shared a common background: most were male, clerical, middle-aged and relatively prosperous. This in turn led to a dominant memory culture, a "common attitude," as Chris Given-Wilson states, "to 'those things which ought to be remembered.'"[31] While the professed aim of such clerics/historiographers was to relate the "truth" about the events of the past, the moral teachings of religion were equally close to their hearts. As Bernard Guenée so succinctly puts it : "notre moine aura une tendance trop naturelle à tremper sa plume historique dans son encre hagiographique."[32]

It is not surprising that the ways in which the historiographers inscribe themselves into their texts as a reflection of their conception of history and historical writing are rarely individualistic. In fact, this is where the works of the corpus, which otherwise differ greatly in their gestures of authorship,

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[28] Taylor points out that instead, "history was an auxiliary science whose role limited its ambitions. The rise of the universities with their emphasis on theology, logic, and philosophy would seem if anything, therefore, to have retarded the study of the past. In the Schools history gave a student only his first intelligence of a text which was to be understood not so much historically as allegorically, tropologically, and anagogically." John Taylor, *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 30. See also Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles. The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London: Continuum, 2004), 65.

[29] Otter, "Functions of Fiction," 109-114; Hayden White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation," in his *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (1978; repr. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 123.

[30] Taylor, *English Historical Literature*, 13.

[31] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 64-65. This is confirmed for the fourteenth century by Taylor, *English Historical Literature*, 8, 15.

[32] Bernard Guenée, "Y a-t-il une historiographie médiévale?" *Revue Historique* 258 (1977), 266.

correlate most. They all draw their audiences' attention to the fact that historiography is the mediation of the events of the past. They, knowledgeable and educated clerics, are the mediators.[33] Likewise, both the envisaged presentation of the historiographical works to the audiences and the construction of the audiences themselves form part of the construction of the authorial personae. However, I will not stop at the analysis of what the historiographers *claim* to be doing (most prominently in their prologues). Instead, I will also look at what they actually *do* when they write history in chapters one and two.[34] They all, for example, place themselves and their audience in time in relation to their concepts of past and present facets of history. They all emphasise certain aspects of history over others in light of their ideas of the value of history for their own present: land (conquered or lost), rulers (rightful or not), conquerors (all of them, ultimately, foreshadowing William of Normandy). In addition, I will treat a strategy of inscribing the historiographer that is more implicit in chapter three. Along the lines suggested by Monika Otter in her reading of twelfth-century historical works,[35] I propose to read the historiographers' representation of writing in general and of books in particular as mirroring their attitudes towards their own work.

Also, the four historiographers not only inscribe themselves into their texts as individuals but they also inscribe themselves as members of one or several groups that may at least partly be conflicting. Psychologists have

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[33] Damian-Grint claims this to be true for Wace: "[The] presentation of the *clerc* as the intermediary between text and audience forms part of Wace's overall literary strategy." Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, 40-41.

[34] See Virginie Greene's review of Damian-Grint's book: "To focus on the parts of the text where authors assert in various ways their authority is not in itself a bad idea, but it leads Damian-Grint to look almost exclusively at what authors claim they are doing, without looking at what they are actually doing. How do these claims of truth, serious scholarship, and knowledge of trustworthy sources compare with the content of the narratives?" Virginie Green, review of *The New Historians of the of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, by Peter Damian-Grint, *Speculum* 76.3 (2001): 710.

[35] Otter, *Inventiones*, 5. Otter here understands her "mirror episodes" as "poetic emblems" and "mises-en-abyme" as defined by Robert Hanning and Lucien Dällenbach: Robert W. Hanning, "Poetic Emblems in Medieval Narrative Texts," in *Vernacular Poetics in the Middle Ages* ed. Lois Ebin, Studies in Medieval Culture 16 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1984); Lucien Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, trans. Jeremy Whiteley and Emma Hughes (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989); see also Otter, "Functions of Fiction," 118.

pointed out the mechanisms at work when defining the "self" as a member of the group(s) to which it belongs. Jerome Bruner states that:

> Defining the Self and its allies also defines those who are in the out-group, and . . . there seems always to be a degradation of the out-group that has a special role, by contrast, in defining one's own qualities and the qualities of those with whom one is allied, one's in-group.[36]

All four historiographers inscribe themselves into their texts as members of an in-group of clerics whose shared qualities are literacy, learnedness and language skills. Through their extensive discussions of their choice to write "in English for the English," however, they also present themselves as members of another in-group. The assertion of a common English language and culture defines an "English" in-group against an out-group of those who, by their own exclusive use of Anglo-Norman, had hitherto defined their own in-group as "non-English." It is obvious that the qualities of language knowledge (Latin and French/Anglo-Norman) on the one hand and the qualities of a shared and unique Englishness on the other are potentially conflicting.

The gestures of authorship discussed so far, whether general or specific to historiography, are all forms of self-inscription into the work. I will now (and in chapters four and five) turn to another group of gestures of authorship, that of negotiating authority against the sources. This group is not, in fact, of a completely different kind. Rather, it is a particular yet essential subgroup of the first group. It is defined by the complex interrelations between three elements: the different kinds of authority, *auctoritas* and *auctoritates*, the medieval historiographer, and the ways in which he seeks to establish his own authority. In historiography, the attempt of establishing authority is closely linked to truth claims. Hayden White, in his article "Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," discusses the different types of authority connected to the truth claims of the narrative of Richerus of Rheims:

> The first authority invoked by the author is that of his patron, Gerbert; it is by his authority that the account is composed . . . Then there are those "authorities" represented by the classic texts on which he draws for his construction of the early history of the French (Caesar, Orosius, Jerome, and so on). There is the "authority" of his predecessor as a historian of the

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[36] Jerome Bruner, "Self-Making and World-Making," in *Narrative and Identity. Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture*, eds. Jens Brockmeier and Donald Carbough (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2001), 34-35.

see of Rheims, Flodoard, an authority with whom he contests as a narrator and on whose style he professes to improve. It is his own authority that Richerus effects in this improvement, by putting "other words" in place of Flodoard's, and modifying "completely the style of presentation." There is, finally, not only the authority of the Heavenly Father, who is invoked as the ultimate cause of everything that happens, but the authority of Richerus' own father . . . who figures as a central subject of a segment of the work as the witness on whose authority the account in this segment is based.[37]

In other words, the historiographer's own authority is established by invoking any, several, or all of the following: firstly the authority of a patron; secondly, the authority (*auctoritas*) of the often classical sources; thirdly, the authority of immediate predecessors and, fourthly, the authority of God (to which the fatherly authority quoted above is connected in intriguing ways). This list should be expanded to include yet another authority, namely the one gained through self-authorisation. An example of this is Wace inscribing himself into his prologue with the following words: "Maistre Wace . . . Ki en conte la verité."[38] Providing name and title of himself in the third person, he evokes the impression of someone else referring to him in the same way as one would refer to an *auctoritas*. His name thus acquires authority and can vouchsafe the veracity of the account. To underline this, the title "maistre" points towards Wace's authorisation to teach (granted, as well, by someone else). Another example is Laʒamon complimenting himself, in the third person, of his "excellent idea" ("mern þonke") to write history.

White, in the quote above, draws our attention to the fact that Richerus effects his own authority by undermining that of his predecessor Flodoard. I suggest that such undermining is also possible with the other authorities described, with the patrons, the classic *auctores* and perhaps even God. Concerning the latter, Alastair Minnis has coined the term *translatio auctoritatis*, a shift of *auctoritas* from "the divine realm to the human."[39]

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[37] Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," in his *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 19.

[38] Wace, *Wace's Roman de Brut: A History of the British*, *Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. Judith E. Weiss, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 199), ll. 7-8. I use this recent edition which is largely based on that by Ivor Arnold, hereafter referred to as "Wace" and line numbers.

[39] Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company, 1988), vii.

Minnis connects this specifically to the later Middle Ages and to Chaucer who in a similar context has even been called "the first writer to take on God."[40] All of these authorities can be used in two ways. Firstly, their authority is asserted. If they are presented as reliable and truthful, the historiographer's own account gains authority through referring to them. Secondly, their authority is undermined. If they are presented as wanting, the historiographer's own account gains authority through rejecting them. To reject an *auctoritas* produces authority: Only someone who knows more, has better and more reliable information may do so. Robert Mannyng, I will argue, applies both these strategies very skilfully.

  The scholarly discourses of authorship and authority have been greatly influenced by the work of two scholars, Alastair Minnis and Paul Zumthor. Alastair Minnis, in his seminal work *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, criticises the application of concepts of modern literary theory to medieval literature ("concepts which have no historical validity as far as medieval literature is concerned"),[41] and proposes to apply medieval theories instead. According to these theories, which were primarily Latin ones,[42] an *auctor* was someone who *created* his material, as is famously exemplified in Bonaventure's often-quoted definition.[43] In the case of historiography, the called-for original creation of material is closely connected to the importance attributed to eyewitness accounts, as Isidore

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[40] Barry Sanders, "Lie It as It Plays: Chaucer Becomes an Author," in *Literacy and Orality*, ed. D. R. Olson and N. Torrace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 111. Sanders here claims that "[Chaucer] is the first English writer to use the word *author* in its secular meaning . . . and because he is the first truly literate English author, Chaucer is, above all, the first writer to take on God."

[41] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 1.

[42] Machan, *Textual Criticism*, 96.

[43] Bonaventure, as cited in Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 94. Bonaventure's definition is the following: "The method of making a book is fourfold. For someone writes the materials of others, adding or changing nothing, and this person is said to be merely the scribe. Someone else writes the materials of others, adding, but nothing on his own, and this person is said to be a compiler. Someone else writes both materials of other men, and of his own, but the materials of others as the principal materials, and his own annexed for the purpose of clarifying them, and this person is said to be the commentator, not the author. Someone else writes both his own materials and those of others, but his own as the principal materials, and the material of others annexed for the purpose of confirming his own, and such must be called the author."

of Seville's definition of history makes clear.[44] The most authoritative historical account, then, was in fact that of an *auctor* who is an eyewitness.[45] Since most historiographers, however, could not claim to have witnessed the events they described, the highest authority was attributed to those "writers whose compositions were made venerable by their antiquity."[46] These authors not only came to be regarded as *auctores* but they were also regarded as possessing *auctoritas*.[47] Consequently, Minnis states:

> In a literary context, the term *auctor* denoted someone who was at once a writer and an authority, someone not merely to be read but also to be respected and believed . . . . The writings of an *auctor* contained, or possessed, *auctoritas* in the abstract sense of the term with its strong connotations of veracity and sagacity.[48]

It is thus through and against the authority of the Latin *auctores* that medieval historiographers writing in the (English) vernacular seek to establish their own authority. Machan and Damian-Grint (although they come to different conclusions) both piont out that the constant negotiations of matters of authority and the enormous importance thus attributed to the sources are a particularity of vernacular historiography.[49]

 Paul Zumthor's influential *Essai de poétique médiévale* led to another school of thought concerning medieval authorship. He opposed editorial practices that tried to establish "the original text" of works that were at least partly manifest as oral performances. With his concept of *mouvance*,[50] he called for a new understanding of works produced within a culture which, despite the existence of written texts, was more an oral than a written one (*oralité mixte*) or within a culture in which written texts were

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[44] Isidore of Seville as cited in Otter, "Functions of Fiction," 113. His definition reads: "History is the narration of events, through which that which occurred in the past is known." See also E. R. Curtius' summary of Isidore's literary theories: E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard Trask, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 450-457.

[45] Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, 68.

[46] Machan, *Textual Criticism*, 96.

[47] Ibid. It is no coincidence, Machan argues, that there were no appropriate vernacular terms for *auctores* and *auctoritas*.

[48] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 10.

[49] Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, 141.

[50] Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, 155-177.

created for both aural prelection and private reading (*oralité seconde*).[51] In his own concise summary, he states that:

> By *mouvance* I mean to indicate that any work, in its manuscript tradition, appears as a constellation of elements, each of which may be the object of variations in the course of time or across space. The notion of *mouvance* implies that the work has no authentic text properly speaking, but that it is constituted by an abstract scheme, materialized in an unstable way from manuscript to manuscript, from performance to performance.[52]

Building on this, but with a greater emphasis on the varying written realisations of medieval works, Bernard Cerquiglini proposed his related concept of *variance*, according to which it is anachronistic to see medieval works as the intellectual property of just one author.[53] With Zumthor and Cerquiglini, Bella Millett points out that scholarly attempts to find an original text "failed to take into account the way the work was seen in its own time."[54] Rather, she suggests in her succinct summary of the two concepts, there is, under such conditions, "less concern for the textual integrity of the original work, and a less clearly-marked distinction between the functions of the author and scribe."[55] This school of thought has a great effect on the terms in which the construction of the historiographer's authorial persona can be discussed. A good starting point is Zumthor's definition of author (the term he uses to mean author, reciter and scribe, "except when there is clear proof otherwise")[56] as "l'homme dans le texte" which may or may not coincide with "l'homme comme tel." I will argue that the degree to which the two coincide (or are made to coincide) depends precisely on the applicability of the theoretical concept of *mouvance* to the work. This is not unlike Chaucer, whose anxiety for the integrity of his work has usually been read as a *caveat* to the concepts

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[51] Zumthor, *La lettre et la voix*, 18-19, 109.

[52] Paul Zumthor, *Speaking of the Middle Ages*, trans. Sarah White (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 96.

[53] Bernard Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la variante* (Paris: Cerf, 1989), 58.

[54] Bella Millett, "Mouvance and the Medieval Author: Re-Editing *Ancrene Wisse*," in *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and Their Transmission*, ed. Alastair Minnis (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), 12.

[55] Millett, *What Is Mouvance?*

[56] Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 41. Zumthor explains: "there is a frequent failure to distinguish clearly between the categories of author, reciter, and . . . . It would perhaps be safer, except when there is clear proof otherwise, that the word "author" covers all three of these overlapping meanings."

of *mouvance* and *variance*.[57] Robert Mannyng clearly applies different authorising strategies in order to control all possible levels of the written and oral/aural realisations of his work.[58]

The four works

The works that form the corpus for this study (the chronicle of Robert Mannyng of Brunne, the chronicle of Robert of Gloucester and the scriptural history *Cursor Mundi* in its two versions) were all written at approximately the same time, between 1275 and 1338. It was a time often described as a period of many crises.[59] One such crisis is the almost constant warfare between the English and the Scots in the wake of the Scottish king Alexander III's death in 1286. This conflict and the impending alliance between Scotland and France posed a "continuous threat to England as a sovereign state."[60] People in the North of England, where both Robert Mannyng and the Northern *Cursor* poet lived and worked, lived in constant fear of raids. In addition, they also suffered from the famines of 1315/16 that were accompanied by a virulent epidemic as well as a sheep- and cattle plague.[61] Robert of Gloucester, in turn, witnessed

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[57] Millett, *What Is Mouvance?*; Machan, in contrast, suggests that "the anxiety that motivates much of Chaucer's metatextual exposition, indeed, is occasioned by the consequences of the denial of auctorial status." Machan, *Textual Criticism*, 134.

[58] In contrast to authors such as Chaucer and Mannyng, Millett claims that the author of the *Ancrenne Wisse* "accepted both the short-term and the long-term instability of his work, and that he actively collaborated in the process of textual change." Millett, "Mouvance and the Medieval Author," 14.

[59] For definitions of the term for the fourteenth century see František Graus, *Pest - Geissler - Judenmorde: Das 14. Jahrhundert als Krisenzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1994); Walter Buckl, *Das 14. Jahrhundert: Krisenzeit* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1995); Bruce M. S. Campbell, *Before the Black Death: Studies in the "Crisis" of the Early Fourteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Ferdinand Seibt and Winfried Eberhard, *Europa 1400: Die Krise des Spätmittelalters* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984); Wendy R. Childs and John Taylor, *Politics and Crisis in Fourteenth-Century England* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1990).

[60] Thea Summerfield, *The Matter of Kings' Lives: The Design of Past and Present in the Early Fourteenth-Century Verse Chronicles by Pierre De Langtoft and Robert Mannyng* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 8.

[61] Sarah M. Horrall, general introduction to *The Southern Version of* Cursor Mundi, vol. 5, ed. Laurence M. Eldredge and Anne L. Klinck (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000), 17.

some of the events of the so-called "Second Barons' War" of 1264-1267. He accuses Henry III of openly favouring his and his wife's French-speaking relatives and constructs (quite unrealistically as I will show in chapter one) the rebellious barons as "English:" "Þoru hom & þoru þe quene was so muche frenss folc ibrouȝt. Þat of englisse men me tolde as riȝt nouȝt" (RG 10,992-93).

   Not all of these events are discussed in the works, but a sense of crisis is inherent in many passages. As mentioned, Turville-Petre has discussed such passages under the focus of the construction of national selves.[62] His ideas have met with considerable criticism, among others from Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Derek Pearsall.[63] Pearsall, for example, states:

> These remarks about England and the English language, and others of a similar kind by Robert Mannyng, Robert of Gloucester and the anonymous author of the *South English Legendary* are evidence only of fragmentary, sporadic, regional responses to particular circumstances, not of a wave of English nationalism sweeping the country.[64]

What has also been neglected in Turville-Petre's discussion is that this process also produces authorial personae. While the arguments of the four historiographers that contribute to the construction of the collective (and, arguably, national) self are quite similar, the ways in which the authorial personae are construed are not. The elements that unite the four works have been discussed extensively, but what separates them is just as important and has not been discussed much: The very different degrees to which the historiographers, by their use of diverse gestures authorship, construct their authorial personae. I propose to amend this in this book.

   Robert of Gloucester's and Robert Mannyng of Brunne's chronicles are verse chronicles that have been categorised as "Brut continués."[65] In contrast to Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Laȝamon's *Brut* (works that are classically called "Bruts"), which end with the exile of the last Celtic king,

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[62] Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*.

[63] Wogan-Browne, *Idea of the Vernacular*, 16-20; Pearsall, "Before-Chaucer Evidences," 29.

[64] Pearsall, "Before-Chaucer Evidences," 29.

[65] Edward Donald Kennedy, *Chronicles and Other Historical Writing*, vol. 8 of *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, *1050-1500*, ed. Albert E. Hartung and J. Burke Severs (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1989), xxi. Kennedy here distinguishes nine categories of historical writing, one of them being the *Brut* chronicles: "chronicles which begin with the legendary founding of Britain, or, although beginning later, are derived from *Brut* chronicles."

the "Bruts continués" continue their accounts up to their writers' own present time.[66] The *Brut* and its continuations were something of a national history, despite the fact that there was neither an official history nor an official writing centre in England in the fourteenth century. There is no evidence that the *Brut* was in any way officially commissioned, instead, as John Taylor states, "it was a popular history addressed to the widest possible medieval audience."[67]

The two versions of the anonymous *Cursor Mundi* are not chronicles, of course. Modern scholars have called the work a "Biblical paraphrase," or more fittingly a "scriptural history."[68] As such, the *Cursor Mundi* belongs with the group of early Middle English Biblical paraphrases such as the *Middle English Genesis* and *Exodus* or the prefatory material of the *South English Legendary*.[69] Although it is, therefore, a very different kind of work, it can still be classified as historical writing because it embeds the few historical events (that would be considered historical by modern definition) in salvation history. Sarah M. Horrall, in her introduction to the first volume of her edition of the Southern versions calls it "a verse history of the world, based on scripture."[70] Suzanne Fleischman points out that the Bible was considered history in the Middle Ages, "and the most authoritative history at that."[71] Like the two chroniclers, both *Cursor Mundi* poets start their work with a Biblical account. For all four writers, history at the outset is *salvation* history. Like Robert Mannyng and Robert of Gloucester, both *Cursor* poets emphasise the teachings that the past holds for the present. Like the two chroniclers, the Northern *Cursor* poet (not the Southern one!) presents himself as the one person to bring those teachings to his audience.

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[66] Summerfield, *Matter of Kings' Lives*, 2.

[67] Taylor, *English Historical Literature*, 45,110.

[68] Thompson, *The* Cursor Mundi, 114.

[69] Horrall also mentions the *Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament* as "a third paraphrase of interest." Horrall, general introduction to *Southern Version of* Cursor Mundi, 8-11. See also also Sarah M. Horrall, introduction to *The Southern Version of* Cursor Mundi, vol. 1 (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1978), 11.

[70] Horrall, introduction to *Southern Version of* Cursor Mundi vol. 1, 11.

[71] Fleischman, "Representation of History and Fiction," 301.