

Colette Moore, *Quoting Speech in Early English*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014, 232 p.

Adina Chirilă*

Faculty of Letters, History and Theology, West University, Bd. Vasile Pârvan 4, 300223 Timișoara, Romania

The book is an extensive, linguistic and literary/stylistic study on the methods of marking off reported speech in literature during the pre-modern period of English (1350–1600), on the basis of several different categories of manuscripts and printed texts now included in *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* (CMEPV). The issue should be addressed by the diachronic research of a language, since the soundness of a medieval text's modern edition, the hermeneutics of the text and the conclusions regarding the aspects that a language might have had in the past lean upon a correct separation of the discourses and of the "voices" that create them. In this respect, for example, Suzanne Romaine believes that understanding the fact that "the norms for reporting speech in discourse or verse may have been different then [i.e. 1530–1550, *Middle Scots*] or could have varied according to genre" (Romaine, 1982, p. 125) is crucial in order to maintain a pertinent hypothesis about the aspect of a colloquial variant of an old language, for "[e]ven if we examine quoted or indirect speech in prose or verse texts [...], which may be assumed to approximate speech to some extent, this is not speech" (*ibidem*).

Colette Moore seizes the speculation of the British scholar, whom she evokes in *Introduction: editing reported speech* (p. 1), further trying, first, to identify and highlight the different methods of quoting employed by the writers and scribes in early English; second, to outline the stylistic relevance of the obvious inconsistency in using the markers of reported speech, and that of the indefinite character as to the mode of discourse present at one point: actual narrative, direct speech or discourse (*oratio recta*), and indirect speech or discourse (*oratio obliqua*).

In detail, the work raises a series of important questions: how should one understand the opinion that the manuscripts have less-determined ways of

indicating reported speech?; what were the assumptions of the pre-modern English speakers and writers about the direct and indirect speech?; to what extent did they differ from those of the nowadays writers?; how does the application of the early methods for reporting speech affect the understanding of a late medieval text in the modern era?; how did the medieval authors work with this fluid system of marking?; what are the consequences of the modern editorial practice's intrusion in the text, regarding the accuracy with which a text is transmitted and displayed for further investigations? (p. 2). Seeking for answers, Colette Moore embraces and develops a work method that combines linguistic, historical pragmatic and hermeneutic perspectives, all possible in the process of text analysis.

The substance of the book is comprised in three chapters that deal with three fundamental aspects of quoting in pre-modern writing, each of them a source for various and meaningful ideas and observations: ways of marking reported discourse, especially in manuscripts (Chapter I, *Methods of marking speech*, p. 18–79); functions of quoting and of quotation in various communication situations (Chapter II, *Interpreting reported speech: defamation depositions, sermons, chronicles*, p. 80–127); stylistic values of direct and indirect speech in a medieval text (Chapter III, *Reported speech in literary texts: stylistic implications*, p. 128–181).

The conclusions of the first chapter are built mostly upon the examination of sixteen manuscripts of the work *The Vision of Pierce the Plowman*, attributed by internal evidences to William Langland (c. 1330–c. 1400), which have survived through more than fifty copies, in at least three variants; upon the investigation of twenty three manuscripts of the work of Nicholas Love (?–c. 1424) *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, of the sixty two that

*Email address: chiriladina@yahoo.com.

we have today; and upon the analysis of an editorial series concerning a small section of *Merchant's Tale* (Geoffrey Chaucer, 1342–1400, *Canterbury Tales*), verses 1263–1267, from the first printed version, c. 1483, by William Caxton, to the modern edition of 1903 [1898], by Alfred W. Pollard. The selection made by Colette Moore is considered representative for working out an image of the techniques of marking reported discourse used by the pre-modern writers and scribes, and by the early editors. They appear to be divided into scribal methods, of *mise-en-page*, and linguistic methods.

Among the first means employed in the attempt to organize graphically a page with more than one voice operating in the construction of the discourse are: the paragraph mark (¶); the line spacing; punctuation marks: *punctus* (·), *punctus elevatus* (‡)—these being used as midline caesura dots, to draw attention to the linguistic mark (*inquit*) of a quotation; the rubrication of letters (e.g.: the abbreviated form of the verb *quod*, the initials of lines when they coincide with someone's discourse, the initials of proper and common names when they designate persons whose words are quoted), and of the scriptural quotations; underlining; composing marginal *note* that call the reader's attention to the quotation's source and, implicitly, to its presence in the text, but also speak about the citation's degree of accuracy towards the archetype: quotation abbreviated by the compiler or the scribe, paraphrase, deviation, augmentation.

Colette More holds that, in general, methods like these are not used systematically. Although some manuscripts show a higher level of organization of different marking methods, most of them lack clarity and constancy in this respect, with frequent alternations of the markers. From one scribe to another, a certain type of marker may be replaced by a different one, according to the preferences or habitudes of the scribe. It also happens that the existence of a marker is completely overlooked when, while copying a text, the scribe applies a new understanding to its content, and feels free “to emendate” the work he labors upon, since the medieval practice of transcribing allows the intervention of the mere scribe as an interpreter of the text.

Linguistic methods of indicating the perspectives' alternation include discourse elements like interjections, vocatives, pronominal, spatial and tem-

poral deictic markers, other pragmatic markers, etc., and also meta-discourses and incident structures—most of them of the *verba dicendi* type. About the latter, noticing their repetitive character and the tendency to operate in coordinated pairs (e.g.: “Rolland **ansuerd** and **sayd**: syr guy of Bourgoyne, come ye...”—*Charles the Grete*, CMEPV, p. 58; “Charlemagne **speke** thus, he **sayd** to hym / I wyll that ye knowe | now that I...”—*Four Sons of Aymon*, Caxton, CMEPV, p. 59), Colette Moore maintains that we witness a process of pragmaticalization/grammaticalization—at least in some cases, e.g.: *seien* ‘to say’, when the verb does not describe the event of speaking, but carries a textual function—that of indicating the shift to the direct speech (although, in the beginning of the discussion, the author mentions the stylistic value of the doubling of verbs, so frequent in many pre-modern languages and in the Bible, as an example of the rhetoric figure *copia*).

The idea of the grammaticalization of the *inquit* is further proved by analysis of the functions that *videlicet* ‘namely, clearly’ (< lat. *videre licet*) has in legal context, upon a corpus of one hundred and twenty depositions in slander cases recorded between 1245 and 1645 in courts from England and Scotland. Colette Moore draws the conclusion that, throughout centuries, with more and more occurrences of the same sort, *videlicet* (also *v.*, *vi.* or *viz.*) develops two textual functions: as a marker in code-switching (when the juridical text is written in Latin and English, the latter being the language known and used by the witnesses in their depositions), and a conventional marker of the reported discourse, either direct or indirect speech, as in (23)/p. 64: “*Durham Diocesan Records 1570*. Elizabeth Robson contra Isabell agnet knops in *causa diffamacionis videlicet* that she is a hoore & a harlott/”.

Thus, the *inquit* constructions in pre-modern texts (a few *verba dicendi* and, in certain contexts, *videlicet*) have mainly an organizing role, usually in the absence of other means invested with this purpose. The deterrent factors, those that have weakened this pragmatic function and stopped the grammaticalization process of the lexical elements under observation are, in Colette Moore's opinion, the emergence and generalization (alongside the multiplication of the books by print) of other editorial conventions: the use of italic letters, of *parentheses*

(or, after Erasmus, *lunule*—used for three centuries for setting of quotative phrases), and commas (*diple*, *inverted comma*), later.

The practice of isolating the *inquit* related to the reported speech may be another proof in favor of the idea that phrases like *he said* or *quod she* are significantly grammaticalized, their semantic content is minimal and indicated as such in the economy of discourse. The main theoretical argument for Colette Moore's opinion lies in several fragments from a few 16th grammarians' works, of George Puttenham, *Arte of English Poesie*, 1589, Richard Mulcaster, *Elementarie*, 1582, and John Hart, *An Orthographie*, 1569 (who, for example, characterizes the fragment between parentheses as removable: "As the *Parentheseos*, which Gréeke word signifieth interposition: and we may understand to be a putting in, or an addition of some other matter by the way: which being left out yet the sentence remayneth good.", p. 74).

As for the *diple* and inverted commas, Colette Moore emphasizes the role that they have in late medieval texts (till the end of the 17th century), namely to indicate gnomic utterances, *sententiae*, whose absolute truth is known or ought to be known and accepted by readers. Only secondary do these signs draw attention to the presence of a *certain* voice that has a certain contribution to the construction of the text; their primary function is to invoke an authority (*auctoritas*) on the basis not of intellectual property, but of truth.

The second Chapter focuses on three literary genres (defamation depositions, sermons and historical chronicles), in order to identify and describe the authors' and scribes' conceptions about the act of quoting, the way in which they operate in texts depending on genre, and the role of the reported discourse in constructing the text as a whole. In judicial cases, the problem concerns the faithfulness in quotation that is expected in the process of recording the depositions. Colette Moore notices that medieval customs allow not only the *ad hoc* transformation of the direct speech of the witnesses into indirect speech, a practice that does not affect the *de dicto* image of the discourse, but also a *de re* registering, when the witnesses' depositions are written down according to the clerk's judgment and evaluation. The convention gives priority to the loyalty to a legal standard of defamation, against the

exact reporting (*verbatim*) of the deposition.

The analysis continues with the sermons, for the crucial importance that the quotation from biblical sources and patristic texts has in illustrating the legitimacy of the preacher's message. Believing that the use of probating quotations is a defining feature of the scholastic sermon—a genre of the pulpit oratory that emerged in Western Europe at the end of the 12th century—, Colette Moore examines a corpus of more than a hundred and fifty such discourses. As a rule, she finds an ambiguous relation between the preacher and the quotation. Crediting someone with an utterance often lacks precision, which may be a sign for the pragmatic value of the very *act* of pointing to an authoritative voice, when the preacher cannot or, for various reasons, doesn't want to clearly identify that voice. The fragments employed as quotations appear to be more or less untrue to the archetype, for the deviations take the form of tacit combination of two or more sources (Colette Moore offers the example of the second sermon from British Library MS Royal 18 B. xxiii, which opens with several biblical fragments—*Jn*, 6, 57, *Mt*, 12, 44, *Lk*, 11, 24—talked about as a unitary fragment), summary, free and unmarked inserting of the preacher's personal comments in the citation, extrapolation, abrupt transition from Latin to English and from direct to indirect discourse, bilingual and redundant use of a biblical or patristic text, etc. Some situations render evident another problem specific to the pre-modern period in the history of a vernacular language: the relation between the source-text written in a sacred language (i.e. Latin) and the translation made in the vernacular language (i.e. English); in this respect, Moore maintains that "[s]ince most of the quotations are from Latin source material, investigating the conception of faithfulness in quotation entails investigating the conception of faithfulness in translation" (p. 106). Correlating the linguistic findings with the specific historical events, she then concludes that, in a period of censorship and severe repression of vernacular renderings of Scripture in any form—*libri*, *libelli*, *aut tractatus* (according to Article 7 of Bishop Arundel's Constitutions of 1407-1409), the preachers were forced either to preserve the Latin aspect of the pericopae used in their sermons, or to create either extremely slavish translations into English, or loose paraphrases so that the censors might not notice the presence of a quotation in discourse,

but that of a mere comment.

Broaching historical chronicles from 1350–1500 (*Brut – The Chronicles of England, Polychronicon – translated and annotated by John Trevisa, The Chronicle of Popes and Emperors, Lollard Chronicle, etc.*), a genre that is partially grounded on speech reporting, the linguist points out the conventional and rhetoric character of reporting direct speech: the act of “quoting” a historical figure’s speech ought to be interpreted as an act of approximation, the act of creating a plausible discourse by the chronicler himself, a discourse that is meaningful to the actual political or dramatic context. “The motive is rhetorical and driven by the narrative rather than by the impulse to mark accuracy” (p. 117). Another observation concerns the fluidity that characterizes the employment of narrative, the metadiscourse about the direct speech and the direct speech itself in chronicles, with unmarked or ambiguous transitions among them.

The third Chapter is a survey of the work of three canonical English writers from the 16th century: the anonymous and presumably only author of the poems *Pearl*, *Cleanness*, *Patience*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (British Library, Ms Cotton Nero A.x), William Langland (*The Vision of Piers the Plowman*), and Geoffrey Chaucer (*Canterbury Tales*). Colette Moore argues here that some authors of the late Middle Ages use the system of speech marking in a manner that creates ambiguity and, consequently, the possibility of a multiple reading, “intrinsic to the literary project” (p. 132). If so, the option of the modern editor who indicates without doubt the “clarified” margins of the reported speech sequences in the old literary text would reflect an *interpretative decision* that simplifies and disadvantages the text. An action as such would be even superfluous in a case like the one known as “the Marriage Encomium” (Chaucer, *The Merchant’s Tale*, verses 1267–1392): Colette Moore believes that the lack of clarity with regard to the identity of the voices that compose the text is in fact the key to the right and full interpretation of the encomium as a succession of general truths about marriage—*sententia* whose gnomic content belongs to the entire humanity (p. 176–177). In a different circumstance—*The Vision of Piers the Plowman*—, the obscurity would be no less than essential in the process of recreating, in the reader’s mind, the dream-like experiences described in the poem, and of achieving the didactic purposes

of the text: “[a]s constructed by indeterminacies in voices and speakers, Will’s journey is partly a journey of perspective, as seemingly external concepts and ideas are internalized and become part of his own thinking. As readers, we undergo this journey with him.” (p. 162).

The observations on numerous literary fragments cited in the last two Chapters lead to the strong conclusion that, in order to endow the nowadays reader with the possibility to grasp the subtle ways in which the pre-modern writers used systems of marking off reported discourse, and with the chance to reach a deeper understanding of the medieval literary art, prudent and rigorous judgment are required in the applying of modern editorial norms when it comes to the issue of quoting.

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Evaluation. The book has been well received by the international academic community, and received favorable reviews right after its first publication, in 2011. [Petré \(2012\)](#) considered it to be well written, accessible to a wider public, an important contribution to the field of English philology and of medieval literary studies.

Specialist or not, the reader discovers a solid work, whose argumentation stands both on theoretical grounds, when the author thoroughly discusses concepts suggested by fundamental, now classic studies (however, one might upbraid her for not referring to a more recent bibliography, see [Petré, 2012](#), p. 304), as well as on empirical research, most of it original. On the latter score, Colette Moore is on her own in the first chapter when, following the examination of the texts, she brings about original synoptic tables concerning the markers of the reported discourse, in *Troilus and Criseyde* (Geoffrey Chaucer) and *The Regiment of Princes* (Thomas Hoccleve), as well as the pragmatic functions of the verbs of speaking and of *videlicet*, in pre-modern literature. Her point of view on the (pre)grammaticalization of the quotative verb *seien* is, undoubtedly, interesting and highly appealing, but the arguments in its favor are not entirely convincing at this point. It’s unclear why the author does not correlate the presumed process of grammaticalization of the verb *seien* as a marker of reported speech in English with the process of grammaticalization of the same quoting verb as a complementizer—a phenomenon that was described by [Deutcher \(2000\)](#), to which

Hopper & Closs Traugott (2003) refer after having said, about the English language, that “[it] is often thought that a special subset of complementation structures, quotatives in which someone else’s speech is reported, arose out of simple juxtaposition of ‘X say/said’ followed by the quotation [...], but there has been little direct historical evidence for such development” (p. 194; *seqq.*). Further on, regardless of the presumptive result of the *seien*’s grammaticalization (accepting that there are different results indeed: marker or connector), the reader would be interested in a hypothesis about the stage in grammaticalization reached by the verb; Colette Moore speaks about a moment when the intricate process ceases, but the existence of a movement towards the functional pole of a lexical-functional continuum (Haspelmath, 1999, p. 1044) seems to be founded only on (cf. the six criteria of grammaticalization, Lehmann, 2002, p. 108–159) what appears as a semantic bleaching—an observation that would correspond to a decreasing in the (semantic) integrity parameter from Lehmann’s theory (2002, p. 114)—, lacking the other necessary problematizations.

In Chapter two, the author frequently refers to various editorial decisions, observations and ideas of the philologists who have published scientific editions of pre-modern English literature; this gives this section the aspect of a synthesis, very welcome and useful, nevertheless, to the goals mentioned at the beginning.

Displaying Colette Moore’s shrewdness and critical spirit towards prior opinions, the analysis carried on in the third Chapter is convincing when it suggests new readings and understandings of the

scrutinized passages, and is successful in highlighting the stylistic implications of ambiguity in speech reporting in late medieval texts. It is not clearly settled though the problem of what would be the primary cause of this ambiguity: *the authors’ deliberate choice of certain stylistic techniques of interpenetration and superposition of direct and indirect speech* (cf. Petré, 2012, p. 305), or, in general, *the early stage in the elaboration of quoting rules*. Colette Moore suggests both: “most writers of the late medieval period use the systems of speech marking only to set off the represented discourse in their texts as clearly as they deemed necessary, and not with an eye to any particular effect. Nevertheless, [...] indeterminacy as to the speaker or to the boundaries of the speech creates a significant double reading. [...] this double reading, if not demonstrably intentional, is nonetheless intrinsic to the literary project” (p. 132); but also: “[t]his voice shifting is a stylistic technique that the poet employs to emphasize semantic shifts and it is made possible by the less-determined system of speech marking” (p. 144).

Useful in the structure of the book are an *appendix* containing reproductions of two fragments from the manuscripts of *The Vision of Piers the Plowman*, as well as an *appendix* with sigla for cited manuscripts, and an index of names and subjects.

Beyond the reviewer’s interest, the novelty of ideas and the quality of their theoretical and empirical argumentation carried on by Colette Moore recommend this book as a bibliographical source that must not be omitted by future studies of historical linguistics and stylistics, in and outside the Anglo-Saxon area.

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