

## Immutatio Syntactica – Slipping in Medieval Latin Literature : Preliminary Findings

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### RÉSUMÉ

Tous les exemples de *slipping* identifiés dans la littérature en latin médiéval au cours de cette recherche préliminaire révèlent une structure identique : un *verbum dicendi* est suivi du discours indirect, lui-même introduit soit par un accusatif et un infinitif (AcI), soit par les conjonctions *quod* et *quia*. Ce discours indirect glisse ensuite vers un discours direct. La rupture syntaxique qui s'ensuit est indiquée à l'aide de *inquit* ou *ait* ; d'autre part, les conjonctions de coordination *sed*, *et*, *tamen* et *quia* font le lien avec la proposition subordonnée précédente. Sans aucune exception, de tels passages abrupts du discours indirect au discours direct ont lieu dans des moments dramatiques et décisifs du texte ou alors mettent en évidence des réflexions et des informations importantes, ceci sans être toutefois obligatoires. La question de savoir si le *slipping* est utilisé de façon volontaire à des fins stylistiques (« *slipping* par effet de style ») ou alors s'il apparaît involontairement (« *slipping* par inadvertance ») ne peut pas obtenir de réponse convaincante sur la base de ces exemples, qui, pour la plupart, sont en latin médiéval ancien. Une possible imitation de modèles provenant de l'Antiquité doit aussi être exclue. Il se pourrait cependant que l'on trouve des explications plausibles dans l'étude de la psychologie du langage en général.

When we set out to investigate a grammatical, linguistic or stylistic phenomenon in medieval Latin, we will always begin with the old philologist's question as to the model or precedence for it in classical literature<sup>1</sup>. For medieval Latin – from the time of the Carolingian reform at the latest – was not a living language<sup>2</sup>. Latin was learnt as a second language at school according to defined grammatical rules on the basis of a discrete corpus of transmitted texts. In addition to this, a teacher did not possess any privileged or inherent knowledge of the language as, for example, a native speaker of a language does.

Vocabulary, grammar and style of a medieval Latin author, therefore, were determined by (a) the schoolbooks, from which he had learnt, (b) the texts available to him, (c) the texts he liked to read, and (d) his native language.

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<sup>1</sup> The Alexandrian philologist Athenaios (4,165d) already coined the phrase *ποῦ κεῖται* ? « where is it to be found ? ».

<sup>2</sup> For a thorough discussion of the elusive nature of medieval Latin, see Stotz (2002, pp. 23-167) ; for a short introduction to language and institutions, see Mantello & Rigg (1996, pp. 71-129).

We are reasonably well informed about medieval schools and the modifications they underwent in the course of the centuries from early to late medieval times. The grammar books guaranteed the uniform character of medieval Latin in spite of the many regional differences. Latin was taught on the basis of the late antique grammars of Aelius Donatus, the *ars minor* and *ars maior*, and the *institutio grammatica* of Priscian. At the basis of all linguistic endeavours was the discrete corpus of ancient classical authors extended by early Christian literature, that is the Bible and the writings of the Latin Church Fathers. Favouring the classics as models for word usage and style and, therefore, disqualifying late Latin Christian literature was far from the minds of medieval Latinists. Rather, the opposite was true : what could lend greater authority to a word or a figure of speech than its having been used in the Bible or in liturgy ? To be sure, this presented a somewhat curious development, as *ars rhetorica* and Bible Latin at first seemed to be irreconcilable. Bible and liturgical texts in the middle ages were in constant use in every walk of life. Vocabulary and style of medieval Latin was, therefore, to a high degree determined by the late Latin Christian idiom. Yet, classicistic tendencies, the conscious effort of emulating classical literature and language usage, remained. This means that we must search both classical as well as early Christian literature for possible models for the phenomenon linguists such as Richman (1986) have come to refer to as « slipping ». We will start in chronological order with classical literature.

The abrupt change from *oratio obliqua* to *oratio recta* within the same speech act has been documented also for classical Latin literature. The relevant modern grammars of Latin, such as Hofmann & Szantyr (1965, p. 361α) and Kühner & Stegmann (1962, p. 548), describe it as a phenomenon of extremely rare occurrence used in order to highlight a certain thought or to lend a dramatic element to a particular episode. Thus, the switch from indirect discourse to direct discourse is described as a consciously employed rhetorical device. Roman historians from Sallustius on used indirect speech frequently in order to convey the feelings, thoughts, opinions, and moods of groups or classes of persons. Instances of *oratio recta* are considerably fewer. Given the frequency of indirect discourse in these texts, the change from *oratio recta* to *oratio obliqua* within the same act of speech occurs only infrequently. The phenomenon, as far as I can see, has not been treated in the ancient Latin theoretical works of rhetorics.

Moving from indirect to direct speech within the same act of speaking requires certain changes in order to transform a subordinate clause into a main clause, namely the change of person in inflectional verb endings as well as in the pronouns and, as in the case of dependent clauses introduced with a subordinating conjunction, a change of mood. Where necessary, adverbs of time and place are to be changed, e. g. *tunc - nunc*. The concomitant changes required by the switch into *oratio recta* seem to be too numerous to consider them simply as negligence on the part of the writer.

Indirect discourse may be introduced by a semantically unspecified *verbum dicendi* such as *dicere*, *recitare* as well as by a semantically specified verb such as *invehor*. The abrupt change to direct speech in most cases is marked by the insertion of *inquit* ; this particular usage of *inquit* is documented in the *Thesaurus Linguae*

*Latinae*<sup>3</sup>. We should also bear in mind that at a time, when texts were written in *scriptio continua* and when there were no markers to indicate direct speech, an inserted *inquit* would have been very helpful indeed for the understanding of a text. Livy II, 2 provides one such example for slipping in classical literature :

- (1) *Recitat ius iurandum populi neminem regnare passuros [...] non credere populum solidam libertatem reciperatam esse, regium genus, regium nomen non solum in civitate, sed etiam in imperio esse, id officere, id obstare libertati. « Hunc tu, » inquit, « tua voluntate L. Tarquini, remove metum. »*

In the assembly the consul Brutus, in the presence of his colleague L. Tarquinius Collatinus, recalls the oath of the Roman people never again to tolerate a tyrant in Rome. A consul, who refers his origin and name to the Tarquini, therefore, constitutes an infringement on the freedom and sovereignty of the people. Having stated in indirect discourse the problem and reason for calling the assembly, Livy then has Brutus turn directly to L. Tarquinius Collatinus : « By your own good will, L. Tarquinius, » he said, « take this fear from us. » The change into *oratio recta* not only adds vividness and drama to the passage, it also contains the solution of the problem<sup>4</sup>.

We now turn to late-Latin Christian literature. I cannot, at this moment, present any examples of slipping ; however, I do not exclude the possibility that instances of the change from *oratio obliqua* to *oratio recta* may be found in the vast corpus of late antique, early Christian writings. I will focus instead on a phenomenon which has had some influence on medieval Latin and, by way of translation, on the vernacular languages. As against classical Latin usage, in late antiquity subordinate clauses introduced by *quod*, *quia*, *quoniam* seem to have been favoured over the accusative and infinitive or *accusativus cum infinitivo*, *AcI*. Furthermore, the explicative conjunction *quia* is frequently used to introduce direct speech or a quotation. This phenomenon occurs frequently in the biblical books translated from the Greek, where since Attic prose ὄτι explicativum is common (Schwyzer 1950, p. 638, A.1). Thus in the New Testament *quia* is also found to introduce direct speech. It seems to have been avoided in the passages translated or revised by Hieronymus according to the norms of late Latin literary usage (Hofmann & Szantyr 1965, p. 578). Augustine too, regards this usage of *quia* as not conforming to the norms of *latinitas*<sup>5</sup>. In view of the fundamental importance of biblical and liturgical texts for medieval Latin it is hardly surprising that the use of *quia* to introduce *oratio recta* was adopted by medieval

<sup>3</sup> *ThLL* VII, s. v., col. 1775, 17 *inseritur orationi obliquae aut cuilibet sententiae compositae sive ad denuo indicandum sententiam alienam referri, sive ad vim singularum vocum aut enuntiationum augendam.*

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of the quotations from Bede, that is examples (2) to (6), all translations from the Latin are mine.

<sup>5</sup> Süss (1932, p. 44) : *superfluum videtur quia ; plenus sensus est, etsi non habeat quia.*

writers. It is treated as a special phenomenon of late antique and medieval Latin by Stotz (1998, p. 403, § 110).

After this brief look at possible influences and models in classical and late Latin, let us now turn to slipping in medieval Latin texts. Our task was to identify passages where direct speech occurs as an abrupt change from indirect speech within the same speech act. As this seems to be not a common feature in medieval Latin, our search through hundreds of pages yielded frustratingly few results.

The examples for slipping in classical literature suggested that a search through historical writings in medieval Latin should prove fruitful ; and this is where I began. Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* offers, over about 400 pages, five instances of the change from *oratio recta* to *oratio obliqua*<sup>6</sup> :

- (2) *Respondebant Scotti quia non ambos eos caperet insula, « sed possumus » inquit « salubre uobis dare consilium, quid agere ualeatis. Nouimus insulam esse aliam non procul a nostra contra ortum solis, quam saepe lucidioribus diebus de longe aspicere solemus. Hanc adire si uultis, habitabilem uobis facere ualeatis ; uel, si qui restiterit, nobis auxiliariis utimini. »* (Bede 1991, I : 1)

The Irish answered that the island would not hold them both ; « but » said they, « we can give you some good advice as to what to do. We know of another island not far from our own, in an easterly direction, which we often see in the distance on clear days. If you will go there, you can make a settlement for yourselves ; but if any one resists you, make use of our help. »

- (3) *Ante pedes episcopi conruit, postulans ut sibi placatus esset, « quia numquam » inquit « deinceps aliquid loquar de hoc aut iudicabo quid uel quantum de pecunia nostra filiis Dei tribuas. »* (Bede 1991, III : 14)

He threw himself at his feet and asked his pardon. « Never from henceforth », he said, « will I speak of this again nor will I form any opinion as to what money of mine or how much of it you should give to the sons of God. »

- (4) *Percussus enim languore atque ad extrema perductus, uocauit fratres, et multum merens ac damnato similis coepit narrare, quia uideret inferos apertos et Satanam demersum in profundis Tartari Caiphanque cum ceteris qui occiderunt Dominum iuxta eum flammis ultricibus*

<sup>6</sup> *Bede's Ecclesiastical History* (1991). The passage concerning the Pict's arrival in Ireland and their settlement in northern Britain is Bede's version of a legend from an ultimately Irish source, see Wallace-Hadrill (1988, pp. 8-9).

*contraditum ; « in quorum uicinia » inquit « heu misero mihi locum despicio aeternae perditionis esse praeparatum. »* (Bede 1991, V : 14)

He was attacked by an illness and, when he was in extremity, he called his brothers ; lamenting like one already damned, he began to describe how he had seen hell opened and Satan in its infernal depths, with Caiphaz and the others who slew the Lord, close by him in the avenging flames : « and near them, » he said, « I see a place of everlasting damnation prepared, alas, for me, wretched man that I am. »

- (5) *Tum Bonifatius consiliarius apostolici papae et alii per plures, qui eum temporibus Agathonis papae ibi uiderant, dicebant ipsum esse episcopum qui nuper Romam accusatus a suis atque ab apostolica sede iudicandus aduenerit : « qui iam dudum » inquit « aequae accusatus huc adueniens, mox audita ac diiudicata causa et controuersia utriusque partis, a beatae memoriae papa Agathone probatus est contra fas a suo episcopatu repulsus ; et tanti apud eum habitus est, ut ipsum in concilio quod congregat episcoporum quasi uirum incorruptae fidei et animi probi residere praeciperet. »* (Bede 1991, V : 19)

Then Boniface, a counsellor of the pope, and several others who had seen him there in the time of Pope Agatho, said that he was the bishop who had been accused by his fellows and had recently come to Rome to be judged by the apostolic see. « And this man, » they said, « also came here, long ago, on a similar charge ; the case and the controversy between the two parties was quickly heard and judgement given by Pope Agatho of blessed memory, who declared that he had been driven unlawfully from his see. The pope held him in such esteem that he ordered him to sit in the assembled council of bishops as being a man of uncorrupt faith and honest mind. »

- (6) *Adstitit enim mihi quidam candido praeclarus habitu, dicens se Michaelem esse archangelum, et « ob hoc » inquit, « missus sum, ut te a morte reuocem ; donauit enim tibi Dominus uitam per orationes ac lacrimas discipulorum ac fratrum tuorum, et per intercessionem beatae suae genetricis semperque uirginis. »* (Bede 1991, V : 19)

There stood by me a glorious being in white robes who said that he was the archangel Michael, and added, « I have been sent to recall you from death. For the Lord has granted you life in answer to the prayers and tears of your disciples and brothers and through the intercession of His blessed mother. »

In all five passages from Bede the syntax follows the same pattern : After a *verbum dicendi* – semantically unspecified as *dicere*, *narrare* or semantically more specified as *respondere* – there follows either an *AcI* or a dependent clause introduced by the conjunctions *ut* or *quia*, which then switches into a direct statement. The adjustments necessitated by the change from *oratio obliqua* to *oratio recta* – that is, the inflectional ending of the verb and the person change in the pronouns, the change of mood, and the tagging by *inquit* / *inquiunt* – result in a syntactical break with the preceding sentence. In two instances the link with the preceding subordinate clause is restored by the conjunctions *et* or *sed*. In (6) the editors, Colgrave and Minors (1991), have chosen not to incorporate the conjunction *et* into the direct quotation.

Is the *immutatio syntactica* in Bede to be viewed as a conscious rhetorical device or is it simply an oversight, an inadvertent slip? In order to address this question we have to look at the contexts. In (2), the Irish refuse to let the Picts settle on their island because of the scarcity of food. The direct speech contains an alternative, namely the referral to the British mainland and the offer of help to establish them there. Thus, the main theme at this point, the settling of Britain by the Picts, is highlighted. In (3), King Oswine asks bishop Aidan for forgiveness. The switch to direct speech thus enhances the vividness of the scene. Examples (4) and (6) are both visionaries' reports. (4) occurs at a critical point, when the visionary gets to look into the jaws of hell and sees a place of punishment destined for himself; direct speech therefore serves to show and emphasize his despair. In (6), the archangel Michael, after introducing himself in indirect discourse, states his message of salvation in direct speech. In (5), finally, Bishop Wilfrid is reinstated in his rights through the intervention of Boniface at the papal appeals court. The direct speech contains a reference to a previous honourable acquittal by Pope Agatho, leading to his being acquitted again. With the exception of example (4), the immediate contexts hardly allow to draw stringent conclusions as to the function of the switch into direct speech; Bede, in his *Historia*, reports many equally dramatic events without enhancing them by syntactical breaks. Thus, slipping is by no means necessary in order to produce the desired effect; when employed, however, it does seem to be functional within its context.

Other historiographical works which I searched for instances of « slipping », namely Otto of Freising, Liudprand of Cremona, William of Malmesbury, Ekkehardt IV, as well as a fair number of saints' lives, did not yield any results. In view of the fact that two out of five examples in Bede were visions, I then directed my search to this type of text. Indeed, genesis and narrative form of visions make the genre conducive to slipping. Generally, a vision is « translated » and written down by a go-between who reports in indirect discourse what the visionary has told him.

There is a remarkable example of slipping in a letter from Boniface to the Abbess Eadburg recounting the experiences of a certain visionary. Boniface expressly states that he is rendering the vision exactly as he had heard it. He, therefore, employs indirect discourse, namely the *AcI*. At two points however, the narration changes into direct speech to later revert back into indirect discourse.

- (7) *Et tam magne claritatis et splendoris angelos eum egressum de corpore suscepisse, ut nullatenus pro nimo splendore in eos aspicere potuisset. Qui iocundis et consonis vocibus canebant : « Domine, ne in ira tua arguas me, neque in furore tuo corripas me. » « Et sublevabant me, » dixit, « in aera sursum. Et in circuitu totius mundi ignem ardentem videbam. [...] Et istius flamme terribili ardore torquebar oculis maxime ardentibus [...] donec splendide visionis angelus manus suae inpositione caput meum quasi protegens tangebatur et me a lesione flammaram tutum reddidit. »* (Briefe 1955, 9 : 3)

[He said] that as he left his body, angels of such brightness and splendour received him, that he could not look at them for all their splendour. They sang with sweet and harmonious voices : « O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. » [7] « And they lifted me, » he said, « up into the air. And all around the world I saw a fire burning. [...] And I was tortured by the glowing heat of those flames with severely burning eyes [...] until an angel of splendid appearance touched my head as if protecting me by the imposition of his hand and rendered me safe from the scorching flames. »

- (8) *Et sic cumulatis et computatis sceleribus antiqui hostes adfirmabant eum reum peccatoris iuris eorum et condicionis indubitanter fuisse. « Econtra autem » dixit, « excussantes me clamitabant parve virtutes anime, quas ego indigne et imperfecte peregi [...]. »* (Briefe 1955, 10 : 21)

And having thus compiled and added up his crimes, the old enemies proved that he was guilty of sins and therefore, without any doubt, rightfully theirs. « Against this, » he said, « the tenuous virtues I had exercised unworthily and imperfectly, cried out, excusing me [...]. »

Both passages display the changes necessary for the switch from subordination to main clause. The somewhat erratic course of the simple narrative as well as the immediate context, to my mind, make it more likely that both slips constitute an associative gliding into direct speech rather than a consciously employed rhetorical device. In the first passage the slip follows the quotation of the angels' song the visionary hears ; the change into direct discourse seems to be caused by the personal pronoun in the first person, *me*, in the quotation of the psalm. The other instance occurs following a narrative in the *AcI*, in which the personified vices and sins had listed the visionary's bad deeds, which added up to his deserving everlasting damnation. The various speakers and the crucial turn of events apparently confused

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<sup>7</sup> Ps 6, 2 ; 38, 1.

the narrator and caused the slip into the more vivid direct discourse. Slipping in this letter by Boniface seems to have occurred inadvertently.

The *Visio Wettini* in the prose version by abbot Heito of Reichenau (806-823) offers, in about seven pages, four instances of slipping :

- (9) *Et dictum est ab angelo de quodam abbate ante decennium defuncto, quod in summitate eius esset deputatus ad purgationem suam, non ad damnationem perpetuam, ibidem eum omnem inclementiam aeris et ventorum incommoditatem imbriumque pati. Adiunxitque idem angelus de eo, quod quidam episcopus nuper defunctus ipsi abbati solatio precum suarum ad impetrandam veniam subvenire debuisset, sicut ei in visione apparens per quendam clericum eius mandaverat. Praescriptus vero episcopus, hoc negligenter pertractans, caritatis ardore non condoluit, ut ei certamine adhibito succurreret. « Et idcirco nec sibi iam, » ait, « subvenire poterit. »* (Visio 1964, p. 270)

And the angel told of an abbot, who died ten years ago, who was sent to the [mountain] summit for his purgation, not for eternal damnation, where he has to endure all types of inclement weather, storms, and rain. And about him the angel added that a recently deceased bishop should have come to the rescue of the abbot with his prayers, as he had bidden him through one of his priests appearing to him in a vision. The aforementioned bishop, however, neglected this and did not show any compassion in burning love to come eagerly to his rescue. « And therefore, » he said, « now he cannot help himself anymore. »

- (10) *Cui ab angelo ductore suo protinus responsum est, quod quamvis multa miranda et laudabilia et deo accepta fecisset, quorum mercede privandus non est, tamen stupri inlecebris resolutus, cum ceteris bonis deo oblatis longevitatem vitae suae in hoc terminare voluisset, ut quasi parva obscenitas et concessa fragilitati humanae libertas molem tantorum bonorum obrui et absumi potuisset. « Qui tamen, » inquit, « in sorte electorum ad vitam praedestinatus est. »* (Visio 1964, p. 271)

The angel who guided him at once answered him that he [i.e. Charlemagne] had performed many admirable and praiseworthy deeds, which were agreeable to God and for which he would not be deprived of his compensation; that he, however, unrestrained in sexual lewdness had chosen to end his long life with his otherwise good dealings offered to God in such a way that a seemingly small obscenity and the liberty which one concedes to human frailty could totally ruin such a great number of excellent deeds. « In spite of this, »

he said, « he is among the elected and predestined for eternal salvation. »

- (11) *Quam terribilem vero sententiam de conversatione comitum intulerit, quis enarrare sufficiat? Cum quosdam eorum non vindices criminum esse dixerit, sed vice diaboli persecutores hominum, iustos damnando et reos iustificando, furibus et sceleratis communicando. « Munerum enim, » inquit, « praeventionem cecati, pro mercede futurorum nil agunt. Sed cum mundanas leges pro coercenda mali audacia amministrant, damna legalia, quae debitoribus infligunt, absque ulla misericordia quasi iure sibi debita suae avariciae reponunt, hic iterum inveniendae. Iustitiam vero spe futurorum numquam agunt, sed cum eam gratis offerre omnibus pro aeternitatis mercede debeant, semper eam venalem, sicut et animam suam, portant. »* (Visio 1964, p. 271)

Who could adequately explain the terrible assessment he made of the dealings of the nobility? Some of whom he called not avengers of crime but like the devil persecutors of men as they condemn the righteous and justify the guilty and have communion with thieves and rogues. « Blinded by earthly riches, » he said, « they do not do anything for eternal compensation. As they apply the laws only to do evil with audacity and as they avariciously – as if they were entitled to them – appropriate the fines imposed on their debtors without any compassion, they will in turn find the same kind of justice here. They never administer justice hoping for eternal life; while they should offer it to everybody for free in exchange for eternal compensation, they always have it for sale, just as their souls. »

- (12) *De Gerolto etiam quondam comite dixit idem angelus, quod in requie esset gloriae martyrum adaequatus: « Zelo, » inquit, « dei in defensione sanctae ecclesiae infidelium turbis congressus temporalis vitae dispendia est passus, ideo aeternae vitae est particeps factus. »* (Visio 1964, p. 274)

The angel told of the deceased count Gerolt that his status in eternal peace was equal to the glory of the martyrs. « In his zeal for God, » he said, « he fought defending the church against the infidels losing his temporal life; thus he partakes in eternal life. »

From a formal point of view examples (7) to (12) follow the same pattern. A semantically unspecified *verbum dicendi* (*dictum, responsum est, dixit*) is followed by indirect discourse introduced either by the conjunction *quod* or as *AcI*. The change into direct speech is marked by *inquit, inquit, and ait*; it is linked with the

preceding indirect discourse by a conjunction *sed, et, enim, tamen*. The change into direct speech marks either a climax or serves to highlight an important thought. It should also be noted here that the more ambitious versification of the *Visio Wettini* by Walafrid Strabo has no instance of slipping<sup>8</sup>.

The *Visio Thurkilli* from the beginning of the thirteenth century, offers one example for slipping :

- (13) *at ille ait hunc fuisse ex proceribus regis Anglie, qui nocte precedenti subito absque confessione et dominici corporis viatico obierat multaue flagitia commiserat, precipue erga homines suos durus et crudelis existens multosque ad extremam inopiam redigens per indebitas exactiones atque iniustas calumpnias. quod maxime fecerat instigatione pessime uxoris sue, que eum semper ad crudelitatis rapacitatem instigavit. « Ideoque merito anima eius ex toto postestati mee est tradita, ut eam in baratri suppliciis indesinenter torqueam ; nec mireris » inquit, « quod eam in equinam formam transformaverim, ut illam usque huc inequitarem, quia dampnatorum animas licet nobis in quaslibet formas et species transformare pro libitu. »* (Vision 1986, pp. 44-5)

[The devil] said that he was one of the nobles of the English king, who last night had died suddenly without Confession and without Holy Communion. That he had committed many crimes and had been particularly cruel against his own people, many of whom he had driven into extreme poverty by unjustified demands and frivolous lawsuits. This he had done mostly at the instigation of his very bad wife, who had always encouraged his cruel rapacity. « Therefore, his soul is rightfully and totally given into my power, so that I may torture her incessantly in the pit of hell. Do not be surprised, » he said, « that I have transformed her into the shape of a horse in order to ride her to this place, as we are allowed to transform the souls of the damned into any shape and form we like. »

The direct speech here is linked to the preceding indirect discourse, an *AcI* and two relative clauses, by *ideo* ; the direct discourse contains the conclusion of what was reported in indirect narrative, namely that the punishment of the soul is legitimate and well deserved. Again, the slip occurs at a dramatic point.

My last example comes from a narrative text, namely the *Disciplina clericalis* of Petrus Alphonsi :

- (14) *Exemplum de Vado : Et senex ait quod brevior erat via per vadum ad civitatem duobus miliaribus quam via per pontem. « sed tamen citius »*

<sup>8</sup> See Walafrid Strabo (1964, pp. 301-33) ; Knittel (1986).

*inquit*, « *ad civitatem venire potestis per pontem.* » (Petrus Alfonsi 1911, p. 26)

A story about a ford : And the old man said that the road to the city through the ford was two miles shorter than the road over the bridge. « Nonetheless » he said, « you can get to the city faster over the bridge. »

The unspecified verb of saying, *ait*, is followed by a dependent clause which then shifts into direct speech containing the main thought. The change is marked by *inquit*, and the conjunction *sed* links the direct speech to the preceding indirect narrative.

The examples from three different literary genres in medieval Latin literature presented here display, from a formal point of view, the same pattern and characteristic features to mark the switch from *oratio obliqua* to *oratio recta*. Function, scope, and effect in all the examples quoted seem to be more or less identical — with the exception, perhaps, of examples (7) and (8), where the sentence structure seems to have induced the narrator to « slip » inadvertently into direct speech. But even there, slipping occurs at a dramatic point and adds vividness to the narration. Admittedly, in all my examples the switch into direct discourse can be seen as enhancing the immediate context ; however, in no instance would the change be necessary to produce this effect. I am, therefore, not sure whether the dichotomy « artful » versus « inadvertent » is helpful when applied to our examples of slipping in medieval Latin. Nor does the old philologist’s question as to possible models give us the answer. There are, to be true, examples for slipping in classical antiquity ; however, these are quite rare and generally in texts not widely read by early medieval writers, where most of our examples for slipping were found<sup>9</sup>. Perhaps we should look for an explanation for this very rare phenomenon in medieval Latin literature not in the imitation of an ancient model but, rather, in the psychology of language. The difficulty of sustaining indirect discourse over long passages has been pointed out (Richman 1986, p. 283). Without repetition of the verb and the conjunction the sense of dependence will get lost ; the narration, therefore, will automatically switch to direct discourse. It should not come as a surprise then that this happens most frequently at a dramatic turn of events. Given that almost all our examples date from the early middle ages and, furthermore, that, as in the case of the *Visio Wettini*, the more ambitious versification does not have the switch from indirect to direct discourse, it is plausible that the linguistic slip in medieval Latin may simply have its origin in the nature of spoken language.

Philologists tend to view each and every phenomenon in classical literature, every word by an ancient author as a model to be admired and imitated. To be sure, we have no other criteria as to what constitutes “good” language use or *latinitas*. At times it may be wise to remind ourselves of the more realistic verdict by Horace (*Ars*

<sup>9</sup> We know quite precisely which books Bede had at his disposal in the library at Wearmouth ; compare Thompson (1935, pp. 263-6).

poet. 359) : *Quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus*, « sometimes even good old Homer slipped ».

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