Compiling a corpus of English historiography

(Parker Chronicle)
• Zurich English Newspaper Corpus (1671-1791): diversification of newspapers in the 18th century
• Corpus of Early English Medical Writing (1375-1800): linguistic features in their disciplinary embedding, sociohistorical framework
• Corpus of English Religious Prose (1150-1800): innovation, transformation and loss in genres
• “there remain quite a few registers or genres in the history of English which wait for extensive documentation in the form of a fat corpus” (Kohnen 2007)
  – “the humanities and the social sciences have rarely been studied” (Pahta & Taavitsainen 2010: 553)

• parallel corpora
  – “register-specific interdiscursive corpora which permit longitudinal studies would seem feasible and helpful” for studying conventionalization and generic change (Virtanen 2010)
Why historiography?

1. long-standing register
   a. understanding present characteristics based on earlier instantiations (Taavitsainen & Pahta 2004: xv)
   b. earlier works as source texts

2. ‘borderline’ register: scholarly – literary cline
   - The historian’s task, however, is at the same time literary and scholarly; history is at once art and science. It has to fulfill all the demands of criticism and scholarship … but at the same time it is supposed to give the same pleasure to the educated mind as the most perfect literary creation. (Ranke, qtd. Vierhaus 1989: 61)

3. large audience (= potential readership)
   a. popular (also: oral reception)
   b. ‘academic’

4. socio-cultural function
   a. identity
   b. ideology (cf. Verschueren 2012)
Potential Research questions

• development of concepts crucial to the register
  – evidentiality
  – causality

• appraisal realisations
  – their link to ideology
  – their use in interacting with the discourse / community

• text-typological constellations: the (changing) role of narrative?

• how are (clusters of) authors/texts/periods placed along the stylistic cline?
1. historiography in a broad sense
2. ca. 900 – 1900
3. British (English) provenance
4. originals, parallels and models
5. complete texts and large, ‘complete’ chunks
c. 900 -

- first draft of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle around 890
- Alfredian translations into OE (?880s>): Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* (orig. 731), Orosius’ *Historia adversus paganus*

- c. 1900

The historical movement of the nineteenth century was perhaps second only to the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century in transforming Western thought and shaping our modern mentality. (Higham 1965: ix-x, quoted in Iggers 2011)

- professionalisation, e.g. history degrees & Ph.D. 1871/1917 (Oxford), 1873/1920 (Cambridge)
- 1844 ff Rolls Series
- *Dictionary of National Biography*
- 1886 *English Historical Review & Royal Historical Society*
• History is the narrative of deeds [*rei gestae*] by means of which those things that have been done in the past are known. History is so-called from the Greek ‘historein’, that is, from [the verb] to see or to know. For amongst the ancients, no one used to write history except the person who had lived among, and seen, those things which were to be written down, since it is better that we ascertain what has happened with our eyes than to assemble it from what we have heard, because things which have been seen can be put forward without lying. (Isidore, *Etymologiae*, in Kempshall 2011: 123)

• the writing of history; *especially*: the writing of history based on the critical examination of sources, the selection of particulars from the authentic materials, and the synthesis of particulars into a narrative that will stand the test of critical methods (Merriam-Webster)
• tradition: ‘rules’ of a discourse type which are supported and maintained by cultural communities such as professional, literary, or political groups (Koch 1997, 49; cf. also Wolf 2011, Watts 1995)

• family resemblances

diversity of “historians”
• monk / priest (eg Bede, Trevisa)
• legal academic (eg Usk)
• merchant/artisan (eg Fabyan)
• translator / printer (eg Holinshed)
• man of affairs/politics (eg More, Clarendon)
• gentleman of letters (eg Gibbon) [cf. Atkinson 1996]
• academic historian (eg E.A.Freeman)
Historiography: genres

- recording genres
  - autobiographical recount
  - biographical recount
  - historical recount
  - historical account

- explaining genres
  - factorial explanation
  - consequential explanation

- arguing genres
  - exposition
  - discussion
  - challenge

- commemorative / documentary ↔ investigative

(Coffin 2006: 49, 67, 92)
Genres: discourse types and text types

• “the rules of historical writing … are derived from the nature, production and operation of narrative” (Munslow 2007: 1)

DISCOURSE TYPES

vertical arrows from nar to arg

TEXT TYPES

vertical arrows from nar to arg

Figure 2. Text types in the service of discourse types (nar = narration; arg = argumentation) (Virtanen 1992: 303)

e.g. French historiography: narrative text type dominates until 14C, awareness of explicit exposition, argumentation and evaluation only 15C onwards (Schlieben-Lange 1983)
The discourse tradition

- Livy
- Eusebius
- Bede
- Brut
- ASC
- Peterb.
- Monmouth
- Hidden
- Holinshed
- Vergil
- Clarendon
- Gibbon
- More
- More
- More
- Foxe
- Saints
- Hagiog.
- Plutarch

Categories:
- Fiction
- Biography
- Local ch.
- Saints
- Aidus
- Aux.
- EHR
- Stubbs
- Macaulay
- Camden
“The documentation which Bede worked so hard to amass is nearly gone now. Of the Latin sources which Bede quotes directly, only two epitaphs and four other documents remain. Bede’s voice dominates the translation more than it does his own text; he stands as the main, almost the sole, authority and author. Moreover, all the papal correspondence advising or admonishing kings is gone – obliterating the history of papal attempts to exert direct authority over English kings.” (Guenther Discenza 2002: 77)

huge impact of Voltaire’s philosophical type of history in England: translations, press reviews, extracts in the Gentleman’s Magazine etc. (O’Brien 2001: 117f)
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core genre, prototype
Case study: causality

• OE-EModE, Helsinki Corpus historical texts + some additions (106,308 words)

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<td>4.8</td>
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<td>35.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
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• decrease of external world causality: c. 85% - 75% - 60%
  – ðanon he ferde into Wiht. *forbīg* he wolde faran into Normandige & swa dyde syððan. (Chronicle E)
  – So it was a marveilous motive for Queen Mary to embrace and advance the authority of the Bishop of Rome, *for that* the validity of King Henryes marryage with Queene Katherine her mother, was thereupon grounded (Hayward)
Case study: quoting / SWT-presentation

- six OE and ME texts, c. 150,000 words & history texts from FLOB

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</table>

- also styled as hearing (esp. Brut)
- functions: evidential, evaluative (incl foregrounding), narrative (incl. characterisation)
  - ME: dominance of evaluative and narrative function