

Telling Tales: The significance of story in Froissart's construction of chivalry in the *Voyage en Béarn*

This essay is interested in the function of storytelling in the way that chivalric culture in the late-fourteenth-century thought about itself. It uses the *Voyage en Béarn* section in Book III of Froissart's *Chroniques* to consider how story influences our understanding of the 'truthfulness' of Froissart's text and can destabilize received notions of chivalry. After establishing Froissart's writing career in the context of a supposedly 'chivalric' period, I will turn to the *Voyage en Béarn* to examine how Froissart interrogates his own mode of chivalric historiography.

Jean Froissart (1337? – c.1404)¹ was a historian and poet active during the later half of the fourteenth century. His *Chroniques*, a prose history of Europe in four books totalling some three million words, detail events from the preliminaries to the Hundred Years War (the coronation of Edward III in 1327) to Henry IV's usurpation of the English crown in 1399. The general association between this period of European history and the concept of chivalry² is influenced, to a significant extent, by Froissart's text. His world is populated by a nobility engaging in political manoeuvring and deeds of arms controlled, supposedly by the expectations of chivalric culture. Indeed, Peter Ainsworth dubs Froissart the "Secretary of Chivalry."³ His protagonists are men of

¹ Michael Jones. 'Froissart, Jean (1337?–c.1404)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50195>, accessed 7 Dec 2009]

² Although Maurice Keen (*Chivalry*, Yale, 1984. p.238) confines his discussion of chivalry within the boundaries of 1100-1500 it is the late-fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries which are his focus.

³ Peter F. Ainsworth. *Jean Froissart and the Fabric of History: Truth, Myth, and Fiction in the Chroniques*. Oxford, 1990. p.143.

high rank, the Black Prince, Sir Geoffroi de Charny, amongst other notable kings, bishops, and knights, but he “scantly recogniz[es] the sufferings of the innocent victims.”⁴

Indeed, writing in the Prologue to Book I, Froissart offers a statement of purpose for his work:

Afin que les grans merveilles et li biau fait d’armes qui sont avenu par les grans guerres de France et d’Engleterre sont avenu, soient notablement register et mis en memore perpetual, pary quot li bon y puissant prendre exemple, je me voeil ensonnier dou metre en prose.⁵

[In order that the honourable enterprises, noble adventures and deeds of arms which took place during the wars waged by France and England should be fittingly related and preserved for posterity, so that brave me should be inspired thereby to follow such examples, I wish to place on record these matters of great renown.]⁶

Ostensibly, Froissart views his work as *exemplum* – a model for chivalric behaviour that future generations of the nobility can hope to emulate. His history has a didactic intention. Furthermore, the author emerges unequivocal in his admiration of chivalric activity, feeling a duty to ensure the longevity of reputation through the act of writing. This raises interesting questions about the trustworthiness of the *Chroniques* as historical source. To what extent does the author’s investment in the honour of noble personalities compromise his text’s value as an accurate picture of events? To what extent was Froissart’s history controlled by his patrons or the expectations of the elite audience for whom he wrote? Froissart is perhaps at its most valuable as a source in what

⁴ Harvey, Sir Paul (Ed.), ‘Jean Froissart’ *The Oxford Companion to French Literature*, Oxford, 1959, p.293.

⁵ *Chroniques de Jean Froissart: Tome Premier*. Ed. Siméon Luce. Paris, 1869, p.209.

⁶ *Froissart, Chronicles*. Edited and translated by Geoffrey Brereton. Harmondsworth, 1968. p.37. All future translations use this edition.

it reveals about the writing of history and its implications for our understanding of chivalric identity.

The exact circumstances of composition of the *Chroniques* are the source of some contention.⁷ However, to summarize crudely, Book I was completed c.1377, for its discussion of earlier events it relies heavily on the work of French chronicler Jean le Bel (c.1290 – 1370)⁸ before later using material gathered from eyewitnesses to events, presumably while Froissart was in the service of Queen Philipa in England and would have had the opportunity to meet not only leading English knights but also their French prisoners. Book II, written at the request of Gui of Blois, was completed in 1387.⁹ Book III, which narrates Froissart's journey to the court of Gaston Foix in Orthez in 1388, was finished by 1390. The book, according to one commentator, "marks the turning point in Froissart's style of writing"¹⁰ as a number of stylistic developments, such as the increased use of Froissart as character-protagonist, appear.

In moving away from the dependence on existing chronicle sources, such as Jean le Bel, that typified parts of Book I, Froissart develops a voice in Book III that is significantly more self-referential. This allows a more sophisticated interplay between fact and fiction to emerge through his intentional problematization of the possibility of ascertaining historical truth. The historian's engagement in the tension between reality and fantasy reaches its apotheosis in the *Voyage en*

⁷ George T. Diller's essay 'Froissart: Patrons and Texts' (in *Froissart: Historian* Ed. J.J.N. Palmer. Suffolk, 1981. 145-160.) discusses in detail the complex relationship between the historian and his patrons as evidenced in various revisions of Book I.

⁸ "Jean Le Bel." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2009. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 15 Dec. 2009 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/302146/Jean-le-Bel>>.

⁹ *Oxford Companion to French Literature*. p.293.

¹⁰ A.H. Diverres, *Voyage en Béarn*, Manchester, 1953. p.xx.

Béarn. A.H. Diverres' edition of the *Voyage*¹¹, which published the text in a single volume in 1953, earmarked this section of the *Chroniques* for particular critical attention. The *Voyage* has understandably captured the imagination of scholars working on Froissart but to the effect that too often literary critics and historians alike have been wont to examine the source in isolation and not contextualize it in a wider debate about the significance of chivalry in the late fourteenth-century.

It is my contention that the Court of Gaston Foix operates as a charged arena for storytelling that interrogates the essence of Froissart's construction of history. This extraordinary section of the *Chroniques* offers an examination not only of Froissart's method as historian, but more specifically his engagement with a chivalric historiography. Within the *Voyage en Béarn*, as Froissart's writerly identity and the apparatus of his work are foregrounded, the boundary between chronicle history and fiction becomes blurred and received notions of chivalric identity are shown to be implicated in this destabilized opposition. The purpose of this essay is to consider how bringing a literary methodology to the reading of Froissart can demonstrate the manner in which the text destabilizes and subverts fourteenth-century models of chivalry. One cannot emerge from the *Voyage* and accept Kilgour's sweeping statement that "Froissart was depicting what he honestly thought to be the fairest and noblest society that has ever appeared on earth"¹² or take Froissart's sentiments in the Prologue to Book I at face value.

¹¹ *Voyage en Béarn* Ed. A.H. Diverres. Manchester, 1953.

¹² Raymond L. Kilgour, *The Decline of Chivalry as shown in the French Literature of the Late Middle Ages*. Harvard, 1937. p60.

In 1388 Froissart travelled through the south of France and arrived at the court of Count Gaston de Foix at Orthez, a territory on the Pyrenean border between France and Spain, on 25th November.¹³ Froissart enjoyed Gaston's hospitality for ten weeks and the record of his experiences, including the stories that he says he heard, form a substantial part of Book III. Gaston was not a chivalric personality in the warrior sense; his participation in the ongoing conflict between France and England appeared to have been motivated by political expediency. Richard Vernier argues that, "he had only discharged his liege obligations to the King of France insofar as that service also coincided with his own regional interests."¹⁴ Furthermore, the English forces appear to have respected Gaston's territories; the Black Prince's *chevauchees* during the 1350's avoided the Count's Bearn-Foix domains. Nevertheless. Gaston's engagement with non-martial aspects of chivalry was extensive. He was a significant patron of the arts (his patronage being a motivating factor in Froissart's visit to his court) supporting music, poetry, and the visual arts. Additionally, Gaston was himself an author and wrote a hunting handbook, *Livre de Chasse*, in the year before Froissart's visit.¹⁵

So what does Froissart's text reveal about this zone that is both politically sensitive and a centre for artistic activity? Vernier, a literary scholar writing a historical biography of Gaston, uses the text primarily as a historical document that provides detail about the court space. He characterizes Froissart as an "afficianado of chivalric prowess"¹⁶ who, impressed by opulence and the courtly

¹³ Michael Jones, 'Froissart, Jean (1337?-c.1404)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50195>, accessed 7 Dec 2009]

¹⁴ Richard Vernier, *Lord of the Pyrenees: Gaston Fébus, Count of Foix (1331-1391)*. Woodbridge, 2008. p.62.

¹⁵ Vernier. p.130.

¹⁶ Vernier. p.113.

entertainments on offer, duly records them in his chronicle. Vernier's reading seems credible in that Froissart would surely want to praise a courtly patron, especially as this was a particularly significant political moment for Gaston and his lordship. After decades of uneasy relations with the French monarchy, Gaston appeared on the verge of reconciliation with Charles VI¹⁷, and thus a glowing report from the renowned chronicler Froissart could be an exercise in asserting the prestige and significance of Gaston's court ahead of important negotiations. However, in treating the text purely as a trustworthy source to inform us about the life and milieu of Gaston, Vernier fails to address how the court functions on a meta-historical level.

Aside from its emphasis on courtly features, the Froissart's text characterizes Gaston's court as an area within which the transmission and reception of information is prioritized. The court is constructed as a chivalric nexus full of knightly personalities with stories to tell; Froissart reports that, "on veoit en la sale et es chambers et en la court chevaliers et escuiers d'onneur aler et marcher, et d'armes et d'amours on parler."¹⁸ [One saw knights and squires coming and going in the hall and the rooms and the courtyard, and one heard them talking of arms and love.]¹⁹ Furthermore, the count himself is said to be excited by Froissart's visit because he enjoys hearing the news of strangers.²⁰ The purpose of establishing the court in such terms, Rosemary Morris calls it a "clearing house for news",²¹ has a more sophisticated purpose than merely to offer a reflection of actuality. Moreover, Froissart constructs a space that might be considered 'hyperreal', a blend of reality and fantasy. Whilst offering a veneer of reality, allowing commentators like

¹⁷ Vernier, p.175.

¹⁸ Diverres, p.68.

¹⁹ Brereton, p.266.

²⁰ Diverres, p.65.

²¹ Rosemary Morris. 'Machaut, Froissart, and the Fictionalization of the Self' *The Modern Language Review* Vol 83.3, 1988. p.547.

Vernier to derive an impression of, say, Gaston's physical appearance,²² the court is also a zone where the making of Froissart's history itself is made visible and consequently interrogated.

Froissart's praise of his host is overwhelmingly admiring:

De toutes choses il estoit tres parfait que on ne le pourroit trop louer [...] Saiges chevalier estoit et de haulte emprinse et plain de bon conseil.²³

[He was so accomplished in every way it was impossible to praise him too highly [...] A shrewd nobleman, bold in action and sound in judgment.]²⁴

Whilst it might be germane to Froissart's purpose to flatter Gaston, the writer also establishes the Count as an idealized version of a certain chivalric personality for the very purpose of undermining this model.

The reader moves from Froissart's admiration of Gaston's court to the troubling story of the violent death of Gaston's son. In doing so Froissart shifts from a passive to an active receiver of information. He describes how at court he "was informed"²⁵ of martial news from across the continent, but Froissart is not only an inert receptacle for tales. Seemingly aware that beneath the richness and lavishness of Gaston's court there is an uneasiness about the absence of the count's son, also named Gaston, Froissart depicts himself actively seeking out narrative to fill this void. His companion and informant Sir Espan de Lyon is unwilling to divulge anything, but Froissart continues his inquiries until he finds an old squire prepared to tell the story. It emerges that Gaston

²² Vernier, p.115.

²³ Diverres, p.66.

²⁴ Brereton, p.64.

²⁵ Brereton, p.262.

Foix killed his son (potentially accidentally) in a fit of anger.²⁶ Froissart concludes by reporting the old squire's statement:

Ainsi en ala que je vous compte de la mort Gaston de Foix. Son pere l'occist voirement, mais le roy de Navarre lui donna le coup de la mort.²⁷

[That is the true account of the death of Gaston of Foix. It was his father who actually killed him, but his real assassin was the King of Navarre.]²⁸

The juxtaposition of this story and the portrayal of Gaston Foix as chivalric exemplar demonstrates how an act of telling has the power to destabilize a received model of chivalry, the court becomes a space for challenging belief. Froissart demands an active reader by forcing us to modify our opinion of Gaston following the reception of new information. The reader must attempt to reconcile Gaston the courtly personality and Gaston the potential murderer. Whilst the association between violence and chivalry might be acceptable on the battlefield, in the court space of *Voyage* it is more troubling and it is in this section of the *Chroniques* that Froissart appears most aware of the potential insecurities within fourteenth-century chivalry.

Commentators, depending on their approach, have reacted to the story in various ways. Vernier reads the story as Froissart's attempt to absolve Gaston of responsibility for his son's death.²⁹

Vernier understands the political sensitivity of the story, particularly in the context of upcoming

²⁶ Gaston is tricked by the King of Navarre into unwittingly poisoning his father. However, the plot is revealed and Gaston (the son) is accused of being a traitor. Despite the count's desire to have his son executed summarily, the young Gaston is imprisoned. However, after Gaston refuses food, Gaston (the father) confronts his son, threatens him with a knife and, according to the text, accidentally nicks his throat causing his death.

²⁷ Diverres, p.78-79.

²⁸ Brereton, p.274.

²⁹ Vernier. p.159.

negotiations with Charles VI, and believes that Froissart is tempering criticism of Gaston by recording the damaging narrative at one-remove rather than in his own voice. Critics with a more literary agenda tend to be less interested in the legality of Gaston's actions, rather more in how the tale reflects themes such as "traumatic knowledge"³⁰ or male anger present within the *Voyage*. However, to compartmentalize historical and literary methods is to ignore the conscious blurring of the two fields within the text. At the court of Gaston Foix, Froissart shows, through bringing his method of accessing history to the fore, that historical truth is problematic because it is shown to be controlled, to an extent, by storytelling. Whilst Froissart's writing may be influenced by the particular circumstances of Gaston's political situation, it also contributes to a more general examination of the role of story in constructing chivalric reputation.

A criticism frequently levelled at Froissart is that he depicts the actions of chivalric personalities, such as the Black Prince, without any apparent criticism; he is accused of being an indiscriminate admirer of the chivalrous classes³¹. However, in the *Voyage en Béarn*, Froissart does demonstrate a more critical attitude towards chivalric identity. The court space deemed to be chivalric through its very existence as a hub for talking of deeds of arms can also offer stories that undermine the majesty of chivalry. The information transmitted by the story threatens the stability of the court within the text as Gaston is left heirless and his reputation is tarnished. Furthermore, by recording the squire's telling in his *Chroniques* Froissart figures such transfer of information as a charged activity in the making of history.

³⁰ Sylvia Hoult. 'Unruly Bodies, Unspeakable Acts: Pierre de Béarn, Camel de Camois and Actaeon in the writings of Jean Froissart' *Exemplaria* Vol 14, 2002. p.80.

³¹ See the Froissart entry in *Oxford Companion to French Literature* (p.293) for one rendering of this oft encountered sentiment.

The stylistic idiosyncrasy that emerges in the *Voyage* tempts us to read Gaston's court as an 'ahistorical' zone somehow detached from the rest of the *Chroniques*. Historian Pierre Tucoo-Chala is particularly interested in the crux between history and fiction in relation to Gaston Foix. His work navigates versions of Gaston as both important participant in contemporary political affairs and the "romantic protagonist of domestic tragedy".³² Froissart appears to consciously blur historical and literary interpretation within the *Voyage*. The facts that the court is accessed by journey, Diller associates this movement with the quest topos of romance,³³ and that the courtiers enjoy listening in rapt silence to Froissart reading his lengthy verse romance *Meliador*³⁴ would appear to suggest a world imbued with romance to the exclusion of history. However, as discussed earlier, Froissart visited Gaston's court at a key historical moment. Yet, Calin suggests that "the narrative structure is now based neither on chronology of events nor coherence of theme".³⁵ Whilst he is right to notice the suspension of the relentless chronological structure that typifies Books I and II, it is flawed to imagine that thematic coherence is likewise postponed for the duration of the *Voyage*. Froissart's overarching theme is the examination of the operation of chivalric history. We ought not assume that Froissart has moved away from the concerns of the earlier books, here he continues to take chivalric activity as his subject. His flirtation with fiction reminds us that, for him, the historical phenomenon of chivalry is bound up with literary concerns relating to the telling and reception of narrative.

³² Referenced in Vernier. p.201.

³³ George T. Diller. 'Froissart's 1389 Travel to Béarn: A Voyage Narration to the Center of the *Chroniques*' *Froissart Across the Genres*. Eds. Maddox & Sturm-Maddox. Florida, 1998. p.51.

³⁴ A 30000 line Arthurian verse romance written by Froissart under the patronage of Wenceslas of Brabant.

³⁵ William Calin. 'Narrative Technique in Fourteenth-Century France: Froissart and his *Chroniques*' *Studies in Honor of Hans-Erich Keller*. Ed. Rupert Pickens. Michigan, 1993. p.232.

The most significant development in style witnessed in the *Voyage* is the increasing prominence of Froissart as character within his own text. Ainsworth sees this as an exercise in establishing a literary personality³⁶ but the arrival of the Froissart-protagonist also allows Froissart to show his method as historian and, as such, raise interesting issues about the location of authority. Marnette argues that Froissart uses the 'I' narrator-character as a strategy to assert authority. The *Voyage*, she says, "is thus a representation of his work as a historian, 'a *chronique des Chroniques*', that guarantees the truth of the whole opus."³⁷ However, Froissart's purpose to me seems more playful; rather than guaranteeing truth, the function of the 'I' voice is to problematize historical authority.

This feature of Froissart's work is most visible in his interaction with the Bascot de Mauléon. This encounter between Froissart and the Gascon mercenary reveals a number of the key issues that are generated by the *Voyage*:

Si me demanda:

-Messire Jehan, avez vous point en vostre histoire ce don't je vous parleray?

Je li respondi:

-Je ne scay aie our non aie. Faictes vostre compte, car je vous oy volentiers parler d'armes [...]³⁸

[The Bascot asked me: 'Sir John, haven't you got what I'm going to tell you in your chronicle?'

'I don't know whether I have or not,' I said. 'Give me your account of it, for I am very interested to hear you talk of deeds of arms.]³⁹

³⁶ Ainsworth, p.145.

³⁷ Sophie Marnette. 'The Experiencing Self and the Narrating Self in Medieval French Chronicles' *The Medieval Author in Medieval French Literature*. Ed. Greene. New York, 2006. p.127.

³⁸ Diverres, p.89.

³⁹ Brereton, p.281.

Firstly, Froissart's method of writing history through conversation with eyewitnesses is constructed within the text. Furthermore, the reader witnesses Froissart's meta-textual self-construction as reputable chronicler as the Bascot is aware of the very text in which he might feature. Finally, and most importantly for the purposes of this essay, this preliminary exchange prioritizes the acts of telling and receiving chivalric story.

The Bascot enters Gaston's court during the Christmas festivities as a personality with an impressive portfolio of tales and a compelling desire to tell. Through his virtuosic storytelling the Bascot becomes the dominant personality of the *Voyage*. His voice, as recorded by Froissart, delights in the business of telling his personal anecdotes and escapades from his life as a mercenary captain across Europe. Commentators have grappled with the grounding of the Bascot in reality to the extent that some scholars doubt his actual existence; Kenneth Fowler suggests that he is "possibly a figure of Froissart's imagination created to tell the story" (Fowler 14). Whilst other scholars have shown that the Bascot was, in fact, a genuine figure,⁴⁰ Fowler is right to acknowledge that his primary function within Froissart's text is not necessarily to give a documentary account of a life in arms, but to perform the role of arch-storyteller.

The Bascot's warm reception at court piques Froissart's curiosity prompting him to ask Espan de Lyon if the Bascot was the same he knew to have been involved as the siege of Mauvezin. Lyon replies, "Oil, respondi il, c'est un bon homme d'armes pour le present et un grand captain."⁴¹ [Yes [...] he's a good soldier in these days and a great captain.]⁴² The Bascot's reputation precedes his

⁴⁰ Unpublished work by Guilhem Pepin provides evidence supporting the Bascot's existence.

⁴¹ Diverres, p.88.

⁴² Brereton, p.280.

arrival in the text; Lyon provides a prejudgment of character against which his narrative can be tested. Not only does this preliminary exchange stress the significance that carrying reputation holds in Froissart rendering of the late-fourteenth-century, it also offers an assertion of chivalric merit to, potentially, be destabilized.

A lively raconteur, the Bascot's stories of battles, sieges, and plots follow each other thick-and-fast. His only constant enemy appears to be peace as the Bascot describes how he raced around the continent involving himself in any conflict that might offer financial advantage. But, to what extent can we understand his tales to represent historical truth? Froissart uses his character's voice within the text to engage in this debate. The Bascot's anecdotes are punctuated by moments of dialogue between himself and Froissart. These exchanges superficially assert a link between story and historical truth. To take one example, Froissart writes:

Lors me dist l'escurier:

- Je croy bien que vous aiex toutes ces choses, et comment le roy d'Angleterre passa et vint devant Chartres, et comment la paix fu faicte des deux roys.
- C'est veritê, respondi je, je l'ay toute, et les traittiez comment ilz furent faiz.⁴³

[The squire stopped and said to me: 'But I expect you have all that, and how the King of England went on and reached Chartres, and how peace was made between the two kings?'

'True,' I said, 'I've got it all, and you're describing things exactly as they happened.]⁴⁴

Here Froissart's existing material confers truth on the Bascot's story and, reflexively, the story confirms the authority of Froissart's history. Froissart uses his participation in the dialogue to

⁴³ Diverres, p.90-91.

⁴⁴ Brereton, p.282.

playfully destabilize authority by showing the potential circularity of truth. The historian's stylistic development in the *Voyage* enables him to implicate his own method in concerns about accessing truth.

Historians want to know how useful Froissart's recording of the Bascot's reminiscences is as a source to tell us about the expectations of fourteenth-century chivalry.⁴⁵ They question whether the text suggests that the mercenary lifestyle, the fighting for different causes primarily motivated by the acquisition of wealth, was sanctioned by a chivalric code. Does the fact that Froissart seems impressed by the Bascot's activities confirm that he was an indiscriminate admirer of the knightly classes? It is a literary approach that allows us to appreciate the potential for irony in Froissart's voice. Froissart constructs a dual-personality, much like Chaucer does in *The Canterbury Tales*, involving both himself as character at the court and as writer of history. The Froissart character, again like Chaucer-the-pilgrim, relishes hearing stories and is unquestioning of the Bascot because he is captivated by his vivid and vigorous autobiography. Zrinka Stahuljak sees Froissart's dual personality as an attempt by the writer to "neutralize his own voice"⁴⁶ - to not implicate himself in chivalric debate. Certainly, in the context of the *Voyage*, as explained above, in which we have a zone primed for the destabilization of chivalric ideal, it is quite possible that Froissart is inviting his readers to themselves question the Bascot's behaviour. Stahuljak identifies an "analogy between chivalric prowess in war and [the Bascot's] narrative prowess"⁴⁷ yet, rather than

⁴⁵ E.g. Kenneth Fowler. *Medieval Mercenaries – Volume 1: The Great Companies*. Oxford, 2001.

⁴⁶ Zrinka Stahuljak. 'Jean Froissart's *Chroniques: Translatio* and the Impossible Apprenticeship of Neutrality' *The Politics of Translation in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Eds. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, von Flotow, and Russell. Ottawa, 2001. p.124.

⁴⁷ Stahuljak., p.130.

performing neutrality, Froissart seems to prioritize the role of the storyteller and by extension his own powerful role in constructing history.

The episode that directly follows the Bascot's speech illustrates this thesis. After the Bascot has concluded, Froissart explains that the Bourc de Caupenne was keen to tell his own story, "a ces motz prinst la parole le Bourc de Campane et commença a parler, et eust volentiers, a ce que je me peuz appercevoir, recordeé la vie et l'affair de lui et son frere."⁴⁸ [the Bourc began speaking and would readily, as I could see, have related the life story and adventures of himself and his brother.]⁴⁹ However, this act of telling is interrupted by the supper bell. The reader is made aware of untold story to which they have no access because Froissart denies the Bourc textual space for his reminiscences. In passing over the Bourc's narrative Froissart reinforces the link between storytelling and chivalric identity. The power to fashion identity and reputation above all relies on holding an audience who can receive your story.

The *Voyage en Béarn* is a challenging source for the historian attempting to ascertain what actual historical information is offered; at the court of Gaston truth is slippery. Froissart celebrates the centrality of storytelling to chivalric identity, but, in doing so, destabilizes the chivalric ideals of which, supposedly, he was such an indiscriminate admirer. Gaston's court is a performance space for tales and their tellers, but despite its hyperreal atmosphere it ought not be distanced from contemporary concern. Rather, in the *Voyage*, Froissart is addressing a key element of his own conception of chivalric history, namely, the value of telling one's own story.

⁴⁸ Diverres, p.110

⁴⁹ Brereton, p.294.

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