



Cahiers
de recherches
médiévales et
humanistes

Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes

Journal of medieval and humanistic studies

22 | 2011

Les voix narratives du récit médiéval

Memory and Voice in Jean Froissart's *dits amoureux*

Finn E. Sinclair



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/crm/12522>

DOI: 10.4000/crm.12522

ISSN: 2273-0893

Publisher

Classiques Garnier

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 December 2011

Number of pages: 139-149

ISSN: 2115-6360

Electronic reference

Finn E. Sinclair, « Memory and Voice in Jean Froissart's *dits amoureux* », *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* [Online], 22 | 2011, Online since 01 December 2014, connection on 01 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/crm/12522> ; DOI : 10.4000/crm.12522



Memory and Voice in Jean Froissart's *dits amoureux*

Abstract : Jean Froissart's dits amoureux illustrate the ways in which Froissart plays with the layering and overlapping of textual voices, with memory, and with time, all of which are important in the construction of the text as an artefact and memorial – a significant aspect of Froissart's relationship with writing. The tensions Froissart sets up between the singular and the universal, and between lived experience and poetic experience, produce poetic texts that play on the notion of « voice ». The « voice » that appears here is implicitly linked with the idea of the « speaking subject », with the implied connection between author, narrator and protagonist, and with the symbiotic relationship between life and art, reality and fiction. This continuum is, however, complicated by the setting of this voice in poetry. This article explores the resulting tensions, and how they are exploited by Froissart to create his polyvalent texts.

Résumé : Dans les dits amoureux de Jean Froissart, la polyvalence de la voix, la mémoire et le temps se présentent comme des moyens importants pour faire vivre le texte en postérité – image significative qui influe sur la relation entre Froissart et ses œuvres. Les textes poétiques invoquent le concept d'une voix multiple, créée par une tension entre la singularité et l'universalité, et entre l'expérience vécue et l'expérience poétique. La « voix » qui se manifeste ici se lie avec l'idée du « sujet qui parle », avec une liaison implicite entre l'auteur, le narrateur et le protagoniste, et avec une relation réciproque entre la vie et l'art, la réalité et la fiction. Cette continuité se complique alors, quand la voix s'exprime dans la poésie. L'article ici présenté étudie les tensions qui en résultent, et la manière dont Froissart les exploite pour créer ses textes polyvalents.

The notion of « voice » in medieval literature is a tricky one, bound up as it is with the importance of orality and a text's medium of transmission, as well as with the « subjective voice » of the author that may be deciphered within a written text. The studies which treat the transition and interplay between orality and writing in the Middle Ages are many, as are those which examine subjectivity in medieval literature¹. My focus in this article lies not on orality or physical utterance, however, but on the written word, and in particular on the verse *dits amoureux* of Jean Froissart. In *Textual Subjectivity*, A. C. Spearing laments the exclusion of the *dit* from his study, defining it thus: « One of its crucial features is a paradox: it purports to be the utterance of a single speaker, expressing his own experience, yet it incorporates much material originating outside that experience, and it exists only in writing »². It is this paradox that I wish to explore here. The tensions Froissart sets

¹ For example, M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993, M. Zink, *Subjectivité littéraire: autour du siècle de Saint Louis*, Paris, PUF, 1985, and S. Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

² A.C. Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity: The Encoding of Subjectivity in Medieval Narratives and Lyrics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 35.

up between the singular and the universal, and between lived experience and poetic experience, produce poetic texts that play on the notion of «voice» – note Spearing’s grounding of his analysis in the idea of «a single speaker», a notion which is subverted by the *dit*’s additional content and its literary form. The «voice» that appears in Froissart’s *dits* is implicitly linked with the idea of the «speaking subject», with the implied connection between author, narrator and protagonist, and with the symbiotic relationship between life and art, reality and fiction³. This continuum is, however, complicated by the setting of this voice in poetry. The poetic inheritance on which Froissart draws in the framing and shaping of his *dits* is significant: he incorporates, and rewrites, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in several of his works, echoes the *Roman de la Rose*, and is indebted to the earlier poet Guillaume de Machaut in both content and form. Froissart’s *dits* do not present a singular poetic «voice», but one which is multi-layered, imbued with the echoes of earlier works, both his own and those of other writers.

A. C. Spearing’s final point, that the *dit* exists only in writing, again shifts the emphasis away from the orality and singularity of the voice it expresses. In his groundbreaking study of the transition between oral and literary culture, Michael Clanchy quotes John of Salisbury:

Fundamentally, letters are shapes indicating voices. Hence they represent things which they bring to mind through the windows of the eyes. Frequently they speak voicelessly the utterances of the absent.⁴

Although the speaker is absent, the words of a text are still «utterances», a perceived relationship that had shifted markedly by the later Middle Ages, when the written text seemed to take on a life of its own, outliving its author⁵. The anxiety over authorial posterity that appears in the works of Villon, Chaucer and Froissart finds its ultimate expression in modern literary theory. Spearing draws on Jacques Derrida:

³ I am not suggesting here that the categories of author, narrator and protagonist effectively speak with the same «voice», or represent the same persona, merely that they may be read as such within a written text. For an analysis of the poetic «I» in fourteenth-century poetry, see C. Attwood, *Dynamic Dichotomy: The Poetic I in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century French Lyric Poetry*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1998. Attwood distinguishes between a) «the historical poet», b) «the implied poet», who is «the structuring consciousness behind a given work», and c) «the ‘I’ which speaks and acts within a text» (p. 6). For the relationship between life and art in Froissart’s *dits*, see F. Sinclair, «Poetic Creation in Jean Froissart’s *L’Espinette amoureuse* and *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece*», forthcoming in *Modern Philology*.

⁴ M. Clanchy, *op. cit.*, p. 253. He is quoting John of Salisbury’s *Metalogicon*, I.13.

⁵ Spearing points to this in his discussion of Chaucer: «Chaucer’s prayer near the end of his *Troilus and Criseyde*, as he sends his ‘littel bok’ (v. 1786) out into the world, that future scribes and readers should not ‘myswrite’ or ‘mysmetre’ it ‘for defaute of tonge’ (v. 1797–6), underlines its written status», *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Derrida spells out for modern readers what those earlier writers could still take for granted. When composed in writing, vernacular poems [...] do not *represent* speech, but take its place.⁶

For Derrida, there is no « hors-texte », while for Roland Barthes, writing is the destruction of voice – the written text is dislocated from both its author and its context.

Although the written vernacular may essentially have displaced the spoken word in the literature of fourteenth century France, the relationship between author and text was not as radically disjointed as that suggested by Derrida or Barthes. Jean Froissart is careful to name himself in the Prologue to Book 1 of his *Chroniques* :

Et pour che que ou temps à venir on puist savoir qui a mis ceste hystore sus, et qui en a esté actères, je me voel nommer. On m'appelle, qui tant me voet honnerer sire Jehan Froissart, net de le conté de Haynau et de la bonne, belle et friche ville de Valenciennes.⁷

Froissart marks himself clearly as the author of the chronicle, linking reality and experience with the written word, and attributing authority to himself. As well as defining the space from which he speaks, Froissart also sets himself in time; he looks forward into the text's future, and towards its future readership, much as he does again in the Prologue to Book 3 :

Car bien sçay que au temps advenir, quant je seray mort et pourri, ceste haulte et noble histoire sera en grant cours, et y prenderont tous nobles et vaillans hommes plaisance et augmentation de bien.⁸

The book will carry forward the posthumous voice of its author, affording him a kind of surrogate immortality which preserves, rather than eradicates; the relationship between the two becomes a dialectic, as the presence and intention of the author is at once replaced, and preserved, by writing⁹.

Both in the fourteenth century in general and in Froissart's writing in particular, the book is bound up with the notions of memory and with time, two structuring devices which have notably been explored by Jacqueline Cerquiglini and Michel Zink, in their studies of late medieval French literature¹⁰. Froissart is perhaps

⁶ A. C. Spearing, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁷ Jean Froissart, *Chroniques : Livre I et Livre II*, ed. by P. F. Ainsworth and G. T. Diller, Paris, Livre de Poche, 2001, p. 77.

⁸ Jean Froissart, *Chroniques: Livre III et Livre IV*, ed. by P. Ainsworth, Paris, Livre de Poche, 2004, p. 90.

⁹ By the later Middle Ages it was common for literary works to be organised in single-author codices, their compilation often overseen by the author him- (or her-) self. Of course, texts were always open to further copying and to alteration, but probably not to the same extent as in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when textual *remaniement* was frequent.

¹⁰ See, in particular, J. Cerquiglini, « Écrire le temps. Le lyrisme de la durée aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles », *Le Temps et la durée dans la littérature au moyen âge et à la Renaissance*, Actes du

best known for his *Chroniques*, which testify to his concern to record, transmit and preserve a slice of life and of history. This impetus to preserve also appears in his poetic *dits*, composed prior to the *Chroniques*, but here the dialectic between author and text is further complicated by the *dit*'s genre¹¹.

Like Froissart, most late medieval authors composed in both lyric and historiographical genres, and in the major lyrico-narrative genres of the *dit* and the *prosimetrum* that occupy an intermediary position between them. The first person orientation of many of these texts means that events as such tends to be subsumed into the experience of events, and the experience of events into the memory of that experience. The centrality of the first person narrator in many of these forms means that the recording of history merges with his experiencing it, and the subjective process of memorialisation takes precedence over the content of memory. Poetry allows for the communication of a « truth » of experience that is not to be equated with factual detail because it is not located in external reality but in subjective processes of reflection, sentiment, or memory¹².

Froissart's corpus of poetic writing is not as great as that of his *Chroniques*, but it is nonetheless considerable. I will focus in particular on the *Espinette amoureuse* (c. 1369), the *Prison amoureuse* (late 1372 or early 1373) and the *Joli Buisson de Jonece* (1373) in my exploration of voice, memory and writing in Froissart's *dits*. These three poems illustrate the ways in which Froissart plays with the layering and overlapping of textual voices, with memory and with time, all of which are important in the construction of the text as an artefact and memorial that nonetheless carries the mark of the authorial « voice » (in all its multiple guises). Froissart's identification with his work is significant – whether in the prose *Chroniques* or his poetry and *dits* in verse, Froissart's role as compiler, recorder and creative writer is an important aspect of his presentation of himself¹³. In the *dits amoureux* this is intensified, however, as this authorial identity and Froissart's projected textual persona infiltrate every level of his writing. The *dits* feature the author as narrator and lover-protagonist in tales that weave the pseudo-autobiographical with the « received wisdom » of poetic composition and form. Author and text appear mutually interactive, as Froissart the author writes himself into his text, and portrays this textual persona as itself preoccupied with

colloque organisé par le Centre de Recherche sur la Littérature du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance de l'Université de Reims, novembre 1984, ed. by Y. Bellenger, Paris, Nizet, 1986, p. 103–114, and Michel Zink, *Froissart et le temps*, Paris, PUF, 1998.

¹¹ See F. Sinclair, art. cit., for further study of the dynamic between the poet and his writing.

¹² For further discussion of the relationship between poetry and history, see A. Armstrong and S. Kay, with the participation of R. Dixon, M. Griffin, S. Huot, F. Nicholson and F. Sinclair, *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the Rose to the Rhetoriqueurs*, Ithaca/London, Cornell University Press, 2011, Chapter 2.

¹³ This also appears in relation to Froissart's romance, *Meliador* : Peter Dembowski cites Froissart's references to his own romance in the *Paradis d'Amour*, the *Chroniques* and the *Dit dou Florin*. In the latter, Froissart recounts his reading of *Meliador* to Gaston Phébus, who calls the author 'beaus maistres' in recognition of his writing skills. See P.F. Dembowski, « *Meliador* de Jean Froissart, son importance littéraire : le vrai dans la fiction », *Études françaises*, 32, 1996, p. 7-19, p. 11.

composition, writing and recording, to the extent that the text often falls into a « mise-en-abyme » of its own composition. In the *Espinette amoureuse* and in the *Joli Buisson de Jonece*, Froissart the lover-protagonist composes a series of *ballades*, *virelays* and *lais* to his lady : lyric interludes which both mirror the lover's emotion and provide structuring « stations of love », in which the poem meditates on the composition and writing of poetry. In the *Prison amoureuse*, this is taken a stage further, as the letters and poems written by the narrator-protagonist Froissart/Flos and by his correspondent Rose are compiled at the end of the *dit* to provide the text which the reader reads – a circularity of writing and invention that places the focus of the poem on the written word and its perpetuation.

Froissart's authorial presence is interlinked with his preoccupation with memory, memorialisation, and the written text as legacy. The memory that permeates his works appears as his own personal memory, the memory of the « je » of the text, often mediated through allegorical dream and poetic invention. But this personal, individual memory functions as an integral aspect of the memory of the « textual community », created and perpetuated through the shared knowledge of texts, their diffusion, writing and rewriting. I would emphasise that by « textual community » I do not simply imply a kind of « literary clique » of writers and readers at a particular point in time, but a wider educated community with an awareness of its own evolving culture. Froissart played a pivotal role in the textualisation of literary culture, in the sense of drawing on, reshaping, and adding to the body of knowledge represented by text and writing. As counterpoint to this idea of textual fluidity and evolution, Froissart was highly aware of the memorial function of the written text, and the importance of the manuscript or book as object.

The fluidity of memory and recollection are significant in the narrative structuring of the *Espinette amoureuse* and the *Joli Buisson de Jonece*, which work together to develop and reflect upon one aspect of « lived » experience, that of Froissart's unrequited love, which is initiated in the *Espinette amoureuse*, and revisited, reassessed and reinterpreted during the course of the *Joli Buisson*. Both poems are apparently autobiographical, with Froissart the narrator retrospectively recounting the experience of Froissart the protagonist, and they both open with a statement which appeals to the notion of reality and the relating of a lived truth¹⁴. In the *Espinette*, Froissart informs his readers that the « dittier » he has composed, and which he now presents, will tell the truth about love : « la verité en iert retrette »¹⁵, while the *Joli Buisson* opens with the words : « Des aventures me souvient / Dou temps passé »¹⁶, events which Froissart will record in writing while he has « sens et memore, / Encre et papier et escriptore » (*JB*, v. 3-4). In both cases, Froissart reinvokes the past and past memories, which are then recorded in writing in order to present and preserve a certain kind of truth – that of « lived » experience. This

¹⁴ For the elaboration of a concept of multiple author functions (poet, narrator, protagonist) in later medieval literature see C. Attwood, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Jean Froissart, *Espinette amoureuse*, ed. by A. Fourrier, Paris, Klincksieck, 1963, v. 111. Subsequent references to *EA* will be incorporated in the text.

¹⁶ Jean Froissart, *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece*, ed. by A. Fourrier, Geneva, Droz, 1975, v. 1-2. Subsequent references to *JB* will be incorporated in the text.

individual experience is, however, placed within the broader context of youth's natural inclination :

Pluiseur enfant de jone eage
Desirent forment le peage
D'amours paiier [...] (EA, v. 1-3).

The young Froissart is a microcosmic representation of amorous and noble youth, at once its reflection and its exemplum. Through this generalisation, his experience is from the start opened up to audience identification, and his *dits* are linked with the themes of other works.

In both his poetic compositions and the later books of the *Chronique*, Froissart's memories provide a vital link between the author and his work. In the *Prison amoureuse*, his self-definition as lover and his capacity to identify with other lovers are based in personal experience : « Je le sçai especiaument / Par moi »¹⁷. Froissart becomes the touchstone for experience and for its expression through poetry. At times the act of remembering and the act of writing seem even to merge into one another. In *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece*, Froissart's memory of how he burned with desire when revisiting the « bush of youth » in a dream is what shapes his decision, at the end of the *dit*, henceforth to compose only religious poetry. And in the opening episode of the same *dit*, he represents himself in dialogue with his thoughts personified as Philosophy who prompts him to go in search of a portrait of his lady made some ten years previously.

The narrative of the *Joli Buisson de Jonece* reflects upon that of the *Espinette amoureuse*, in which Froissart returns to the memory of a lost love through his dream. Froissart's memory is doubled as both he, as protagonist-narrator, and Philosophy recall the painting and putting away of his lady's portrait. Rather than memory of the portrait itself, however, it is the act of remembering which seems important here. Philip Bennett points to « the narrator's difficulty in remembering the pictorial item which should be the locus of his memory of both his lady and his love »¹⁸. The subjective experience of Froissart's love and the past narrative surrounding the portrait are more significant than the object itself, and memory is identified as the act of remembering, the act of committing something to memory. Memory is constitutive of identity, as suggested by Michel Zink : « Les poèmes [de Froissart] construisent une représentation du moi structurée par le processus de la réminiscence, par la présence du souvenir à la conscience, cette conscience qui n'est que dans le reflet du souvenir »¹⁹. The representation of the self is structured by and through memory, an interplay which is played out in the frame of the written text. This is significant as the movement away from the reality of lived experience is constituted as poetic experience. Not only does Froissart remember remembering his lady in the *Joli Buisson*, but the means whereby he does so is by remembering his

¹⁷ Jean Froissart, *La Prison amoureuse*, ed. by A. Fourier, Paris, Klincksieck, 1974, v. 68-69. Subsequent references to *PA* will be incorporated in the text.

¹⁸ P. E. Bennett, « *Ut Pictura Memoria* : Froissart's Quest for Lost Time », *Zeitschrift für Französische Sprache und Literatur*, 120, 2010, p. 229-44, p. 236.

¹⁹ M. Zink, *Froissart et le temps*, p. 152.

own past writings. The identity recalled or reconstituted in the *dit* is that of himself as a poet. In a similar way, later in the *dit*, the content of his love affair with this lady often remains curiously unavailable to Froissart, and is not so much called to mind as a set of events, but as a remainder which is preserved and transmitted by what Cerquiglini calls «lyric memory». The repetition of lyric insertions that punctuate the flow of narrative serve as markers and memorials of the lover's experience and emotion. The memory they contain is bound up in the immediate narrative and present of the *dit*, but is also fluid; the poetic form allows for a universalising of the poet's experience.

The interplay between the *Espinette amoureuse* and the *Joli Buisson* and the complexity of the act of remembering performed by their narrator-protagonist reveals the uncertainty of memory; the past which is recalled to mind proves elusive, and the act of remembering supplants the events that the poet-protagonist believes he remembers. The lady to whom Froissart returns in his dream of the *Joli Buisson* was never so welcoming in the *Espinette*, and the experience the lover-protagonist maps on to past events acts as a rewriting, both of memory and of text²⁰. This is a state of affairs that Cerquiglini appropriately terms «melancholic»; she shows how, in the *Espinette amoureuse*, «Tout se passe comme si, pour le poète, l'expérience était toujours une réexpérience, la réactualisation d'une expérience passée», and yet, at the same time, this past is always experienced as new or still to come²¹. In a different approach to this same problematic, drawing on the work of Giorgio Agamben, I have suggested elsewhere that the *Espinette amoureuse* and *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece* manifest «the different ways in which poetic writing [...] transforms and replaces the lived experience with something which is more than itself, and yet essentially itself»²². The knowledge that is enshrined in poetic form is never available as a direct, personal memory, but it is the means whereby individual experience of time can be changed into a universalised sense of experience that links together a (textual) community²³.

²⁰ In the *Espinette amoureuse*, the lover falls ill for love of his lady, he is pricked by thorns in a garland his lady asks him to kiss (v. 3525-26), and she pulls his hair, rejecting his friendship (v. 3789-92). See *Jean Froissart, An Anthology of Narrative and Lyric Poetry*, ed. by K. M. Figg and R. B. Palmer, New York/London, Routledge, 2001.

²¹ J. Cerquiglini-Toulet, «Un paradoxe mélancolique ou le lyrisme chez Jean Froissart», *Perspectives Médiévales, Actes du Colloque International Jehan Froissart, Lille 3 – Valenciennes, 30 septembre – 1^{er} octobre 2004*, ed. by M.-M. Castellani and J.-C. Herbin, Paris, Société de langues et de littératures médiévales d'oc et d'oïl, 2006, p. 53-62, p. 55.

²² F. Sinclair, art. cit. This view of poetry as fundamentally connected to life is paralleled by Guillaume de Machaut's conception of lyric poetry as having a particular «truth value» through its origin in the rhythms of the body rather than in those of words. See also J. Cerquiglini, *Un Engin si soutil. Guillaume de Machaut et l'écriture au XIV^e siècle*, Geneva, Slatkine, 1985, especially p. 194-96, and G. Agamben, *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, trans. by D. Heller-Roazen, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999.

²³ In a similar way, P.F. Dembowski points to the collective nature of the protagonist in Froissart's *Chroniques* and in his *Meliador*: «Le véritable héros de ces oeuvres, c'est la chevalerie européenne, collective, hiérarchisée», art. cit., p. 10.

In the *Prison amoureuse*, Froissart's personal love experience is doubled in that of his anonymous male correspondent and patron, Rose, who seeks Froissart's advice as he pines for a lady and dare not declare his love (Letter I). The *Prison* is inspired by Guillaume de Machaut's *Le Livre dou Voir dit*, whose narrative is shaped by the exchange of letters between the poet-protagonist and his lady. Froissart rewrites this to focus on two male writers; at once, experience and memory are extended away from the personal and autobiographical towards the social and collective. Importantly, also, the relationship with the patron (Rose, possibly Wenceslas de Brabant in reality) creates a framework for the exchange of texts, where experience and memory become bound up with the creation, dissemination and glossing of poetry. Froissart's personal, individual memory functions here as an integral aspect of the memory of a wider community that is created and perpetuated through the shared knowledge of texts, their diffusion, writing and rewriting.

Although Froissart does show a concern with the importance of poetic composition as a means of renewing tradition in the *Espinette amoureuse* and the *Joli Buisson de Jonece*, it is the *Prison amoureuse* which is more obviously bound up with the importance of composition, textual authority, and the dissemination and preservation of the written word. In her study of the *Prison amoureuse*, Jacqueline Cerquiglini emphasises the lyric poem as an object which is built, and the materiality of the book; the enclosing of poems in a series of caskets, chests and pockets suggests that «poetry is an object, but an object that can be animated»²⁴. The book and the poem are at one and the same time manufactured objects, and a means of transmitting a knowledge and experience that stems from the *sentement*, the lived experience, of the poet²⁵. The various letters and lyric poems that make up the text are described as being filed away by the narrator in a variety of boxes, pouches and other hiding places, which contain, enclose and protect the narrative voices they represent²⁶. At the end of the *Prison* they are all gathered together into one volume, to constitute the text we have as a record of what took place.

The *Prison amoureuse* initially recounts the tale of Froissart's seemingly unrequited love for a lady, a theme that picks up on that of his earlier *Espinette amoureuse*. This poetic trope is used to lend authority to Froissart the narrator-protagonist's position as confidant, advisor and author. His own definition as lover is reaffirmed in this *dit*; as Froissart says, he is well able to identify with other lovers through his own personal experience: «Je le sçai especiaument / Par moi» (*PA*, v. 68-69). Yet through the doubling of the lover-figure in Rose, and the echoing of Machaut's *Voir dit*, poetic experience, intertextuality and the communal knowledge of textuality are foregrounded. These are all important factors in the construction of Froissart's work, and in the *Prison* Froissart plays with this knowledge to create a text which refers back to his own previous work – the

²⁴ J. Cerquiglini-Toulet, «Fullness and Emptiness: Shortages and Storehouses of Lyric Treasure in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries», *Yale French Studies* special issue, *Contexts: Style and Values in Medieval Art and Literature*, ed. by D. Poiron and N. Freeman Regalado, 1991, p. 224-39, p. 235.

²⁵ See Cerquiglini-Toulet, *ibid.*, p. 226-27.

²⁶ Froissart's eccentric filing system has been studied by Cerquiglini-Toulet, *ibid.*, p. 224-39.

Espinette Amoureuse – to the work of other poets, and forward to his *Joli Buisson de jonece*. The network of influence represented by the *Prison* is also internal to the *dit* itself, as the letters, *balades* and *virelais* which are exchanged between Froissart (who takes the pseudonym of Flos) and Rose, are composed, glossed and circulated within the frame of the encompassing *dit*. This notion of framing and containment is important in the structuring of the text. Poems are enclosed within letters, which are physically enclosed within bags or caskets, the whole tale is bound within the written text of the *dit*, which is then circulated as a physical, textual object. This act of compilation is requested by Rose on behalf of his lady towards the end of the *dit* :

[J]e vous pri chierement que toutes lettres, trettiés, balades, virelais que nous avons envoiiet l'un l'autre, vous voelliés rassambler et metre en .i. volume par maniere de livret et cheli donner nom par quoy on le congnoisse (*PA*, Letter X, v. 11-15).

The tale told by the *Prison amoureuse* is that of its own composition and compilation. The book from which the reader reads is the physical memorialisation of this tale, both in terms of the text written there, and the enclosing book itself as a memorial object, a dialectic that reflects the interplay between the activity of voice and the written text as object.

Interpretation, glossing and rewriting are important aspects of Froissart's text, and provide a way to increase knowledge, or produce a new knowledge based on recollection. When Rose asks Flos to provide him with

Un petit dittié amoureux, qui se traitast sus aucune nouvelle matere qu'on n'aroit onques veü ne oÿ mise en rime, tele com, par figure, fu jadis de Piramus et de Tysbé, ou de Eneas et de Dido, ou de Tristan et Yseus (*PA*, Letter V, v. 44-48),

Flos (or Froissart) turns to a « glose » of the tale of Pynoteüs, « si com Ovides le recorde » (*PA*, v. 1297). Despite its classical « origin », this is a tale which is « nouvelle », and Froissart recommends it to lovers, who should read it, listen to it and praise it if they find it worthwhile (*PA*, v. 1312-15). This textual and oral dissemination suggests the circulation and discussion of texts ; they should be remembered and passed on. This does not, however, imply a simple reiteration of a known tale, for the story which Flos recounts is nothing of the kind. As has been pointed out by many critics, the tale of Pynoteüs and his beloved Neptisphelé is original to Froissart, but does recall the myths of Orpheus and Pygmalion. It also incorporates many classical themes and allusions : a bucolic setting, communion with wild animals, hunting, reference to classical and mythological figures – Pluto, Cerberus, Proserpine etc. – to the extent that it becomes a pseudo-Ovidian myth. Froissart creates a tale that draws upon the known and recognisable, and yet which is in itself something new. The tale of Pynoteüs, as told by Flos, is a metaphor for its own creation. When Neptisphelé is killed and eaten by a lion, Pynoteüs recreates her image from water and moist earth :

D'aige et de terre muiste et mole,
Dou long, dou large et del estroit,

Dou clos, del ouvert, dou destroit,
 Tele que fu jadis au monde
 Neptisphelé qui tant fu monde (*PA*, v. 1718-23).

Pynoteüs forgets nothing, modelling and shaping her exact proportions, « sicom il l'euïst en escript » (*PA*, v. 1738). The lover prays that Phoebus will grant life and movement to his modelled image, which does spring to life as soon as Pynoteüs' orison is finished. « Neptisphelé, estes vous ce ? », asks Pynoteüs ; « – Oïl, dous amis, ce sui je », comes the reply (*PA*, v. 1946-47). The true Neptisphelé has been copied « to the letter », to the extent that she lives and breathes and seems identical to the original, yet this version of Neptisphelé is nonetheless a reproduction and a gloss. Froissart tells the reader at the end of his tale :

Et croi qu'il n'euïst ja passes
 Tels recors ne mis en memore,
 Se vraie ne tenist l'ystore (*PA*, v. 1993-95).

The « truth » of the tale lies in its foundation in memory, and in the meaning that lies behind it. Its setting into writing becomes a way of memorialising the tale, and fixing its shape and form, just as the memory of Neptisphelé is « fixed » in her modelled image. Writing also aids transmission ; Froissart the narrator-protagonist takes great pains to ensure the transmission of his text to Rose, wrapping it carefully in a « toile neuve, / Bien ciree et bien aournee » (*PA*, v. 2007-08), and setting it directly into the hands of Rose's messenger.

The circularity of writing and invention in the *Prison amoureuse* leads to the recycling and rewriting of poetic tradition and inheritance, as Ovid becomes pseudo-Ovid, a poem invented and transcribed within the frame of a poem. The process of textual accumulation continues, as Flos' « Ovidian » narrative is commented upon and glossed by Rose, his lady and Flos, the whole being incorporated into the compiled text of the *Prison amoureuse*. Mary Carruthers, in *The Book of Memory*, sees this process of glossing as « the mark of textualisation itself » ; she distinguishes between text and book, defining textualisation as a social and cultural process : « the layers of meaning that attach as a text is woven into and through the historical and institutional fabric of a society »²⁷. Paul Zumthor also sees this glossing as a means of maintaining a textual continuum : « l'écriture, glose la parole ; une autre écriture glose la première et produit une parole seconde, à son tour, glosée. Ainsi se constitue la science, indissolublement liée à l'opération de la voix »²⁸. The paradox of the written text is ever-present, and however we approach its study, whether through the analysis of its « subjective voice », or through an exploration of its intertextuality, it appears as polyvalent and fluid, despite any authorial desire to transmit his voice to posterity. This is particularly the case in the *dits amoureux* ; to return to A.C. Spearing's definition of the genre, with which we began, it is evident that the notion of « voice » in these texts is paradoxical. The *dits*

²⁷ M. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory : A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 12.

²⁸ P. Zumthor, *La Poésie et la voix dans la civilisation médiévale*, Paris, Seuil, 1987, p. 93.

seem to present both a unified, subjective voice, which represents author, narrator and protagonist in an undivided continuum, a voice of individual experience, and a multiplicity of « voices » drawn from Froissart's poetic inheritance. Jean Froissart was clearly aware of this paradox, and he plays with the notions of flux and stasis, remembering, memory and recording, in order to produce poetic works that explore the boundaries of the individual and of individual experience and expression.

Finn E. Sinclair
Girton College, Cambridge