

## Chapter 3

# Valenciennes (Hainault)

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VALENCIENNES grew up at the head of navigation of the Escaut (Scheldt, Schelde). As a medieval entrepôt where West European maritime traffic met continental traders from the Rhine basin and beyond, the town prospered, with a vigorous textile industry; in largely agricultural and feudal Hainault, only Mons, the county capital, could rival it.<sup>1</sup> Geopolitically, under the Treaty of Verdun (843), the river marked the frontier between Francia and Lotharingia, and in the later Middle Ages separated the dioceses of Arras (France) and Cambrai (Empire). Physically straddling the river, Valenciennes was, like the rest of the county of Hainault, Imperial territory (although this is to simplify a very complex situation). After the dissolution of the thirteenth-century dynastic union between Flanders and Hainault and before the absorption of both into the Burgundian conglomeration, the town became a strategically significant bulwark against France, to which Flanders and some minor domains west of the Escaut paid homage.<sup>2</sup> Waterways may separate, but they also integrate. Commercial, political, and cultural networks crisscrossed the frontier between the Empire and the kingdom of France, reflecting and creating correspondingly complex allegiances throughout a distinct region. Most significant were the dynastic connections which outlasted and often overrode diplomatic affiliations, and which mean that Hainault's past cannot be separated from that of the other Low Countries, the Rhine marches, and northern France. Conversely, the use of generic names (not only 'Low Countries', but also sometimes 'Flanders' or 'Holland') should not obscure the territories' distinctive histories.<sup>3</sup> Writing in the late fourteenth century, Jacques de Guise emphasizes how political divisions

<sup>1</sup> Valenciennes belonged to the hanse of the XVII towns, trading with Champagne; see Carolus-Barré, 'Les XVII villes'. On the rivalry between Mons and Valenciennes, and on Valenciennes' claims to independence from Hainault, see Cauchies, 'Mons et Valenciennes'.

<sup>2</sup> The town's history is treated in detail in Platelle (ed.), *Valenciennes*. Guignet, *Nouvelle Histoire*, treats the medieval period only briefly but has a recent bibliography. Nys and Salamagne (eds), *Valenciennes*, include excellent articles on cultural activity in the town.

<sup>3</sup> On Hainault in different contexts, see Platelle and Clauzel, *Histoire*; Lucas, *Low Countries*; Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*; Prevenier, 'Low Countries', esp. pp. 577–80 and 585–7; Blockmans and Prevenier, *Promised Lands*.



FIGURE 3 Froissart and his informant Espan de Lyon talking *en route* to Gaston Phebus's castle, then being received by the prince. The Hague, KB, 130 B 21, fo. 1r, Gerrit Potter van de Loo's translation: Froissart, *Kroniek* (Vol. III), North Holland; c.1450–1460.

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hamper the assembly of materials for a history of the county, and scholars since must agree.<sup>4</sup> Hainault is today a Belgian province, while Valenciennes is in France. Sometimes more fully or positively treated in writings from Belgium or Holland than from modern France, the town and its inhabitants are at other times omitted from Belgian histories. The nineteenth century saw a spate of nationalistic publishing, with Froissart receiving competing Belgian and French editions.<sup>5</sup> With its multiple names, the river itself emblemizes an intricate linguistic situation, further complicating historical research.

From 1299 Hainault was in dynastic union with the counties of Holland and Zeeland and the lordship of Friesland. After the Avesnes dynasty ended in the mid fourteenth century, the Bavarian Wittelsbach counts made Holland their prime territory, with The

<sup>4</sup> Jacques de Guise, Prologue, chapters VII, VIII; in Jacobi de Guisia, *Annales historiae illustrium principum Hanoniae*, ed. Ernst Sackur, MGH SS 30.1, pp. 44–334 (pp. 84–5). I am grateful to Shelagh Sneddon for finding the MGH text and for refining my translations.

<sup>5</sup> Respectively, by Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove, and by Siméon Luce (for the Société de l'Histoire de France, ongoing). On these and other nineteenth-century editions, see Ridoux, 'Deux éditeurs de Froissart'.

Hague as capital. The Wittelsbachs remained active in the francophone network south of their domains (Froissart cites Albert of Bavaria among his patrons).<sup>6</sup> However, the main language of the comital court became Dutch, in what has been termed ‘a landslide, culturally and politically’.<sup>7</sup> One consequence is that, although medieval Valenciennes has had some excellent French-language historians, for comprehensive coverage of the mid and late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century political agitations one must turn to historians of Holland and the Low Countries, often writing in Dutch or German. It is difficult to generalize about the significance or intensity of linguistic affiliations, in part because modern interests intrude. Albert Henry argues that the term ‘wallon’ to distinguish Romance speakers from speakers of *le thiois*—a collective term for Low German, Rhenish, Dutch, or Flemish—originated in the fifteenth-century Burgundian state and specifically with the intellectuals of Hainault.<sup>8</sup> Although Valenciennes’ architectural medieval patrimony has almost entirely disappeared, certain regional geo-political and linguistic legacies have not only persisted, but deepened.

My focus will be on literature in French; readers may consult other chapters for coverage of different aspects of the region’s history and culture. I shall begin before our period and end after it, aiming to map Hainault’s changing orientation relative to the major powers. In the fourteenth century the main cultural and political influences run along an east–west axis, with England especially important in the first, and the Empire in the second half of the century. By the fifteenth century, influences run north–south, dominated by ducal Burgundy. Paris and the kingdom of France also count, if less weightily. The writers I shall discuss moved between establishments, dynasties, and allegiances in northern France and in England as well as in the Low Countries. Hainault origins and loyalties necessitated no specific political preferences during the Hundred Years War, although the county’s life was undoubtedly affected.

## The first half of the fourteenth century

William I (‘the Good’), count of Hainault from 1304 until his death in 1337, was also Count William III of Holland and Count William II of Zeeland, as well as Lord of Friesland (throughout this chapter I follow Hainault numberings). His marriage alliances illustrate his centrality to high international politics. His wife was Joan of

<sup>6</sup> The connections between Froissart’s work and the Flemish Low Countries have been overshadowed by those linking his work to France and to Britain. On Froissart’s interest in the Flemish Low Countries, see van Herwaarden, ‘War in the Low Countries’. In order to emphasize this relatively neglected connection, my opening miniature (Fig. 3) is taken from The Hague, KB, 130 B 21, Gerrit Potter van de Loo’s translation: Froissart, *Kroniek* (Vol. III), North Holland; c.1450–60, reproduced with kind permission of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek. On this Dutch translation, see Schoenaers, *Precepts of Good Behaviour*; for an overview of the illustrations in manuscripts of Book III of the *Chroniques*, see Schoenaers, ‘History of Conflict or Manual of Conduct?’.

<sup>7</sup> Van Oostrom, ‘Middle Dutch Literature’, 33.

<sup>8</sup> Henry, *Esquisse*, 39–40.

Valois, sister to the French king Philip VI; he married his son, the future William II, to Joan, heiress to the duchies of Brabant, Lothier, and Limburg (after his death she married Wenceslas of Bohemia, duke of Luxembourg). His daughters, in descending order of age, were settled thus: Margaret, to the duke of Bavaria, later Emperor Ludwig IV Wittelsbach; Philippa, to Edward III of England; Joan, to William V, duke of Juliers/Jülich; and Isabella to Robert of Namur, of a junior branch of the comital family of Flanders, and later Knight of the Garter. These mixed alliances could hardly fail to make William a key figure in the general war that would engulf north-western Europe. William's heir initially continued his pro-English policy but made peace with the French in 1343. Thereafter neutrality, interpreted by some historians as self-interest, by others as enlightened concern for the people, required careful balancing of connections. William II died in 1345 trying to subdue Friesland, and the county passed to William I's eldest daughter Margaret and thence, after a succession struggle, to her Bavarian and imperial heirs.

In the early fourteenth century, therefore, Valenciennes hosted a dazzling court, fed by a surge in prosperity during the thirteenth century. William I's alliances with France, the Empire, the Low Countries, and England exported his court's passion for chivalry and for tournaments and cemented Hainault's political importance.<sup>9</sup> The mighty, and mightily bizarre prose romance of *Perceforest*, written for William I and William II in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, supports English claims to sovereignty over the whole island of Britain through the adventures of Alexander's knights well before Arthur's day (and thus joins the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century debates over intra-British sovereignty conducted via the *Brut* tradition, including Albina and Scota). In *Perceforest* Britain, permeated by the marvels of the Orient, becomes exotic and mysterious, a place of conquests and hybridities.<sup>10</sup>

The English connection is manifest also in the *Regret Guillaume*, written shortly after William's death by Jean de Le Mote and addressed to William's daughter Philippa, Edward III's queen. Philippa famously favoured a Hainault entourage, for as Froissart says, 'Sur toutes riens Les gens en amoit, Prisoit et looit' ('Above all things she loved, valued, and praised its people').<sup>11</sup> Chaucer's wife Philippa was probably the daughter of one such, Sir Payn Roelt, Guyenne king of arms.<sup>12</sup> There were also Hainault knights in England before Edward married; the marriage itself grew out of his mother Isabella's reliance for military aid on William I and his brother, Jean de Beaumont. Other

<sup>9</sup> Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, gives the classic account of Hainault chivalry; on the literary culture it exported, see Devaux, 'Court of Hainault'. I touch here only on some highlights.

<sup>10</sup> *Perceforest* is not yet fully edited. For recent bibliography and critical discussion, see Huot, *Postcolonial Fictions*. On the hybridity of courtliness, see Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, 179–229; Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries*. On interest in the East at William I's court and the Second Crusade Cycle of *chansons de geste*, see Devaux, 'Court of Hainault', 3–5; on William II's interest in crusading, see Lucas, *Low Countries*, 493–501.

<sup>11</sup> Lay VII, in Froissart, *Lyric Poems*, 106–12 (ll. 91–3).

<sup>12</sup> In which case, she was sister to Katherine Swynford, ancestress of the Beaufort dynasty. See 'Chaucer, Geoffrey', *ODNB*, vol. 11, 247–59 (p. 248).

Hennuyers came as or with hostages; some stayed for years and forged long-lasting or short-lived bonds.

It was perhaps to counter Le Mote's address to Philippa that Simon de Lille, Parisian-based goldsmith to King Philip VI, commissioned him in 1340 to write the *Parfait du paon*, in which the *Perceforest's* proto-English heroes are presented as treacherously breaking oaths of allegiance to attack Alexander. For a major current scholar of the Hainault court, this composition rebukes Edward and the Low Countries nobles for their recent aggressions against France and censures Le Mote's earlier loyalties.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, in the *Parfait* Alexander is the first offender, and the right course of action far from clear. Le Mote highlights dilemmas of divided allegiances and the peculiar horror of war between brothers, allies, and kin. Even so, writing the *Parfait* did not prevent Le Mote from working afterwards in 'Albion de Dieu maudite' (III, refrain; 'Albion, accursed by God'), as Philippe de Vitry, bishop of Meaux, French royal counsellor, and Renaissance man *avant la lettre*, calls it.<sup>14</sup> Le Mote's self-defence is as courteous as Philippe's accusation of treacherous flight is insulting: 'Ne je ne suy point de la nacion De terre, o grec Gaule, de Dieu amee' (IV, ll. 9–10; 'Nor am I at all of the people of that land called in Greek Gaul, loved by God').<sup>15</sup> Looking past Vitry's political vitriol, the ballade exchange addresses wider issues of *translatio* and of poetic practice, anticipating the seventeenth-century quarrel between *anciens* and *modernes*. Vitry alleges that good poetry requires classical allusion rather than 'noms divers' (III, l. 23; 'names all over the place'), and Le Mote's fellow Low Countries poet Jean Campion urges Le Mote to eschew 'noms de Bretesque' (V, l. 15; 'British names').<sup>16</sup> Le Mote humorously defends his naming strategies—'Si, te supply, ne banny mon bon nom' (IV, l. 29; 'I beg of you, do not banish my good name'), and shows by his rhetoric that he also commands Latinate nomenclature: 'O Victriens, mondains dieux d'armonnie' (IV, l. 1; 'Oh Man of Vitry, earthly god of harmony'). Le Mote's work travelled well, despite Vitry's efforts to contain it. His *Regret* influenced both Machaut and Chaucer, while Deschamps' lyric tributes to both these poets echo Le Mote's ballades. But by then the world had changed, and Hainault was ruled by a dynasty oriented politically towards the north and east, towards Holland and Germany.

<sup>13</sup> Van der Meulen, 'Simon de Lille'.

<sup>14</sup> Le Mote's career is reviewed by Wilkins, 'Music and Poetry'. Wilkins points out that in 1323 Simon had made jewellery for a daughter of the count of Hainault (p. 191). Simon's son and grandson are recorded as goldsmiths in Valenciennes: Nys and Salamagne (eds), *Valenciennes*, 399.

<sup>15</sup> Pognon gives the ballade texts, 'Ballades mythologiques', 407–12. These lyrics have been discussed and partially re-edited several times, with scholars disagreeing on their meaning. I use Pognon here because he includes all six ballades, thus giving a fuller picture of the exchange. Le Mote has a much higher profile in English than in French medieval studies, and the best discussion of his work and influence is Wimsatt, *Chaucer*, 43–76. Wimsatt suggests that an acerbic Latin motet by Vitry may also be directed against Le Mote. More recently on the exchange, see Butterfield, *Familiar Enemy*, 114–30. There is disagreement over the dating of this exchange, with some scholars placing it before 1340, others after. I have followed the later dating.

<sup>16</sup> Many of the names Le Mote uses are unattested elsewhere, which may indicate either ignorance or inventiveness on his part.

## The later fourteenth century

In 1358 Margaret's son William III became insane, and the Hainault towns rejected as regent his wife, Maud (Mathilda) of Lancaster, settling instead on one of Margaret's younger sons, Albert, duke of Bavaria-Straubing. Albert inherited as count in 1388 and died in 1404, his long reign bringing some stability. His son, William of Ostrevant (a territory for which the counts of Hainault paid homage to the king of France) succeeded as William IV, dying in 1417 and passing the county to his daughter, the romantically ill-fated Jacqueline of Bavaria. After a civil war, Philip of Burgundy wrested Hainault from Jacqueline, finally, in 1433. The process of absorption into Burgundy had been protracted; a double marriage in 1385 had already united William of Ostrevant with Margaret of Burgundy, daughter of Duke Philip the Bold, and Margaret of Bavaria, Albert's daughter, with John the Fearless, Philip's heir.

The chapter on The Hague covers the Wittelsbach comital court and literature in *le thiois*. My French-language focus takes me to Valenciennes, and thereafter to the illustrious careers of two of its sons: the bourgeois poet and chronicler Jean Froissart, and the *chevalier-poète* Jean de Werchin.

### Valenciennes

The town beyond the court was a prosperous market centre, notable for commercial vitality and a famously innovative textile industry. Although Hainault's chief city, Valenciennes energetically defended its rights against the counts. Its unusual legal privileges included the right to burn the houses in the surrounding countryside of anyone, nobles included, committing a crime against a bourgeois; the otherwise royal privilege of executing criminals; and, most significantly, the right to interpret many of its own laws.

Literary activity here was typical of the northern French and Low Countries towns. A lively popular theatrical tradition would flourish into later centuries.<sup>17</sup> Two confraternities (one even older than that of Arras) held *puys* in honour of the Virgin Mary, from which some winning poems survive.<sup>18</sup> However, the town's and the county's glory is prose historiography. Evidence of that intermingling of court and bourgeoisie that historians often ascribe to the Low Countries comes in one such work: the *Récits d'un bourgeois de Valenciennes* (c.1365), a chronicle centred on the Bernier family. *Grand bourgeois*, comital officer, and knight banneret under William I (and immediately banished by William II), Jean Bernier participated in chivalric festivals and even threw a banquet for princes: the 1337 Valenciennes conference at which

<sup>17</sup> Koopmans, 'Cultures théâtrales'.

<sup>18</sup> Hécart (ed.), *Serventois*. A few of Froissart's lyrics also proclaim that they were 'crowned at Valenciennes'. Butterfield relates international lyric exchanges in the context of *puys*, *Familiar Enemy*, 234–8. Some further detail on poetic activity in town and court is given by Herbin, 'Activité poétique'.

Edward III attempted to rally the Low Countries against France.<sup>19</sup> Neither city nor county was noted for speculative learning, at least according to the Franciscan Jacques de Guise (c.1340–99), author in the 1390s of the vast *Annales historiae illustrium principum Hanoniae* which traces Hainault's Trojan origins (from Bavo, a cousin of Priam's, and his city of Belgis) and its counts' Carolingian and saintly genealogy. Guise asserts the county's historic independence and much greater past extension as the original Gallia Belgica. He explains in his prologue why he turned to historiography. After twenty-six years studying logic, natural and moral philosophy, mathematics, and physics and 'ad apicem gradus theologie proventus' ('having advanced to the highest grade in theology'), he returned to his native Hainault:

And he understood how things were there, and that theology and the other speculative sciences were spurned (*aspernantur*), indeed, that their possessors were deemed to be as if rambling (*delirantes*) or insane. Then he reflected and wondered in what way he might spend the rest of his life, avoiding idleness (*ocium*), which is the enemy of the soul; and he turned back and applied his mind to the gross and practical sciences (*ad scientias grossas atque palpabiles*), and even to their most basic elements, and, wishing to serve his prince and compatriots, he undertook this work, which is full of labour. (Prologue, ch. X, p. 86)

Given Guise's regional pride, this statement is indirectly boastful: Hainault valued practical, civic arts. Guise borrows the model of Israel, figuring the county's towns as the tribes or sons, Holland and Zeeland as the two illegitimate wives, the count as Israel himself (chapter VI, pp. 83–4). Gathering diverse historical materials into a history of Hainault reconstitutes spiritually a country divided by internal strife and external depredation, reversing Hainault's cultural diaspora (see especially chapter II, pp. 79–80). Historiography here aims at national recomposition.<sup>20</sup>

#### JEAN FROISSART

Born at around the time William I died and the Hundred Years War began, Jean Froissart (c.1330 or 1337–c.1405), poet, romancer, and chronicler, had a career both individual and indicative of his country's situation in Europe. After a (probably) bourgeois childhood in Valenciennes he joined Philippa's entourage in England.<sup>21</sup> After her death he found patrons among her relatives in and around Hainault, their dynastic solidarity evidently outweighing differing attitudes towards the Hundred

<sup>19</sup> On the *Récits*, see Platelle, 'La bonne et franke ville', 83–5; Small, 'Chroniqueurs', 280–1. The Valenciennes conference formed part of Edward III's efforts to form an alliance with the Low Countries against France. See Lucas, *Low Countries*, 204–9.

<sup>20</sup> The Franciscan foundation was closely linked to the counts, and Guise was confessor to William of Ostrevant and to Margaret of Burgundy: van Overstraeten, 'La version originelle'. On Guise's sources, see Small, 'Chroniqueurs', 282.

<sup>21</sup> His exact relation to Philippa is uncertain; see Croenen, 'Mécènes'. The critical bibliography on Froissart is vast. I have here given the major book-length studies together with a selection of recent works by important scholars.

Years War.<sup>22</sup> Although he returned repeatedly to Valenciennes, his travels—to Scotland, Milan, Orthez in the Béarn, and Avignon, among other places—and access by hearsay to events taking place in the Iberian peninsula, Ireland, Hungary, and Turkey, trace the further reaches of these circles of patronage, and his monumental *Chroniques* detail their roles in the larger war.

Froissart's output from the 1360s to around 1400 encompasses various genres. In his youth he wrote *dits amoureux* in the latest style, the last and greatest being *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece*. Over many years he produced fixed-form lyrics: *lais*, *pastourelles*, *chants royaux*, *ballades*, *virelays*, and *rondeaux*.<sup>23</sup> Also in verse is his long Arthurian romance, *Meliador*, and it is possible that the *Chroniques* themselves were not originally in prose. Froissart may have begun his historiographical work before 1360; he rewrote the first Book and worked on the last until his presumed death around the turn of the fifteenth century. He did not lack for patrons who esteemed him enough to finance his diplomatic or fact-finding missions. He was in poetic contact with, at least, Machaut, Chaucer, and Deschamps, and (possibly along with Chaucer) attended the wedding at Milan of the duke of Clarence to Violante Visconti in 1368; Petrarch was present, but Froissart tells us nothing of this.

Although Froissart's *Chroniques* are more famous today, his *dits* are among the most interesting fourteenth-century courtly writings. His approach to the poetic persona is striking: refusing to elevate it to the dignity of the counsellor (as others do), he emphasizes the almost mechanical function (*Orloge*) of the recorder of events, yet presents this *aministreur* (*Joli Buisson*, l. 411) as a focus for literary attention. Froissart highlights phenomenological concerns. Against a world of change and circumstance stands the poetic subject, almost static in his lyric longings. Events and emotions are enclosed within circles that are not really cycles. The poet-lover of *L'Espinette amoureuse* (1369), caught in love's thornbush, closes his reminiscences by declaring that that same juvenile love burns within him ever more intensely.<sup>24</sup> In one of the great literary explorations of mid-life crisis (the phrase is Dembowski's), the *Joli Buisson de Jonece* (1373) reprises the subject supposedly a decade on.<sup>25</sup> Evoking past misconduct and remorse, and declaring that he is now old and must think of death, the traumatized poet is encouraged by a personified Philosophy to recall past successes by listing his benefactors and earlier works. He then laments that he has no new material for further pleasing verses, so Philosophy persuades him to review a portrait of his once beloved mistress; passion re-ignites, and in a dream he knows youth a second time. Disregarding Youth's warning to use this chance more wisely,

<sup>22</sup> Small emphasizes the connections of Froissart's patrons with the counts of Hainault, 'Chroniqueurs', 284–5.

<sup>23</sup> On Froissart's lyrics, see especially Figg, *Short Lyric Poems*. The lyrics survive in two, interestingly different manuscripts. MS A (Paris, BnF fr. 831) appears to have been prepared for an English audience—possibly for presentation to Richard II—and MS B (Paris, BnF fr. 830) for a French one. Figg summarizes the discussion in her Introduction (pp. 18–20).

<sup>24</sup> Froissart, *L'Espinette amoureuse*, ll. 3881–90.

<sup>25</sup> Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, 36–41.



he enthusiastically re-enacts the follies he demonstrated in the earlier poem. We are caught again in the thornbush, now reincarnated as Youth's *joli buisson* ('merry bush').

Within this seeming circle, however, the ostensibly ineducable subject grounds an evaluation of time's passage and effects, for past and present experiences are not the same. Reiterating that time is fleeting and irrecoverable even as he recovers it, Froissart explores the role in consciousness of *le souvenir*. The 'clockman' (*orlogiers*) who makes the subject tick, *le souvenir* is an engagement with time and memory that registers and interacts dynamically with the mutability of earthly life, while also striving to ignore its transience.<sup>26</sup> One might say that for Froissart, *le souvenir* is consciousness. Thus the subject of the *Joli Buisson* contemplates new patrons by looking forward to commemorating them in a future work (ll. 329–33). This prospective-retrospective awareness links the individual to the collective on the one hand, and history to legend and to fantasy on the other, since, as Philosophy observes, such names as Gawain or Tristan are known only through activities like the writer's, and we owe even the Christian faith to such *registreurs* as saints Paul and Bernard (ll. 405–21); the *Joli Buisson* (likewise?) celebrates the benevolence of Froissart's own patrons. Compared with the equally self-reflexive self elaborated in Machaut's *dits*, Froissart's version of consciousness seems refractory and refracted. Thus the lady's portrait which obsesses the middle-aged poet of the *Joli Buisson* was in the *Espinette* a mirror in which the poet dreamt he saw her face (both portrait and mirror are figures for the poems themselves); while the bushy *Buisson*'s central shrub mutates from the earlier metaphor for the mingled flowers and thorns of love to become an uncompassable, paradoxical agglomeration of perceptions and ideas (ll. 1357–1422), a figure interweaving thought with its unthought.<sup>27</sup> *Le souvenir* as creative consciousness twines together memory and forgetting, and locates these intersubjectively as well as intrasubjectively.

Forming a fictional prequel to the British sections of his *Chroniques* and with the same Scottish setting as parts of Book I, Froissart's *Meliador* promotes English territorial interests. Arthurian work was already an established instrument in the efforts to annex Scotland, accomplished in *Meliador* through the marriage of the eponymous hero with the Scottish princess Hermondine.<sup>28</sup> Probably begun in the early 1360s, the work was important and flexible enough for Froissart to turn it in the early 1380s into a showcase for the substantial lyric *oeuvre* of his patron Wenceslas, duke of Brabant, and to read it before Gaston Fébus at Orthez in 1388.<sup>29</sup> It seems now an odd choice, 'delightfully

<sup>26</sup> *L'Orloge amoureux* (c.1368), ll. 927–96. Froissart's concern with time throughout his work is explored especially by Zink, *Temps* (the key monograph on Froissart's entire *oeuvre*).

<sup>27</sup> Kay, 'Understanding'.

<sup>28</sup> *Meliador*'s political references have been established by A. H. Diverres in several articles; his conclusions are summarized by Schmolke-Hasselmann, *Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, 272–7; see also pp. 205–7. On *Meliador* see especially Dembowski, *Jean Froissart. Meliador* also forms part of the dialogue around the figures of Arthur and Alexander represented by *Perceforest* and the *Parfait du paon*, among others.

<sup>29</sup> See Diller, '1389', on this episode as an instance of Froissardian self-intertextuality and self-reflexion.

old-fashioned', for Arthurian verse romance in French was by then obsolete.<sup>30</sup> However, Froissart characteristically cloaks innovation with traditionalism.<sup>31</sup> By situating the narrative before any of the well-known Arthurian characters were heard of, Froissart appropriates but alters the *matière de Bretagne*, inventing new heroes to people its world (compare Le Mote's use of possibly made-up 'noms de Bretesque', p. 57 above).<sup>32</sup> Philosophy's rhetorical question about writers' memorial function in the *Joli Buisson* takes on new import as Froissart records a tradition to which he alone bears witness. Romance written in French *verse* came with a particular freight in view of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century vogue for prosification. If rhyme is a foreign tongue—*lengaigne estrange*, as the prosifier Jehan Bagnyon puts it—then it is peculiarly suited to a view of the past and other countries as in some sense analogous.<sup>33</sup> Thus the geography of the *Chroniques* is mnemonic, most strikingly in Froissart's own famous journey to Béarn, recorded in Book III.<sup>34</sup> In another vein, Froissart's *Meliador* may be less backward-looking than critics focusing on late medieval French literature consider. We may link it instead to the significant new developments of (often original) Arthurian verse romance in English and in Dutch, among other languages used at the network of courts radiating from the alliances of William I of Hainault, and within which Froissart made his career.<sup>35</sup>

Whatever the medium or form, typically Froissardian is the use of multiple voices to explore the insights and limitations inherent in points of view; eye-witnesses offer disparate accounts, political affiliations are mixed, and source texts and authorial rewritings complicate the textual cloth.<sup>36</sup> In the view of history advanced in the *Chroniques*, the world is changed by individual and collective instrumental intervention shaped by people's *perceptions* of the world, perceptions themselves fed by other narratives, however partial or embroidered. Thus writing such as Froissart's crucially influences historical action. He celebrates past chivalry and *faits d'armes* in order to encourage future prowess, in whose moral and aesthetic value he apparently believes.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Schmolke-Hasselmann, *Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, 21.

<sup>31</sup> Dembowski's is the classic discussion. For a parallel reading of the *Chroniques*, see Ainsworth, *Fabric of History*. On Froissart's pseudo-Ovidian myths, see Kelly, 'Les inventions ovidiennes'.

<sup>32</sup> *Meliador*, ll. 1–43.

<sup>33</sup> Bagnyon, *Histoire de Charlemagne* [1465–70], 220–1.

<sup>34</sup> See further Chapter 9, 'Béarn'.

<sup>35</sup> For the Dutch tradition, see Besamusca, 'Medieval Dutch Arthurian Material'; on English, Burrow, 'The Fourteenth-Century Arthur'.

<sup>36</sup> For the textual history, see the Introductions to the different Books in the recent partial edition in the *Lettres gothiques* collection by, respectively, Diller, Ainsworth (Books II and III), and Varvaro. References are to this accessible edition. Invaluable online resources for students of Froissart are Ainsworth and Croenen (eds), *The Online Froissart (Chroniques)*, and Croenen, *Bibliography Jean Froissart*.

<sup>37</sup> *Chroniques, livre I*, 71–7. Compare the prologue to Jean Le Bel's chronicle, on which Froissart's Book I is based. Le Bel depicts his writing as commemoration and as a duty to the fallen (I (1904), pp. 1–4); Froissart insists on his work's function as a store of examples for those to come: 'la memore des bons et li recors des preus atisent et enflament par raison les coers des jones bachelers' (p. 73; 'the memory of the good and the record of those with prowess rightly fire and inflame the hearts of young men'). Moreover, he cuts Le Bel's condemnation of rhyme, hyperbole, and implausible exploits, instead giving a new role to *merveilles* (wonders) and to imagination while still insisting on veracity.

However, for all his emphasis on chivalric ideology's importance for medieval politics, Froissart presents its limitations as an explanatory principle. Thus in Book III, when the young William of Ostrevant, thirsting after exploits, asks his father if he may join his brother-in-law, the future duke of Burgundy, crusading in the east, the count of Hainault replies:

Guillaume, puis que tu as la volenté de voiaquier et d'aller en Honguerie et en Turquie et querir les armes sur gens et pays qui oncques riens ne nous fourfirent ne nul tittle de raison tu n'y as d'y aller, fors que pour la vaine gloire de ce monde, laisse Jehan de Bourgoingne et nos cousins de France faire leurs emprises et fay la tienne à par toy et t'en va en Frise et conquiers nostre hiretaige, que les Frisons par leur orgueil et rudesse nous ostent et tollent. (*Chroniques, Livres III et IV (Livre III)*, p. 535)

William, since you want to travel and to go to Hungary and to Turkey and to seek arms against peoples and lands who never did us any wrong, and you have no reasonable right to go there, except for this world's vainglory, let John of Burgundy and our cousins of France do their deeds of prowess and do you do yours, and go to Friesland and conquer our inheritance, that the Friesians by their pride and violence take away from us.

There is little sense here from either man of the wider missions stressed in many justifications of chivalry. Individual chivalric self-improvement is not subservient to political pragmatism or even cynicism, but nor does it guard against them.

Scholars who have worked on the many revisions and redactions of Froissart's *Chroniques* consider that the tension between chivalric ideal and political process grows in the later versions.<sup>38</sup> It is therefore commonly said that Froissart charts chivalry's waning as well as its flowering. On the other hand, the sense of decline is equally evident in the earlier, personal *Joli Buisson*, where it is answered by withdrawal into religion. Given that Froissart foregrounds his lifelong interest in point of view increasingly as the *Chroniques* go on, we have to ask which is out of joint: the times, or their ageing chronicler?<sup>39</sup> That dynamic link between retrospection and prospection that animates Froissart's earlier work—his faith in the future, if you will—is displaced. Later versions of the *Chroniques* foreground the writer's posterity and disengage this somewhat from the present. And indeed, his *Chroniques* were to be enormously influential on historiography from the later fifteenth through the early nineteenth centuries, returning to serious attention at the end of the twentieth.

<sup>38</sup> See especially Ainsworth, *Fabric of History*; on the Rome manuscript, Diller, *Attitudes*. Kennedy ('Theory and Practice') argues (correctly, in my view) that the same tension is present in chivalric prose romances. Kelly, 'Imitation', shows the comparable complexity of Froissart's use of examples in his verse.

<sup>39</sup> Cerquiglini-Toulet points out that being psychologically out of joint with his time is a fundamental resource of Froissart's poetic creativity; 'Paradoxe', 59. She relates Froissart to a fourteenth-century poetics of melancholy; *Colour*.

JEAN DE WERCHIN (1374–1415)<sup>40</sup>

The chivalric combination of legend with historical action, which fascinated Froissart, was still alive in the early fifteenth century, epitomized by Jean de Werchin—the original Don Quixote, as Voltaire caustically called him.<sup>41</sup> Grandson of the Seneschal mentioned by Froissart (*Joli Buisson*, l. 321), Werchin, hereditary Seneschal of Hainault and a knightly poet or poetic knight, was a member of Charles VI's 'court of love' (as was William of Ostrevant) and negotiated successfully the conflicts among the high nobility that marked the times.<sup>42</sup> Celebrated by Christine de Pizan as an exemplary knight and lover, he earned special mention in the chronicle of Enguerrand de Monstrelet for the challenge that he issued to any 'gentilz hommes de nom et d'armes, sans reproche' (letter I, ll. 1–2; 'men noble and without reproach in name and arms') who would fight him during his journey to Compostela in 1402.<sup>43</sup> His further activities are charted in a series of letters and replies (1407–9) between Werchin and Sir John Cornwall, and between Werchin and Henry IV. These highly formal documents show the participants concerned strictly with the courtly matters of honour and love while engaging in political point-scoring. Unsurprisingly, Werchin would die at Agincourt.

His verse output tempers courtly tradition with realism. Werchin's dream-vision poem, *Le Songe de la barge*, set on board ship during the delay before the failed expedition against England in 1404, details the complaints at the court of Love of various disappointed lovers. It highlights the female viewpoint, and the female figures emerge with more credibility and dignity than the males—who either demand that the ladies reward their unwanted service with love or, after long service, abandon admirable ladies for younger models. Although both undue idealism and excessive pragmatism are censured, courtly values themselves are not condemned, but endorsed. The *Songe's* centrepiece presents a knight and lady mourning their respective dead lovers. Love decrees that they shall fall in love with each other. Initially rejecting the possibility, they gradually awaken to each other's attractions and to the idea of loving

<sup>40</sup> Information on Werchin is taken from Grenier-Winther's edition of his *Songe de la barge*, which includes an edition of his chivalric letters and the surviving replies as well as his lyric poetry and ballade exchange with Lannoy; and especially from Paravicini, 'Jean de Werchin', who includes much biographical and archival material not in Grenier-Winther. Among the few discussions of Werchin's works, see especially Willard, 'Jean de Werchin', and Grenier-Winther, 'Songe de la barge'.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted by Grenier-Winther, *Songe de la barge*, p. xvi.

<sup>42</sup> On this *cour amoureuse* and its link to *puys*, see Taylor, *Making of Poetry*, 13–18, and at much greater length, Bozzolo and Loyau, *La Cour amoureuse*. A similar aristocratic poetry competition is described in Le Mote, *Parfait*, ll. 947–1526.

<sup>43</sup> Paravicini details Werchin's many journeys to, among others: Santiago de Compostela, Prussia, Sicily, Constantinople, and the Holy Land. In the opening and closing lines of her *Livre des trois jugemens*, Christine de Pizan called upon Werchin to judge the cases she presented; she included him in a list of past and contemporary paragons in her *Débat des deux amans* (ll. 1665–76), and honoured his tireless chivalry in a ballade (XXXIII among the 'Autres Balades', in *Œuvres poétiques*, ed. Roy, I (1886), 245–6). Willard suggests that Werchin's *Songe* should be seen as part of a poetic exchange with Pizan ('Jean de Werchin', 600).

and are duly joined together by *Leesse* (ll. 2441–59, ‘Joy’). In light of high aristocratic mortality, Love’s provision is humane and economical. Properly interpreted, courtly values can revivify society.<sup>44</sup>

## The fifteenth century: Burgundy and Hainault

By the end of our period, the orientation of Valenciennes and of Hainault had changed again. From the broadly west–east axis of the fourteenth century (England, Low Countries, Empire), the main cultural influence now ran north–south, dominated by Burgundy. Over a century, Philip the Bold, John the Fearless, Philip the Good, and Charles the Rash were to acquire the titles of almost the entire Low Countries. Their aim may have been to reconstitute the Carolingian kingdom of Lotharingia; in any case, they created a formidable European power.<sup>45</sup> Hainault was never their chief northern base; however, Georges Chastellain, Jean Molinet, and Simon Marmion were all established in Valenciennes, and the town was an active artistic and cultural centre.<sup>46</sup> The ambitions of Duke Philip the Good reinvigorated Hainault literature in the mid fifteenth century, and assured its dissemination in the early modern period. We literally cannot study fourteenth-century Hainault literature without appreciating Burgundian developments. *Perceforest* survives complete only in the reworking by David Aubert presented to Philip in 1459–60, and all the extant *Perceforest* manuscripts were probably produced under Burgundian auspices.<sup>47</sup> Kervyn de Lettenhove based his edition of Book IV of Froissart’s *Chroniques* on the famous Breslau manuscript—another Aubert production, including pro-Burgundian, anti-Orleanist revisions.<sup>48</sup> Guise’s *Annales Hannoniae* were translated as the *Chroniques de Hainaut* by Jean Wauquelin (based at Mons, Hainault’s capital and other chief city), and presented to Philip in 1447.<sup>49</sup> Philip collected works that demonstrated his territories’ historic independence of the great powers and justified his autonomous political authority. It is often claimed that his programme of compilation, prosification, and translation aimed at producing an overarching construct, if not an identity, able to weld together his disparate domains; thus the *Chroniques de Hainaut* may have served as a ‘Burgundian Chronicles of Saint Denis’.<sup>50</sup> These commissions also testify to an

<sup>44</sup> Werchin expresses similar views in his ballade exchange with his squire, Guillebert de Lannoy, who would become an important travel-writer and diplomat in Burgundy’s service.

<sup>45</sup> Blockmans and Prevenier, *Promised Lands*.

<sup>46</sup> Servant, *Artistes*; Nys and Salamagne (eds), *Valenciennes*.

<sup>47</sup> Roussineau (ed.), *Perceforest*, IV.1, pp. xxi–xxxii. On Aubert, see Straub, *David Aubert*.

<sup>48</sup> Le Guay, *Princes de Bourgogne*, 16–18. On fifteenth-century perceptions of Froissart’s politics and manuscript dissemination, a recent contribution is Croenen, ‘Reception’.

<sup>49</sup> Wauquelin’s text has no modern edition, although its magnificent manuscripts have been much discussed; see especially Cockshaw and van den Bergen-Pantens (eds), *Chroniques de Hainaut*. On Wauquelin, see especially Crécy (ed.), *Jehan Wauquelin*.

<sup>50</sup> Rigoulot, ‘Imaginary History’, 37.

often overlooked particularizing impetus. Emphasizing the local connections that prompted Wauquelin's translation, Graeme Small argues that the work promoted the county's interests in competition with other territories of the Burgundian agglomeration.<sup>51</sup> As J. H. Elliott points out, 'the competing aspirations towards unity and diversity . . . have remained a constant of European history'.<sup>52</sup> Beyond the glamour of centralizing courts and nascent nation-states, we need to explore further how late medieval cultural productions worked to intervene in that competition—as urgent today as it ever was.

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<sup>51</sup> Wauquelin's and similar works for Small represent an impulse coming 'en premier lieu des périphéries, plutôt que du centre' (*Les Chroniques*, 19). See further Chapter 6, 'Dijon, Burgundy'.

<sup>52</sup> Elliott, 'Europe', 71. Small suggests the utility of Elliott's essay on early modern Europe for thinking about medieval Burgundy ('Local Elites', 244).

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