

A 'Refound' Manuscript of Froissart Revisited: Newberry MS f.37

The nineteenth-century editors of Froissart's *Chroniques* had access to a considerable number of manuscripts in public collections.¹ They were also aware of some copies in private hands and of several manuscripts known from earlier references, but to which they had no access. One such textual witness, particularly important for the study of the textual tradition and the development of Froissart's œuvre as a whole, is the manuscript containing the first two books of the *Chroniques* owned by the abbé Favier, whose library was auctioned in Lille in 1763. S. Luce seemed unaware of its existence in 1867, but J. Kervyn de Lettenhove discussed it in 1873 in the introduction to his edition (I.II–III, pp. 433–5). A year earlier, in 1872, Delisle had published a short article about this manuscript, consisting largely of a long quotation taken from the sale's catalogue.² Delisle pointed out that the Favier manuscript was of considerable interest because it contained the so-called 'B' version of Book I (the *première rédaction revisée* in Luce's classification, the *troisième rédaction* according to Kervyn's), of which only three or four independent witnesses were known at the time. Delisle also noted that the Favier manuscript contained some very important textual variants in the prologue. These included a reference to the author as canon at Chimay, a position Froissart obtained sometime between 1382 and 1393, and an explicit mention of Froissart's patron Guy de Châtillon (d. 1397), count of Blois, who was probably instrumental in obtaining the Chimay canonry for him. In a 1975 article entitled 'A Lost Manuscript of Froissart Refound' Paul Saenger identified the Favier copy as the two-volume MS Case f.37 in the Newberry Library in Chicago.³ Saenger pointed out some of the implications of the Newberry copy for the relative chronology of the different redactions of Book I of the *Chroniques*, but his arguments seem to have escaped many of the scholars who have since published on this thorny problem.⁴

Kervyn de Lettenhove was also aware of another manuscript containing the 'B' version of Book I (I.II–III, pp. 435–6). This volume, once in Thomas Johnes's Pesaro Library at Hafod in mid Wales, was used by its owner to supply a base text of certain chapters of Book I which were missing from the 'A' version text from which he translated the *Chroniques* into English.⁵ Kervyn discussed furthermore another manuscript formerly at Hafod, from which Johnes had translated some variant chapters of Book II of the *Chroniques*. Kervyn translated these sections back into (modern) French in the introduction to his edition (I.II–III, pp. 373–81) and argued that the manuscript must have represented an otherwise unknown version of Book II of the *Chroniques*, to be dated after the known versions and containing some additional material relating to England. Unfortunately, Kervyn was unable to trace either volume.

Transcription work carried out for the recently launched *Online Froissart* has allowed me to identify the Johnes volumes as none other than the Newberry set and therefore identical to the Favier manuscript.⁶ From what I have read so far it has become clear that the Newberry text is substantially different from the *textus receptus* and other known versions of the *Chroniques*, and that it represents what I propose to call the 'C' versions of Books I and II. Apart from the variants in the prologue, the part of Book I found in the first volume (up to § 641 of Luce's edition) closely resembles the 'B' version, although it deviates significantly from the standard text in a number of chapters.⁷ From the second volume onwards, and especially in Book II, the differences between the 'C' version and the standard text become more numerous and more dramatic. Some chapters have been removed, others added, very many completely rewritten.

Further textual work will be needed to identify, interpret and date all these differences, but I expect this effort to confirm that the ‘C’ version of the *Chroniques* represents otherwise unrecorded authorial versions of Books I and II. Amongst the additions to the standard text are several pieces of autobiographical information relating to Froissart’s information-gathering methods which align closely to similar statements added to the youngest version of Book I (the so-called ‘Rome’ redaction, dated c. 1404), which a later scribe would not have been able to invent. One such statement is found at the end of Book II, after the text of the Peace of Tournai (18 December 1385) where, in a highly revealing passage unique to the ‘C’ version, Froissart informs us how he obtained the text of this charter:

Je sçay bien que, sitos que la congnaissance de la paix vint au conte Guy de Blois — qui fu acteres de ceste histore, car my Froissart il m’en ensonnia a faire et en paia tres volentiers toutes les painnes —, il m’envoia de la conté de Blois, ou nous estions pour le temps, en la chité de Tournay et me bailla ses lettres de creance adrechans as signeurs de la ville qui pour lors le gouvernoient. Et a sa priiere obeirent et m’en delivrerent la copie, car il l’avoient. Je le escripsi et puis retournay viers lui en Blois et li delivray, dont il ot grant joie (vol. 2, fol. 237r).

The problems regarding the dating of the ‘C’ version and its implications for the order of the redactions, in particular those of Book I, are complex and will need considerably more discussion than space allows for here. I shall therefore limit myself to some brief observations. A first one is that the ‘C’ redaction offers a homogenous text of Books I and II, unlike the other surviving manuscripts, which seem to have been copied from mixed sets representing different stages in the writing of the first two Books of the *Chroniques*, and therefore always show transitional ‘joins’ in the text. This is not the case for ‘C’, and the absence of such transitional passages probably means that this version came about in one single revision. Therefore any arguments relevant to the dating of this version apply to the whole of Books I and II as preserved in the Newberry manuscript. Moreover, it seems that the ‘C’ version was conceived as part of a set which already included a text of Book III. At the end of the manuscript one finds a scribal colophon preceded by the phrase ‘Je me suy etc.’ (II, fol. 237v). This phrase eluded Saenger and the other commentators, but it is in fact the incipit of Book III and therefore to be interpreted as a catch word. If we thus accept that the ‘C’ version already included Book III, then the earliest it can be dated is 1389 (the date of the most recent events recorded in that text). Moreover there is evidence that the ‘C’ version is even younger, and may not in fact have been reworked earlier than 1394. Towards the end of Book I there is a reference to Sir Hugh Calveley, captain of Calais in 1375–1378 (§ 786 of Luce’s edition).⁸ Sir Hugh died in 1394 and the modifications to the ‘C’ version seem to imply that he was already dead when Froissart was rewriting his ‘C’ text, as Calveley is being referred to as ‘messires Hues de Cavrelee, qui fu en son tamps uns chevaliers tous adrechies’ (II, fol. 54v, my emphasis). If Kervyn’s impression is correct that many changes to Book II in the ‘C’ version concern English affairs, then this could mean that this version was written after 1395, when a four-month stay in England must have given Froissart ample opportunity to collect additional information for his historical project, including the news of Calveley’s death the year before.⁹

Textual work has already led to some interesting preliminary conclusions concerning the order of the different versions of the *Chroniques*. The comparison of the final chapters of Book II (§ 500–2) across the four known versions seems to contradict Raynaud’s conclusions about the relative chronology of what he called the *rédaction primitive* and the *rédaction révisée* of Book II.¹⁰ It seems that Kervyn de Lettenhove was correct in ordering these as

follows: 1. *Chronique de Flandres*; 2. Raynaud's *rédaction révisée* (found amongst others in the Breslau and Arsenal MSS and in BnF fr. 5006, equivalent to Kervyn's *première* and *seconde rédactions*); 3. Raynaud's *rédaction primitive* (found in the Leiden MS, Kervyn's *troisième rédaction*); to which list we can now firmly add 4. the 'C' version (Kervyn's *quatrième rédaction*).¹¹

Initial conclusions as regards Book I also put into question the views taken in the Société de l'Histoire de France edition of Froissart's *Chroniques*. Luce argued there against Kervyn de Lettenhove that the 'Amiens' version had to be dated after 'B' (I, pp. XLIII–LXVII). George Diller has amply demonstrated that such relative ordering is unlikely and would be difficult given that the 'A' and 'B' redactions probably date from after 1391, while there is no solid internal evidence to assign the 'Amiens' redaction to so late a date.¹² Given that the 'C' version of Book I seems an authorial reworking of the 'B' version, it must therefore be immediately following it in the relative chronology.¹³ If the late date proposed here for the 'C' version (between 1394/5 and 1397) is correct, then this means that, if one accepts Luce's relative chronology, the date of composition of the 'Amiens' version would have to be pushed towards the very end of the fourteenth or the early years of the fifteenth century. This would make it contemporary with Book IV and with the 'Rome' version of Book I, to which it is nevertheless very dissimilar in style and general approach. The 'C' version, especially of Book II, is much more akin to the 'Rome' redaction. All this argues for reversing Luce's order and placing 'Amiens' before the 'A', 'B' and 'C' redactions.

The Newberry copy still needs a considerable amount of textual work before its full implications for Froissart scholarship become clear. It is nevertheless probably comparable in significance to the discovery of the single manuscript witness of the 'Rome' version by Kervyn de Lettenhove in the Vatican Library in 1860. Whereas the Vatican manuscript only contains the first third or so of Book I, the Newberry manuscript contains not only a complete text of Book I (albeit to a large extent identical to the 'B' version) but also of Book II. Since 1860, the 'Rome' text has been edited four times. The importance of the Newberry manuscript would seem fully to justify a similar treatment with the publication of a scholarly edition, if not of the whole text, then at least of all the chapters which show signs of authorial rewriting.

Notes

¹ *Chroniques de J. Froissart*, ed. by Siméon Luce, Gaston Raynaud, Léon and Albert Mirot, 15 vols published (Paris, 1869–1975); *Œuvres de Froissart. Chroniques*, ed. by Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove, 26 vols (Brussels, 1867–1877).

² Léopold Delisle, 'Note sur un manuscrit perdu des Chroniques de Froissart', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 33 (1872), pp. 286–8.

³ Paul Saenger, 'A Lost Manuscript of Froissart Refound: Newberry Library Manuscript F 37', *Manuscripta*, 19 (1975), pp. 15–26; see also Id., *A Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Western Manuscript Books At the Newberry Library* (Chicago, 1989), pp. 67–8.

⁴ Most recently Jean-Marie Moeglin, 'Froissart, le métier d'historien et l'invention de la Guerre de Cent Ans', *Romania*, 124 (2006), pp. 429–70.

⁵ R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Thomas Johnes of Hafod (1748–1816): Translator and Bibliophile', *The Welsh History Review*, 15 (1991), 399–415 (p. 407).

⁶ *The Online Froissart*, ed. by Peter Ainsworth and Godfried Croenen, version 1.1 (Sheffield, 2010), <<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/onlinefroissart>> [accessed 3 June 2010]. AHRC funding for the *Online Froissart* is gratefully acknowledged.

⁷ These include § 232–5, § 404–16 and § 439 of Luce’s edition.

⁸ Kenneth Fowler, ‘Calveley, Sir Hugh (d. 1394)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford, 2004; online edition, 2007) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4407>>, accessed 4 June 2010.

⁹ Godfried Croenen, Kristen M. Figg and Andrew Taylor, ‘Authorship, Patronage, and Literary Gifts: The Books Froissart Brought to England in 1395’, *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 11 (2008), pp. 1–42.

¹⁰ This work was carried out in collaboration with Dr Natasha Romanova, post-doctoral research fellow on the Online Froissart project, and first presented in July 2008 at the Medieval Chronicle conference in Belfast.

¹¹ I am deliberately simplifying both Raynaud’s and Kervyn’s classifications to focus on the main differences between the text of Book II as found in the Leiden MS, on the one hand, and the Breslau and Arsenal MSS, on the other.

¹² George T. Diller, ed., *Froissart, Chroniques. Livre 1. Le manuscrit d’Amiens*, 5 vols published (Geneva, 1991–1998), I, pp. IX–XXIII.

¹³ Moeglin’s solution, to place the ‘Amiens’ redaction in between the ‘A’ and ‘B’ versions, is not very satisfactory and lacks a solid textual basis (‘Froissart, le métier d’historien’, pp. 432 and 468).