

God, Leadership, Flemings, and Archery: Contemporary Perceptions of Victory and Defeat at the Battle of Sluys, 1340

Most historians of the Hundred Years War see the battle of Sluys, fought on June 24, 1340, as the first major onslaught of this late medieval conflict between France and England. A victory for the English, this naval battle allowed Edward III to land on the continent, to gather his Low Countries' allies to him, and to besiege the town of Tournai, the nearest major French-controlled enclave. For the French, the battle of Sluys was also significant. Although militarily it was only a minor setback, the English siege of Tournai failing as it would, the French fleet had been destroyed and it would take a number of years before France could once again challenge the English for control of the Channel. What caused this English victory and French defeat? After a brief look at modern historical explanations of the causes for victory and defeat, this article will examine contemporary perceptions of what led to Sluys' result. It will show that for English, French, and Low Countries' authors, there are different reasons given for victory and defeat at Sluys. Finally, it will show how Jean Froissart, in three different redactions of his *Chroniques*, used all three "nationalistic" perceptions.

MODERN HISTORICAL PERCEPTIONS

The battle of Sluys has excited the pens of many modern historians. Indeed, much more has been written about the battle in our own century than was ever written about it in the fourteenth century. Modern historians seem to have analyzed every aspect of the battle. Great historical discoveries have been made, and nearly,

it is fair to say, as many unsubstantiated leaps of historical faith have been taken. However, one thing cannot be agreed on. What was the cause of victory and defeat at the battle of Sluys? They either blame the French for the defeat, credit the English for the victory, or see the intervention of the Flemings on the side of the English as the reason for victory.

In blaming the French for the loss, we may hearken to the words of French naval historian Johannes Tramond, who blames the successors of Philip IV for allowing the navy to fall into ruin thus awarding Edward an easy victory at Sluys. Other modern historians who also blame the French for this defeat cite the poor quality of the French sailors as the cause of their loss at Sluys. For, although they fought bravely, they were no match for the more experienced and more "noble" English sailors. Claude Farrère, for example, insists that the reason behind the disparate fighting ability of the English lies in the fact that poor, instead of good, French sailors had been pressed into duty. And Ferdinand Lot sees this as a problem due to the refusal of the French gentry to man the ships in this battle.

However, most historians who recognize the French as the cause of defeat rather than the English as the cause of victory conclude that the incompetence of the French commanders was the ultimate reason for the defeat at Sluys. While Desmond Seward dismisses the French admirals, Hugh Quiéret and Jean Béhuchet, merely as "no seaman,"²¹ and Jean Favier writes that "the weakness of the French navy, excellent in all other regards, was its command,"²² other modern historians note the incompetence of these French leaders

by recording the inept tactics which the French navy displayed that day. Michael Packe sees the French ships "too densely packed together,"¹³ with Robin Neillands adding that this tight formation "therefore sacrificed their advantages of superior seamanship and manoeuvre."¹⁴ David Hannay claims that "as the French were drawn up along the bank of an estuary, and the English fleet was coming in from the sea, there was nothing to force King Edward to make a front attack,"¹⁵ and William Ledyard Rodgers agrees, noting that Sluys was "a poor place for a hostile fleet to lie in wait, as the shores were unfriendly and it was difficult to get supplies. Consequently, the French fleet was obliged to anchor somewhat off shore, although within the entrance to the bay."¹⁶ Jonathan Sumption alters this thesis slightly to include the drifting of ships, chained together, into the shore, thus "reducing the searoom further;" when the French admirals responded to this crisis by casting off the chains between the ships, it was too late to regroup and defend their position. Finally, Charles de la Roncière, recalling Vegetius 1. IV. 46, adds:

The opinion of what was responsible for our misfortune must be left with the navy. It remained in place, sails stored, in contempt of the military manual of their time, which prescribed to them to guard the sea and to push the enemy towards the coast.

Yet, even the French admirals at Sluys have their own modern defender in Admiral G. A. J. P. Auphan who, indicting instead the poor ship-building technology of the day, writes:

...the admirals of then were no worse than those of today. When one commands two hundred vessels and thirty thousand men in such decisive circumstances, one cannot choose his tactic lightly. The ardor with which the French fought, all the way to the death for twenty thousand of them, demonstrates that this tactic was understood, approved and followed. In reality...the ships then were not capable of confronting the open sea.

In crediting the English with the cause of victory at Sluys, most often modern historians point to the competence of the English king and his naval tactics. Three historians, C. D. Yonge, Scott L. Waugh, and Timothy J. Runyan, primarily credit the character of Edward for the victory. Yonge cites Edward's courage in the battle as the stimulus under which his sailors fought so well. Waugh notes that the English king, "when his navy came into sight of the huge French fleet," appealed "shrewdly" to the base attitude of soldiers to look on war as an enterprise, boosting morale by promising them "not only God's blessing but whatever they were able to lay their hands on as well."¹⁷ Runyan sees Edward's competence shown in the gathering of a fleet capable of even competing, let alone defeating, a large French navy.

As for the tactics Edward used at Sluys, modern historians have arrived at several different interpretations in crediting the English with the victory. Michael Packe credits the English with a feigned retreat which caused the French, in an effort to follow them, to break ranks and confusedly "to foul each other in the harbour mouth," thereby allowing Edward to "come back on their half-beam with the wind and tide behind them."¹⁸ This same effort, according to Hans van Werveke, was not a feigned retreat but merely Edward "wisely" attempting to gain the wind and sun behind him before attacking the French. Above all, C. F. Richmond avers, the English fleet caught the French at rest, and they were able to defeat them before they could get underway.

The most often recognized tactical cause for the English victory, however, is the English inclusion of archers on board their ships leading to the long bow's first great victory in the Hundred Years War. As Robin Neillands writes:

Edward sent his ships against the enemy line in units of three, two ships crammed with archers and one full of men-at-arms. This gave the English immediate local superiority and the French ships began to fall into their hands with ever-increasing rapidity. The two ships with archers would come alongside, and from the towering castles hose the enemy decks with arrows until the decimated crews

could be overwhelmed by a boarding party of men-at-arms, which swarmed on board from the third vessel.

Alfred H. Burne is even more colorful in his description of the role of archery in the victory:

The long-bowmen had "sitting targets," each arrow found its billet in the massed ranks on the French decks, and the lusty and expert men-at-arms carried on the slaughter, pushing back their opponents step by step across the decks and into the sea. It must have been an extraordinary sight.

Some French historians accept this as the cause of the French defeat in the battle. Johannes Tramond, for example, attributes the loss to the English archers noting that "our sailors succumbed to the number and the superiority of the enemy archers."⁹

Finally, there are some modern historians, among them Henri Pirenne and Charles de la Roncière, who follow a third route in commenting on the cause of victory and defeat at Sluys; they neither blame the French for the loss, nor do they give credit to the English for the victory. They recognize a third party, the Flemings, who assisted the English in the latter stages of the battle. Prior to the battle, Edward had put to shore the Bishop of Lincoln and Sir Reginald de Cobham as emissar to the Flemish towns to arouse support. The Flemings had responded by gathering in large numbers at Sluys. There they filled whatever sea-worthy craft they could find and sailed against the rear of the French fleet. Some also remained on shore to cut off any retreat which the French tried to make on land. To them, this was the true source for Edward's victory.

In looking at contemporary or near contemporary perceptions of victory and defeat at the battle of Sluys, it becomes necessary to split the sources into three separate groups. Certainly the English and the French sources are included in two of these categories, but, unlike other battles when only the sources concerned with the victors and the sources concerned with the defeated need to be analyzed, a third group of historical sources must be looked at when studying the battle of Sluys: those written by authors living in lands

which were allied with the English forces. This group, as we shall see, often differed in its analysis of the battle and the reasons for victory.

CONTEMPORARY "FOREIGN" PERCEPTIONS

Sources outside those mentioned above can largely be discounted when looking at the battle of Sluys, for very few "foreign" perceptions of this battle exist. Except for the German Heinrich de Diessenhoven's *Chronicon* and the Italian Giovanni Villani's *Istorie Fiorentine*, no major contemporary foreign commentator on Sluys is found. Moreover, Diessenhoven's work contains no analysis of why the English defeated the French. He simply notes that the English overcame the French at Sluys with many thousand French sailors being killed or drowned, and that Edward triumphed "gloriously."¹⁰

Thus, it is left up to Villani to be our sole major non-Allied/French commentator to discuss this battle. Villani certainly favors the English in this affair, a sentiment which may be judged easily from his acclamation of Edward as "buono Adoardo Terzo," and this praise for the English ruler extends later in Villani's chronicle as Edward is described as the reason for the English success. In describing the reluctance of some of the allies in facing the powerful French navy, Edward's prompt action makes him victorious. By this quick action, after a battle which lasted into the night, Edward is able to defeat the strong French force bringing glory and booty to himself and his allies.

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH PERCEPTIONS

While modern English historians have devoted much time and writing to the details of the battle of Sluys, the same cannot be said for their medieval counterparts. Only one or two of these contemporary or near contemporary authors seem interested in recording many details of the battle,¹¹ while several, including the anonymous authors of the *Annales de Bermundeseia*, the *Chronicon Angliae Petriburgensis*, the *Debat des herauts — d'armes de France et d'Angleterre*, and *Gregory's Chronicle*, as well as the *Gesta*

Edwardi de Carnarvan and John Hardyng, contain no information about the battle other than a record of English victory and the mention of the great number of French dead.

As well, often the details of the battle which are given by English authors are not substantiated by any other contemporary source. For example, only Robert of Avesbury and the unedited *Historia Roffensis* mention the pre-battle warnings given to Edward by his Chancellor, Archbishop John Stratford; Edward by disregarding these warnings forced Stratford's resignation. (He was later reinstated in the position.)¹²

As for the events occurring directly after the battle, we only have a patchwork of interesting anecdotes to lead us to any conclusions. Certainly, most of the English sources describe the large number of French dead and drowned, but only Thomas of Burton's *Chronica monasterii de Melsa* reports the now-famous "fish-story" of Sluys:

There was such an infusion of blood that for three days after the battle in all the water of the Zwin all the way to the sea there seemed to be more blood than water. And there were so many dead and drowned French and Normans there that it was said, ridiculing them, that if God had given the fish the power of speech after they had devoured so many of the dead, they would have spoken fluent French.

Moreover, when the news of the victory was reported to London, only Robert of Avesbury records that "on account of the distance of the place, it was believed to be a lie."¹³ And, it is only Thomas Walsingham who reports the amusing anecdote of the delivery of the news to Philip VI:

...since no one dared to report the loss of the battle to the king of France, familiars of the king employed a certain fool to tell him, that in some way through his words the king might know what had happened. This fool, placed in the presence of the king, began vehemently to indict the insanity of the English, and he began to multiply his words concerning

this matter. However, the king, ignoring what the words of this moron wished to say to him, asked why he said that the English were so insane. The fool said to him: "Because they are timid and do not dare to dance in the sea as our generous Normans and French do." Through these words, the king understood that they had been the victims and that the English were the victors.

When it comes to tactical maneuvers at Sluys, on either the French or the English side, the English chroniclers are equally reticent. Indeed, what few tactical details we do get often contradict other authors' details. While it is true that Adam Murimuth, Robert of Avesbury and Geoffrey le Baker all mention the French order of battle¹⁴ with Robert of Avesbury also noting that the French ships were chained together,¹⁵ only Murimuth and Baker detail the English order of battle.

Some English writers also discuss the problems the English faced both in manning their fleet and in the small size of their ships when compared to the larger French vessels. Adam Murimuth, for example, reports that the battle lasted very long "on account of the fortitude and the magnitude of the Spanish and French ships."¹⁶ Laurence Minot, on the other hand, takes an entirely different view of the size of the English ships, remarking that their small size made them so quick in the water that their Norman opponents could not keep up with them.

Several English commentators note that the English surprised the French. Indeed, this seems to have been Edward III's plan at Sluys. As Geoffrey le Baker writes:

[The king of England] said that they would not be expecting them, and arming himself and his men, and preparing them quickly, after the hour of nine, when he had the wind and the sun at his back and the flow of the river with him, having divided into three lines, he made a great assault on the French.

The French simply did not see them, notes Thomas Otterbourne. Even Edward himself was

convinced that the French were confused by this tactic, and that this confusion led to an early English advantage. In a letter written to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the king of England writes: "...by the arduous attack which we followed, they were put completely in ruin, so that we and our ships were most able to prosper from the peril of this great confusion."¹⁷ But if this assault on the French was a feigned retreat, we must rely only on the word of Robert of Avesbury and the *French Chronicle of London*. Avesbury writes:

Then the English judging the French ships to be chained together in one line with iron chains so that no one might penetrate their line, they sailed a little to the rear. Meanwhile, the French, deceived by this action, broke their line and, as they believed the English to be fleeing, strived to follow.

Finally, the English battlefield tactic which most medieval sources, like their modern counterparts, want to accept as the cause for victory was the adept English archery which easily mowed down an enemy unaccustomed to such a weapon. Thomas Otterbourne, Ranulph Higden, Thomas of Burton and the anonymous *Vita Edwardi II* all determine that the English archers were the reason for an English victory. This may not show overwhelming agreement for archery as the cause of victory, however, as these sources all seem to use exactly the same wording: "Wherefore, God favoring them, the French and Normans were conquered harshly by the English archers."¹⁸ Other English chroniclers of the battle of Sluys mention the longbow only in a list of weapons used in the battle without comparatively determining its effectiveness in any way. Thomas Walsingham, for example, also lists the two-edged sword and both throwing and battle axes with the bow,¹⁹ and Geoffrey le Baker mentions the use of spears, battle axes, swords, iron quarrels from crossbows, arrows from longbows and stones thrown from the ship's towers as the weapons used by the English.

Most English sources also fail to mention the Flemish reinforcements who aided the English fleet by blocking the shore so that the French were unable to escape on land. Only the

Chronicon Lanercost, *The Anonimale Chronicle* and a letter from Edward to the people of London note the Flemish participation in the battle. The former two chronicles remark merely that the Bishop of Norwich and Lord Reginald de Cobham were sent ashore to stir up the Flemings,²⁰ while the letter from Edward reports little more, saying only that "the Flemings were of good will to have come to us in battle from the beginning to the end."²¹

Many late medieval English writers also do not regard Edward as the cause of victory at Sluys. Certainly, the English king is seen as a pivotal and important character in this battle, with many contemporaries praising him in the manner of the fifteenth-century William of Worcester who calls him the "most famous knight of renomme,"²² but only Laurence Minot records Edward's presence as crucial to the final outcome:

*Sir Edward, oure gude king wurthi in wall
Faght wele on þat flude, faire mot him fall;
Als it es custom of king to comfort þam all
So thanked he gudely þe grete and þe small,
He thanked þam gudely, God gif him mede,
Þus come oure king in þe Swin till þat gude dede.*

Minot also mentions other particularly valiant warriors in the battle devoting a verse to Robert of Morley, the earl of Northampton, Sir Walter the Mawney, the duke of Lancaster, Sir William of Klinton, the earl of Gloucester, John Badding and John of Aile.

What or whom then do the English perceive as the cause of victory in this naval battle? Many English authors give credit solely to God. If nothing else, there was an effort among the English to show that the battle was just and that defeat of France somehow benefitted the English or their allies. Edward himself claims, in a letter written to the people of London, that his only intention in fighting the French was to restore peace and to bring independence to Flanders. Furthermore, in a letter he wrote to the English

Parliament after the battle, the king claims that the battle was "just" as France had frequently attacked England, and that they had allied themselves with the dreaded enemy of England: Scotland. Finally, Ranulph Higden adds yet another justification for the battle. The English attacked France in order to gain retribution for the towns of Gascony which France had stolen from them.

Most of the English sources tell us that God was on their side, often using only the phrase "Deo favente," and that this was the reason for the English victory. Some of these chroniclers, however, are more direct in their citations of God's aid. The *Anonimale Chronicle*, for example, reports: "The king of England with 412 ships attacked the great mass of French ships, and by the grace of God he defeated them."²³ Henry Knighton adds more to this discussion when he writes: "And having commissioned a naval battle and having fought there exceptionally and strongly, finally Christ conceded the victory to King Edward, and thus the French were defeated."²⁴ Moreover, the poet Laurence Minot after pleading several times for prayers on behalf of Edward in his undertaking against the French writes happily:

*Pis was þe bataille þat fell in þe Swin,
Whare many Normandes made mekill
din;
Wele war þai armed vp to þe chin;*

*Bot God and sir Edward gert paire boste
blin,
Pus blinned paire boste, als we wele ken:
God assoyle paire sawls, sais all, Amen.*

Other English commentators are even more specific in remarking on God's role in the English victory. Robert of Avesbury notes that it was by the "gift of God" that the wind blew favorably for Edward,²⁵ while the *Chronicon de Lanercost* gives Edward himself god-like qualities. Describing the feeling of Edward's followers after the victory this anonymous chronicler writes:

*After this victory the king of England and
France remained at sea for three days,
and then landed in Flanders, all men
shouting: "Long live the king of the*

*French and of England! Blessed is he
that comes in the name of the Lord!" And
although there were some who were
incensed a little because of his long stay
in England, the queen remaining in
Ghent exposed to many risks, together
with the English who were there in Flan-
ders supporting the king of England and
France, yet all those afflicted with the
king's evil who came near him were
immediately made whole by his touch.*

The most explicit commentator on God's role at the battle of Sluys is the king of England himself. Already in the manifesto made by Edward upon assuming the title of the king of France, the English king had expressed his belief that God was on the side of the English, and that He would give them victory over the French so that in peace they might go on a crusade to the Holy Land. After Sluys, Edward again reiterates the belief that God was with the English. Three letters, all written just after the battle was fought, remain from Edward, and all rest on the presumption that England was victorious over the French solely because of God's aid. In the letter written to the Archbishop of Canterbury Edward reports that he believed that God was with the English when He converted "a storm into a breeze" which allowed the English to sail to Sluys and to victory. Furthermore, God granted to Edward not only His presence, but also the tax subsidy, soldiers and favorable wind to pursue the battle. In the same letter he writes:

*But the God of mercies, seeing us or-
dered in such danger, more graciously
and more quickly than human reason can
judge, sent to us a great naval subsidy,
an unforeseen number of soldiers and
always a favorable wind as He had pro-
mised. And thus, under the hope of celest-
tial aid and the faithfulness of our jus-
tice, with our fleet coming to Sluys, we
discovered the French fleet and our en-
emy having prepared for battle in a cop-
ious number. In which on the day of the
nativity of Saint John the Baptist, He,
Our Hope, Christ the Lord, in the strong*

and able conflict allowed us to prevail having made not a small slaughter of French and capturing even all of their fleet, with only a small attack having been made on us.

So, Edward praises and thanks God for the victory at Sluys, and at the end of his letter to the Archbishop he urges his people to do the same.

This view of God aiding the English at the battle of Sluys does not disappear in the English annals. As late as the reign of Henry V this perception is still observed. In a speech made before Parliament by the Bishop of Winchester in 1416, and recorded in the *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, he cites the victory at Sluys as God's first favorable "verdict" for the English over the French in the Hundred Years War.

Finally, almost as a postscript to this perception, as witnessed by Geoffrey le Baker, who otherwise mentions nothing about God at Sluys, was that Merlin prophesied this victory.

CONTEMPORARY SOUTHERN LOW COUNTRIES PERCEPTIONS

In analyzing the perceptions of victory and defeat at the battle of Sluys, it becomes necessary to study the writers from the Low Countries separately from those of England. Although they do not see the conclusion of the battle in any different way, nor do they rejoice in the victory any less, they do have their own perceptions of the battle and of what caused the outcome. Perhaps the proximity of Sluys gives this battle a greater importance for these writers, for most of the contemporary or near contemporary writers from Brabant, Hainault and Flanders record more details about the victory at Sluys than do English authors.

There are some similarities between the English and allied authors' accounts. Certainly the large number of French dead at Sluys impresses the Low Countries' chronicler to the same degree that it does the English writer, although the heavy English death toll also impresses these authors, a statistic often missed or softened by the English writer. There is even the hint of descriptive narrative in Jan de Klerk's *Brabantse yeeften*

which hearkens back to Thomas of Burton's account given of the French dead: "The French left there / thirty thousand (that was many) / the sea was colored red with blood / In many ships men stood / with blood rising above their ankles."²⁶ Equally impressive to these authors is the large number of French soldiers who willingly drowned at the end of the battle. The *Van den derden Eduwaert*, a poem written in medieval Dutch by Jan de Klerk, author of *Brabantse yeeften*, says that "they were so defeated / the French, and they knew it so well / that they leaped from the ships / and with all hope lost they drowned."²⁷

These chroniclers mention little about the tactics employed at the battle of Sluys, less even than the contemporary English writers. Even Jean le Bel of Hainault, despite his praise for the "prowess" of the English soldiers, calling them "the most noble and most gallant fighters ever seen," fails to discuss the battlefield tactics employed by them. Moreover, the only references to Edward's attack of the French with the sun and wind at his back or the role of the English archers found in the accounts of the allies are found in the *Chronique de Flandre*.

Some of the Low Countries' commentators also agree with the view held by Laurence Minot that Edward III was the reason for victory at Sluys. Edward is seen by most of the Low Countries' chroniclers as the savior of their region. Indeed, Jan de Klerk's poem, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, is meant as a paean to the majesty of this foreign king. His victory at Sluys merely confirmed that idea. The anonymous author of the *Chronicon comitum Flandriae*, who had described Edward earlier in his work favorably as "young and spirited," comments that he was "more glorious through the victory which he made."²⁸ The fifteenth-century Flemish chronicler Adrien de Budt is equally impressed, especially because Edward himself was wounded in the thigh during the battle; still "the victory fell to him."²⁹ Most eloquent in this regard is Jean le Bel who writes: "But King Edward held himself so bravely, and he did so many feats of valor [during the battle] that he rallied and gave courage to all the others."³⁰ All this praise for Edward is justified, claims the *Breve chronicon Flandriae*, simply because "he freed Flanders."³¹

Most frequently, however, the contemporary commentators from the Low Countries differ from the English in what they view as the important occurrences at Sluys. For example, it seems of little importance to these writers to know the circumstances behind the gathering of an English fleet or that the Archbishop of Canterbury warned Edward against fighting the French fleet. Instead, it is the question of Edward's intent in coming to the Low Countries to attack the French which is discussed. The *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen*, for example, reports that Edward wanted to come to Flanders in "groeter macht" to impress both the French king and the most populous area of his realm. Besides, Edward had to return to Flanders, says Jan de Klerk in *Van den derden Eduwaert*, because he had promised to do so:

*Edward and his men came/over the sea/
with two hundred or more ships,/any ship
which would hold together,/believing in
himself./And the first thing that he did/
when he came to the land of Flanders,/
heedless of anything else,/was to set
himself on Flemish land./Believing in
God, he said,/“when I left this land,/I
believed with great faith/that I would
return here/before St. John’s day./And I
have done so/because here I stand.”³²*

There was another aspect to this return of the English king. As the *Chronicon comitum Flandriae* reports, it was important for the economic well-being of the Low Countries that they keep a friendship with the English. Having recently been driven to massive hunger by the English embargo on account of their allegiance to the French crown, the Flemings had felt compelled to align themselves with Edward, despite the avid protestations of Philip VI against it. Edward's return to Flanders had shown that this friendship was a dual affair.

The Low Countries' authors also spend more time in describing, always in negative terms, the French at the battle of Sluys. They identify the French as consisting mostly of Normans, traitors to England, and of renegade Flemings, traitors to Flanders. Moreover, according to these writers, the Normans at Sluys were pirates before the

battle, sailors who had terrorized the coasts of the Low Countries illegally before being legitimized by war. Nevertheless, the quality of these French soldiers was poor, and their leaders were also corrupt.

Above all, it was the French purpose in fighting this battle which frightened the allies. For not only did Philip VI wish to stop Edward on his return to Flanders by anchoring his fleet at Sluys, he also intended to capture and destroy Flanders and Brabant. In particular, Jan de Klerk in *Van den derden Eduwaert* notes, the French king intended to attack Antwerp, the pride of Brabant.

All of this leads to the further and greater complaint of French wickedness. Jan de Klerk's *Van den derden Eduwaert* reports that the French were proud,³³ and the *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen* describes their leaders as evil men "without feelings."³⁴ Philip ruled "unduly and without justice," avers the *Chronicon comitum Flandriae*,³⁵ but it is Adrien de Budt who makes the harsh claim that the French king had even tried to influence some of the Flemish leaders with bribes, offering "to forget all their debts" and to return to their control "the villages of Douai and Lille with their castellannies." But these bribes were refused.

If the French were evil, then the English at Sluys were good; some of the allied authors, like the English writers, saw the hand of God in the English victory. Jean le Bel records that victory was obtained "par la grace de Dieu princepaument,"³⁶ and the *Van den derden Eduwaert* reports: "But God sent his mercy / in order to undo the evil / because this evil here he / would no longer stand for."³⁷ In addition to this, the *Chronicon comitum Flandriae* reports that Sluys merely fulfilled part of the prophecies of the prophetess Hildegard who prophesied that in the year 1340 "there would be much slaughter and destruction."³⁸

Finally, as is to be expected, several Low Countries' writers credit the Flemings with the victory, for they came to the aid of the English when their allies from across the Channel were about to falter. The mid-fifteenth-century *Chronique des Pays-Bas* is certainly the most direct in

this perception. This chronicle reports: "The English began to lose at the beginning, but they were aided by the Flemings and the French were defeated."³⁹ Attached to this perception is an interesting anecdote mentioned by Jan de Klerk in his *Van den derden Eduwaert*. Apparently, a man from Flanders named Jan van Eyle, who had fled to the French before the battle tried to come ashore during the battle, but he was blocked by the Flemings who, despite being tempted by his monetary bribes, "cut off his head."⁴⁰

CONTEMPORARY FRENCH PERCEPTIONS

Like the authors of the Low Countries, the contemporary or near contemporary French chroniclers who write about the reign of Philip VI devote much commentary to this first great defeat suffered by the French king. Most of these commentators add many details to their accounts which give us interesting perceptions of the battle and of the cause of French defeat. Only Gilles li Muisit records nothing about the battle, although his reticence is understandable as he writes from within the besieged town of Tournai. Under the dire circumstances of the siege of Tournai by the English and their allies following their naval victory, the battle of Sluys was quickly forgotten.

Some of the French perceptions are not unlike those seen before in the accounts of the English and Low Countries writers. Still, it is apparent that they view the activity at Sluys through the eyes of a loser trying to rationalize defeat. For example, although many of these authors discuss the nature and size of the English fleet, at least three French sources, the *Chronicon* of Richard Lescot, the *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis and the *Grandes chroniques de France*, claim that Philip gathered his fleet only after learning that Edward had gathered first his own large navy. Moreover, the *Grandes chroniques* reports that by the time Philip was able to gather his fleet together, Edward "had already arrived at Sluys."⁴¹

The French contemporaries commenting on the battle of Sluys give little credibility to the English perception of a victory based on their superior tactics. Only the *Grandes chroniques* mention Edward's use of the sun and wind to

sweep down onto the surprised French ships, but this in no definitive way leads to their victory. And while several French chronicles mention the presence of English archers at the battle, it is only an indication of their impressive numbers, a "grant planté" says the *Grandes chroniques*, and not their role in the French defeat.

While these sources seem to dismiss the English perceptions of victory and defeat at Sluys, much more credence is given to the Low Countries' perception that the Flemings present in the battle awarded the victory to the English. For, although Jean de Venette reports only that the Flemings were present, and that they were "slain in large numbers by the French,"⁴² other French chronicles record the important role played by the Flemings in support of their English allies. For example, the *Chronographia regum Francorum* reports that the French were unable to flee to the shore because of the large number of armed Flemings who awaited them. Some French chroniclers are even more emphatic in their perception of the worth of Flemish aid to the English. The *Chronique Normande* reports "there was a great and marvelous battle, and many English were killed in the beginning, but they were rescued by the Flemings, and the French were defeated."⁴³ Richard Lescot adds: "Our soldiers, holding themselves well at first, were afterwards repulsed by means of a multitude of oncoming Flemings."⁴⁴

The year 1340 was not good for the French, and their own perceptions of the defeat at Sluys take on a sense of finality; it was not only they who suffered, it was all of Christianity. The *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis leaves a very philosophical entry:

In this year of calamity and misery, of ignominy and confusion, nothing laudable was achieved between the two kings of France and England, because whatever was done during this year was not from the Holy Spirit, but ought to be supposed to have proceeded from the angel of Satan. For, although in the two or three years preceding many grave things had been done to the paupers of the Church, besides the most grave exactions done to the common people, in this

year the highest confusion prevailed; however, it occurred not in any way for the utility of the republics of the aforementioned kings, but, alas, for the degradation and confusion of all Christianity, and of the holy and universal mother Church, for whom the said princes ought to be the sustenance and the support.

Jean de Venette blames this all on the appearance of a comet which was seen, he says, "about A.D. 1340."⁴⁵ But Jean de Hocsem finds a more human fault. Quoting from the *Eunuchus* of Terence (IV.7), he comments on the activities of the year: "All ought to be tempted by wisdom rather than by war."⁴⁶

The French commentators do not see any gallantry or valor performed by Edward III at Sluys. For most of these authors, the English king was nothing other than a pure example of evil. Cuvelier, the author of the *Chronique de Bertrand de Guesclin*, for example, describes Edward simply as "moult de mauulx."⁴⁷ To these writers, it was not enough that Edward had broken his own oath of homage to the French king, and, after Philip had already reigned for twelve years, that he had declared himself the king of France as well as of England forbidding anyone under the pain of death from referring to Philip VI as the French king,⁴⁸ but he also aided the loyal Flemish subjects in breaking their oaths of fealty to the French crown. Richard Lescot, for example, notes that Edward "extorted money to aid the Flemings who intended to do homage to him."⁴⁹ Above all, in fighting at Sluys, the English king caused many of his troops to die, not to mention the large number of French who also were slain in that battle. Jean de Hocsem writes: "The king of England wasted many of his troops, and it is said that the greatest condemnation was sustained in these things."⁵⁰

So, on what or on whom should the blame for this defeat fall according to the French chroniclers of the battle of Sluys? If neither the English tactics nor the actions of the English king should be credited with the victory, and if only a few chroniclers believed that the Flemings played the decisive role at Sluys, what then is the perception of defeat for the French in this battle? It seems

that the blame for this defeat, according to these authors, must be placed at the feet of the French admirals, Béhuchet, and Quiéret, who ineptly, and possibly corruptly, failed to follow the advice of those who were more experienced in this type of warfare.

Although almost all of the French writers contend that their soldiers who were at the battle of Sluys displayed courage and fought well, and despite the contention of Jean de Venette and of the anonymous author of the *Chronique des quatre premiers Valois* that the French leaders "went against the English with good heart and with good courage,"⁵¹ most writers look upon the French admirals as poor judges of naval tactics. Moreover, when they were offered sound advice by the more experienced naval captain, Barbaveria, advice which would later prove to be prophetic, they refused to follow it. The *Chronographia regum Francorum* relates the story:

Moreover, Barbaveria, who was in his galleys, perceiving the advent of the English, said to the admiral [Hugh Quiéret] and to Nicholas Béhuchet: "My lords, you now see the king of England with his fleet approaching us. If you believe me, the whole fleet ought to be moved onto the open sea; for if you remain here, the English who have the wind, the sun and the flow of the water with them in so much that they will confine you because you will be able to help your ships only minimally." However, Nicholas Béhuchet who knew better how to make a calculation than to fight naval battles, responded to him: "He is a coward who retreats from here and does not stand ready for the onset of battle."⁵²

This is added to by both the *Grandes chroniques* and the *Chronographia regum Francorum*, who claim that Béhuchet, being a treasurer and not a soldier, was taken by greed to fill his ships not with fighting men, but with poor fishermen and sailors.

These contentions lead many French authors writing about the battle of Sluys to conclude that the cause of defeat was the ineptitude of the French admirals. The anonymous author of the

Grandes chroniques writes:

And this defeat came about because of the pride of the two admirals as the one was unable to tolerate the other, and all because of envy. And so they did not wish to believe the counsel of Barbarveria...so the evil came upon them as so many witnessed.

To this same conclusion, almost as a postscript, the continuator of Guillaume de Nangis's *Chronicon* adds a passage from Lucan's *Pharsalia* (1.95) which the continuator interprets for us: "Wishing to say and to agree that whatever is said or supposed, no one wishes to have a companion in authority, but only to attribute all authority to himself."⁵³

JEAN FROISSART'S PERCEPTIONS

There is one final author whose perceptions of victory and defeat at the battle of Sluys should be analyzed. Jean Froissart deserves to be separated from the groups of commentators mentioned above because he clearly does not fit into any of the three categories noted above. It is true that he was born in the Low Countries and that his source for most of his early *Chroniques* is Jean le Bel. Still Froissart in his description of this battle does not fit the pattern of his mentor. Indeed, much of Froissart's narrative on the battle of Sluys is original and seems to be derived from sources which do not exist today. In addition to this, there are three main redactions of Froissart's *Chroniques*, and all three differ in many details of the battle and in their conclusions as to what caused victory and defeat there. The three different conclusions put forth in Froissart's versions fit neatly into the three perceptions which we have already discussed: those of the English chroniclers, the Low Countries' chroniclers and the French chroniclers.

First, it should be pointed out that Froissart does not like to describe the events of this battle. For him it has no violent equal, certainly not in comparison with the land battles which he has described. Indeed, in the middle of the narrative found in his second redaction (Luce's order),

Froissart stops and relates why naval battles are worse than land battles:

This battle which I describe for you was very foul and very horrible; battles and attacks on the sea are longer and larger than those on land, because one is unable to flee, or to retreat. So they agree to defend and to sell and to demonstrate their prowess.

This said, Froissart describes the battle in greater detail than any other author. He notes the numbers of French men and ships, describing the latter as "such a great number of vessels that their masts looked exactly like a forest,"⁵⁴ as well as the number of English soldiers who were present at Sluys. He declines to mention, however, the number of English ships there, saying in the second redaction of his *Chroniques* only that the French ships outnumbered the English in a four to one ratio. Despite the presence of a large force on both sides, neither the French nor the English fled from their positions. The French wished to defend Sluys "bien et hardiment,"⁵⁵ and the English relished the opportunity finally to meet the French in battle. Froissart records the oration given by Edward to his men before the battle:

I have long desired to fight the French, so let us fight them if it pleases God and St. George. Because truly the enemy has done so much against us that I wish to take vengeance against them if I can.

Edward then ordered his ships in lines, alternating a ship full of men-at-arms with two ships of archers. Also present in the English ranks, Froissart reports, was a ship filled with noblewomen set to join their queen at Ghent. They were protected by a guard of archers instructed by Edward to "guard their honor."⁵⁶ The English king then took advantage of the wind, and he turned to face the French with the sun behind him. Froissart's second redaction describes this maneuver:

When the king of England and his marshal had ordered well and wisely their lines of battle, they made to submit and

draw their sails against the wind. And they came to the right to take advantage of the sun which in coming there was in the face [of the French].

The French prepared to meet the English, believing themselves to be more experienced and superior fighters. They attacked first with the large captured English ship, the *Christoffle*. English and Norman/Genoese archers "very savagely and very harshly" traded "very strong and very vigorous" archery fire, but ultimately the English longbowmen proved to be superior to their cross-bow counterparts and the *Christoffle* returned to English hands. But this setback did not stifle the fighting spirit of the French who fought on for the entire day. In his final redaction, Froissart comments on the fighting capabilities of each side:

And this was a very large and very perilous battle because the Normans and the Genoese were all proven and accustomed to the sea, and they withstood fatigue well because in all their lives they had done nothing else except pursue armed adventures on the sea. Also it was said that the English were good men of the sea for they were made and nourished in it, and they too could withstand the fatigue.⁵⁷

As far as prowess and bravery shown by both armies, Froissart is blunt. "It is not difficult to come upon great feats of arms," the chronicler writes. Several English nobles are singled out for their prowess in battle,⁵⁸ but no one is as impressive to Froissart as Edward III, as the following passage from the third redaction shows:

The king of England was there in the flower of his youth, and he did not try to save himself, but he ventured into the battle as adventurously as any of his knights, and he demonstrated himself well in fighting with weapons if the need was shown.

The French admirals also earn his praise as Froissart writes: "It was good to see that Hugh Quiéret was a good and hardy knight, and that

Pierre (sic) Béhuchet also performed marvels of arms."⁵⁹ Eventually, however, both were captured and executed.

When Froissart arrives at his reasons about what caused victory for the English and defeat for the French at Sluys, each of the three redactions of his work come to different conclusions. The first redaction, for example, regards the superior tactics and valor of the English soldiers, specifically Edward III, as the determining factor in the battle. Edward's strategic use of the sun and wind against the French is highlighted, and added to this is a description of the effective fighting capabilities of English archers and men-at-arms:

And the archers and the arbalestriers commenced to draw their bows one against the other diversely and rapidly, and the men-at-arms approached and fought hand to hand harshly and hardily...But the English proved so good and so brave...that they obtained the place of battle and the French ships, and the Normans and all those who had fought against them were dead and defeated, slain and drowned. No one was able to escape and all were put to death.

Froissart repeats this perception at the end of the second redaction of his *Chroniques* indicating that the English valor and tactical superiority were still an important factor in the victory. It was, however, not the only factor in the defeat of the French. Froissart adds a further comment at the end of this account, absent from his first redaction, which makes clear that the arrival of Flemish reinforcements at the end of the battle ultimately marked the defeat of the French:

And the battle lasted from the first hour to the evening, and finally a great number of Flemings arrived because early in the morning the bailleux of Sluys had sent signals to Bruges and to the nearby villages. So all the villages came and arrived at Sluys on foot, on horse, or along the Roe river, coming to aid the English. And there assembled at Sluys a great number of Flemings, and they entered into boats and barges and large

Spanish vessels, and they came to the battle all fresh and invigorated, and they gave great comfort to the English.

The third redaction of the *Chroniques* presents an altogether different perception of what led to the French defeat at the hands of the English at Sluys. Removing almost entirely any mention of English tactical superiority and referring to the Flemish involvement — including a previously unmentioned tally of 8,000 Flemish participants — only as a subsidiary cause of the defeat, Froissart turns to an analysis of the poor French naval position as the cause of their defeat. Edward simply took advantage of this poor positioning, the French ships at rest and locked together, to gain victory:

Finally the English obtained the sea and the place of battle; and those who were present — Normans, Picards, Genoese, and those from Provençal — all were defeated, and very few were saved because they were unable to flee from the defeat. What was the cause of this? I will tell you. The English in coming there had enclosed the French between themselves and Sluys. They [the French] were unable to recoil, as did their enemy, nor to go forward, nor to break the English navy which had blocked all passage to the sea. They and any who wished to save themselves by coming to Sluys were killed at once because the Flemings, who had a great hatred for those who in each and every season had harassed and harried the passage to Sluys and had robbed and pillaged on the sea, took care to kill

without pity anyone whom they came upon on land or on the sea.

In analyzing the perceptions of victory and defeat at the battle of Sluys, we see that it is impossible to study only the versions of the victors and the defeated, for a third party's perceptions must also be studied: those of the allies aligned with the English. Although these writers do not deny the English victory, nor do they rejoice in the victory any less than their English allies, they do have their own perceptions of victory which emphasize the role of the Flemings in the battle. These perceptions are unlike the English ones which perceive victory to have come from Edward, his tactics or his archers, or the French which see defeat arising from the incompetent and divisive actions of the French leaders. In the battle of Sluys then we may conclude that the perceptions of victory and defeat take on a more geographically-oriented side than they have in any other fourteenth-century battle.

Notes

1. Joannes Tramond, *Manuel d'histoire maritime de la France* (Paris, 1916), 32.
2. See, for example, William Laird Clowes, *The Royal Navy*, 7 vols. (London, 1897), 1:254.
3. Claude Farrère, *Histoire de la marine Française* (Paris, 1934), 30.
4. Ferdinand Lot, *L'art militaire et les armées au moyen âge en Europe et dans le proche orient* (Paris, 1946), 1:337-38.
5. Desmond Seward, *The Hundred Years War: The English in France, 1337-1453* (New York, 1978), 43.
6. Jean Favier, *La guerre de cent ans* (Paris, 1980), 97: "La faiblesse de cette marine française, excellente à tous autres égards, c'est son commandement." See also Edouard Perroy, *The Hundred Years War* (London, 1962), 106; Clowes, *Royal Navy*, 1:257-58; and Roy Martin Haines, *Archbishop John Stratford: Political Revolutionary and Champion of the Liberties of the English Church ca. 1275/80-1348* (Toronto, 1986), 270-71.
7. Michael Packe, *King Edward III* (London, 1983), 93.
8. Robin Neillands, *The Hundred Years War* (London, 1990), 83.
9. David Hannay, *A Short History of the Royal Navy*, 2 vols. (London, 1898), 1:21.
10. William Ledyard Rodgers, *Naval Warfare Under Oars, 4th to 16th Centuries: A Study of Strategy, Tactics and Ship Design* (1940; rpt. Annapolis, 1967), 97.
11. Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War: Trial by Battle*. (Philadelphia, 1991), 325.
12. Charles de la Roncière, *Histoire de la marine Française* (Paris, 1899), 446: Pour notre malheur, l'opinion du comptable prévalut sur celle du marin. On resta sur place, les voiles carguées, au mépris du manuel militaire du temps, qui prescrivait de garder le large et de pousser l'ennemi à la côte.
13. G. A. J. P. Auphan, *La marine dans l'histoire de France* (Paris, 1955), 6: "...les amiraux d'alors n'étaient pas plus bêtes que ceux d'aujourd'hui. Quand on commande à deux cents vaisseaux et trente mille hommes dans des circonstances aussi décisives, on ne choisit pas sa tactique à la légère. L'ardeur avec laquelle les Français combattirent, jusqu'à la mort de vingt mille d'entre eux, montre que cette tactique fut comprise, approuvée et suivie. En réalité...les navires d'alors n'étaient pas capables de s'affronter au large.
14. C. D. Yonge, *The History of the British Navy*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London, 1866), 1:14.
15. Scott L. Waugh, *England in the Reign of Edward III*. (Cambridge, 1991), 128.
16. Timothy J. Runyan, "Ships and Mariners in Later Medieval England," *Journal of British Studies* 16 (1977), 8-9.
17. Packe, *Edward III*, 93.
18. Hans van Werveke, *Jacques van Artevelde* (Brussels, 1943), 61. See also Rodgers, *Naval Warfare*, 99-100 and Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War, c. 1300-c. 1450* (Cambridge, 1988), 13.
19. C. F. Richmond, "The 'War at Sea,'" *The Hundred Years War*, ed. K. Fowler (London, 1971), 97.
20. Neillands, *Hundred Years War*, 84.
21. Alfred H. Burne, *The Crecy War* (London, 1955), 55. See also Rodgers, *Naval Warfare*, 99-100; Sumption, *Hundred Years War*, 326; May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, Oxford History of England (Oxford, 1959), 129; Henry Stephen Lucas, *The Low Countries and the Hundred Years War, 1326-1347* (Ann Arbor, 1929), 399-400; Michael Prestwich, *The Three Edwards: War and State in England, 1272-1377* (London, 1980), 173; and William Longman, *The History of the Life and Times of Edward the Third*, 3 vols. (London, 1869), 1:172-73.
22. Tramond, *Manuel*, 33: "...nos navires succombèrent sous le nombre et la supériorité des archers ennemis." See also Auphan, *La Marine*, 6 and Eugene Deprez, *Les préliminaires de la guerre de cent ans: Le paupauté, la France et l'Angleterre (1328-1342)*, (1902; rpt. Geneva, 1975), 322.
23. Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, 7 vols. (Brussels, 1903), 2:115 and Roncière, 1:452. See also Sumption, 327. For opposing views see Lucas, *The Hundred Years War, 1326-1347* (Ann Arbor, 1929), 401 and Clowes, *Royal Navy* 1:252.
24. Heinricus von Diessenhoven, *Chronicon de Heinricus Truchsess von Diessenhoven*, in *Fontes rerum Germanicarum*, vol. 4, ed. J. F.

- Bohmer (Stuttgart, 1868), 34.
25. Giovanni Villani, *Istorie Fiorentine*, in *Scriptores rerum Italicarum*, xiii, ed. L. Muratori, c. 837.
 26. See Robert of Avesbury, *De gestis mirabilibus Edwardi III*, ed. E. M. Thompson, Rolls Series (London, 1889), 310-14; Geoffrey le Baker, *Chronicon*, ed. E. M. Thompson (Oxford, 1889), 142-45; and Adam Murimuth, *Continuatio chroniconum*, ed. E. M. Thompson, Rolls Series (London, 1889), 105-07.
 27. *Annales monasterii de Bermundeseia*, 1042-1432, in *Annales monastici*, iii, ed. H. R. Luard, Rolls Series (London, 1866), 474; *Chronicon Angliae Petriburgensis*, ed. J. A. Giles (London, 1845), 168; *Débat des herauts-d'armes de France et d'Angleterre*, ed. L. Pannier and P. Meyer (Paris, 1877), 83; *Gregory's Chronicle*, 1189-1469, in *Historical Collections of a Citizen in London in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J. Gardiner, Camden Society (London, 1876), 81; *Gesta Edwardi de Carnarvan auctore canonico Bridlingtoniensi*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ii, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series (London, 1883), 149; and John Hardyng, *Chronicle*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1812), 325. This could, however, indicate how very interested the English were in this battle if so many small monastic chronicles at least mentioned it.
 28. See Robert of Avesbury, *De Gestis*, 310-11 and *Historia Roffensis* (British Library, Cotton mss. Faustina B. v. fol. 84v). The *Historia Roffensis* was brought to my attention in a footnote in Haines, 270.
 29. Thomas of Burton, *Chronica monasterii de Melsa a fundatione usque ad annum 1396*, ed. E. A. Bonds, Rolls Series, 2 vols. (London, 1868), 2:45. Tantaque fuit ibidem effusio sanguinis quod tota illa aqua de Swynn, et usque in mare, per 3 dies sequentes magis apparuit sanguis quam aqua; tantique fuerunt ibidem Franci et Normanni interfecti et submersi quod de eis ridicule dicebatur, quod, si Deus piscibus maris loquelam dedisset, ex ipsorum mortuorum devoratione, ydioma Gallicum profecto in posterum habuissent.
 30. Robert of Avesbury, *De Gestis*, 312: "...et propter loci distantiam mendacium credebatur."
 31. Thomas of Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H. T. Riley, 2 vols. (London, 1863), 1:227: Unde...cum nullus auderet referre belli praesentis exitum Regi Franciae, familiae quemdam stultum ejusdem Regis subornaverunt, ut per ejus verba quoddammodo Rex intelligeret quod factum fuit. Nempe dictus fatuus, in Regis praesentia constitutus, coepit vehementer vituperare vecordiam Anglicorum, et hujusmodi materia multiplicare verba. Rex autem ignorans quid sibi vellent verba morionis, interrogat quare dicit Anglicos tam vecordes. Cui ille, "Quia," inquit, "timidi sunt, et in mare saltare non sunt ausi, ut fecerunt nostri Normanni et Gallici generosi;" per quod verbum illico Rex suos intellexit fore devictos, et Anglicos fore victores.
 32. Adam Murimuth, *Continuatis*, 106-07; Robert of Avesbury, *De Gestis*, 312; and Geoffrey le Baker, *Chronicon*, 143.
 33. Robert of Avesbury, *De Gestis*, 312.
 34. Adam Murimuth, *Continuatio*, 106 and Geoffrey le Baker, *Chronicon*, 142.
 35. Adam Murimuth, *Continuatio*, 106: "Ubi fuit magnum proelium navale commissum, propter fortitudinem et magnitudinem navium Hispaniae et Franciae ad proelium paratarum."
 36. Laurence Minot, *Poems*, ed. J. Hall (Oxford, 1887), 17.
 37. Geoffrey le Baker, *Chronicon*, 142: {Rex Angliae} dixit non esse ulterius expectandum, se et suis ad arma currentibus, et cito paratis, post horam nonam, quando habuit ventum et solem a tergo et impetum fluminis secum, divise in tres turmas, hostibus dedit optatum insultum. See also Minot, *Poems*, 15 and *The French Chronicle of London*, in *Croniques de London*, ed. G. J. Augier, Camden Series o. s. 28 (London, 1864), 76.
 38. Thomas Otterbourne, *Chronica regum Angliae*, ed. T. Hearne, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1732), 1:129.
 39. Edward's letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury is found in Froissart, *Chroniques*, in *Oeuvres de Froissart*, ed. Henri Marie Bruno Joseph, Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove [hereafter Kervyn de Lettenhove], 29 vols. (Brussels, 1874), 18:165-66: "...ardua negotia quae prosequimur, fuissent penitus in ruina, quinimmo nos et nostri fuisset verisimiliter periculo confusionis magnae subiecti."
 40. Robert of Avesbury, *De Gestis*, 312. Tunc Angli, perpendentes navigium Francigenarum fore cum catenis ferreis in una acie adeo colligatum quod non potuit penetrare, retro paululum navigarunt. Francigenae vero, per

- hoc decepti, suum navigium dissolverunt et Anglicos, ut credebant fugientes, insequi nitebantur. See also *French Chronicle*, 76.
41. Thomas Otterbourne, *Chronica Regum Angliae*, 1:129; Ranulph Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. J. R. Lumby, Rolls Series, 9 vols. (London, 1882), 8:336; *Vita Edwardi secundi*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. W. Stubbs (London, 1882), 293; and Thomas of Burton, *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, 2:44: "Ubi, Deo favente, Franci et Normanni acriter sagittati per Anglos sunt devicti."
 42. Thomas of Walsingham, *Ypodigma Neustria*, ed. H. T. Riley, Rolls Series (London, 1876), 279.
 43. Geoffrey le Baker, *Chronicon*, 142-43.
 44. *The Anonimale Chronicle, 1333 to 1381*, ed. V. H. Galbraith (Manchester, 1927), 16 and *Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. J. Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1839), 333-34.
 45. This letter may be found in Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 18:167: "Les Fflemengs estoient de bone volenté d'avoir venus à nous à la bataille du comencement tanque à la fin."
 46. William of Worcester, *The Boke of Noblesse*, ed. J. G. Nichols (London, 1860), 12.
 47. Minot, *Poems*, 17. See also *French Chronicle of London*, 77.
 48. Minot, *Poems*, 17.
 49. Found in Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 18:167.
 50. This letter may be found in Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 18:168.
 51. Ranulph Higden, *Polychronicon*, 8:332.
 52. See Thomas of Burton, *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, 2:44-45; Thomas of Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, 1:226-27; *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, 292-93; *Eulogium Historiarum sive temporis*, ed. F. S. Haydon, Rolls Series, 3 vols. (London, 1863), 1:205; *The Brut, or the Chronicles of England*, ed. F. W. D. Brie, Early English Text Society, 2 vols. (London, 1908), 2:295; and Thomas Gray, *Scalachronica*, ed. J. Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1836), 169.
 53. *Anonimale Chronicle*, 16: "Le roi Dengleterre ovesqe ccccxii neofes assailla la graunt maas des neofes de France et par la grace de Dieu les discomfitrent et ascunes priste-rout."
 54. Henry Knighton, *Chronicon*, ed. J. R. Lumby, Rolls Series (London, 1895), 18: "Commissoque navali bello et hinc inde egregie et fortiter pugnato, tandem Christus concessit victoriam Edwardo regi, sicque Franci prostrati sunt."
 55. Minot, *Poems*, 17.
 56. Robert of Avesbury, *De Gestis*, 312.
 57. Robert of Avesbury, *De Gestis*, 333-34: Qua habita victoria, rex Angliae et Franciae remansit super mare per triduum, et tunc in Flandriam applicuit, omnibus acclamantibus, "vivat rex Francorum et Angliae, benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini!" Cum tamen ante contra ipsum propter suam moram diuturnam in Anglia fuerant minime provocati, et regina apud Gandavum existens plurimus periculis exposita, cum suis Anglicis inibi qui fuerunt ad regem vero Angliae et Franciae in Flandria existente, omnes regio morbo vexati accedentes ipsius tactu continuo sunt sanati.
 58. This manifesto is printed in Walter of Hemingburgh, *Chronicon*, English Historical Society, 2 vols. (London, 1848), 2:336-340.
 59. The letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury can be found in *Foedera, conventiones, etc.*, ed. T. Rymer, 20 vols. (London, 1739), 2:79; Robert of Avesbury, *De Gestis*, 312-14; and Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 18:165-66. It is dated 28 June 1340. The letter to the people of London, dated also 28 June 1340, is found only in Jean Froissart, 18:165-67. And the letter of Edward to Parliament, written two days later, can be found in *Foedera*, 79-80 and Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 18:167-70.
 60. See Robert of Avesbury, *De Gestis*, 312.
 61. See Robert of Avesbury, *De Gestis*, 313: Sed Deus misericordiarum, videns nos in tantis periculis constitutos, gratus et citius quam humana ratio judicare poterat, misit nobis magnum navale subsidium et insperatum numerum armatorum ac semper ventum prosperum juxta votum; et sic, sub spe coelestis auxilii et justitiae nostrae fiducia, dictum portum navigio venientes, invenimus dictam classem et hostes nostros ibidem paratissimos ad praelium in multitudine copiosa, quibus, in festo Nativitatis Sancti-Johannis Baptistae proximo praeterito, ipse, spes nostra, Christus Deus, per conflictum fortem et validum, nos praevalere concessit, facta strage non modica dictorum hostium, capta etiam quodam modo tota classe, cum laesione gentis nostrae modica respective. See also Edward's letter to the people of London and to the Parliament found in *Froissart* (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 18:166-68.

62. Found in Robert of Avesbury, *De Gestis*, 313-14.
63. *Gesta Henrici quinti regis Anglie*, ed. and trans. F. Taylor and J. S. Roskell (Oxford, 1975), 122-24.
64. Geoffrey le Baker, *Chronicon*, 142.
65. Jan de Klerk, *Brabantse yeesten of rijmkroniek van Braband*, ed. J. F. Willems and J. H. Bormans, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1839), 1:564:
- Der Franchoise bleven daer dan
Dertich dusent (dat was groot):
Die zee was van bloede root;
In menich scip men woet
Toten enkele in dat bloet.
- See also Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, ed. J. G. Heymans (Nijmegen, 1983), 122.
66. Jan de Klerk, *Van dan derden Eduwaert*, 124:
- Doe so worden gescouffiert
Die Franse ende so begrepen,
Dat sij sprongen uten scepen
Ende verdroncken mit hoepen groet.
67. Jean le Bel, *Chroniques de Jean le Bel*, ed. J. Viard and E. Duprez, Société de l'histoire de France, 2 vols. (Paris, 1904), 1:156: "Que ce sont plus nobles et les plus frisches combastans qu'on sache."
68. *Chronique de Flandre*, in *Istorie et croniques de Flandres*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1879), 2:383.
69. Jan de Klerk, *Van dan derden Eduwaert*, 93-142.
70. *Chronicon comitum Flandriae*, in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, i, ed. J. J. de Smet (Brussels, 1837), 213: "Post hanc victoriam gloriosus rex Anglorum, gloriosior per victoriam jam effectus..."
71. Adrien de Budt, *Chronicon Flandriae*, in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, i, ed. J. J. de Smet (Brussels, 1837), 327: "...cessit tamen sibi victoria."
72. Jean le Bel, *Chroniques*, 1:179: "Maiz le roy Edowart se maintint sy vassaument, et faisoit de si grands proesses de son propre corps que il resbaudissoit et donnoit cuer à tous les autres."
73. *Breve chronicon Flandriae*, in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, iii, ed. J. J. de Smet (Brussels, 1856), 8: "atque Flandriam liberavit."
74. *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen*, in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, iv, ed. J. J. de Smet (Brussels, 1865), 831.
75. Jan de Klerk, *Van dan derden Eduwaert*, 122:
- Quamen Eduwaert ende siin liede
Getogen over de zee
Mit ij. c. scepen of mee
Alse die ghene die woude volstaen
Int gelof dat hij hadde gedaen.
Ende ten iersten dat hij vernam
Dat hij bij tlant van Vlaenderen quam,
Dede hi hem sonder letten
Opt lant van vlaederen setten.
Geloeft sij God, dat hij sprac.
Doen ic uut desen lande trac,
Geloefdic mitter trouwen mijn
Dat ic hier weder soude siin
Eer Sint Jans dach sonder waen
Ende dat so hebbic gedaen,
Want ic hier sta opt sant.
- See also Edmond de Dyncer, *Chronicon ducum Brabantiae*, ed. P. F. X. de Ram, 3 vols. (Brussels), 2:631-32.
76. *Chronicon comitum Flandriae*, 210.
77. See, for example, Jan de Klerk, *Van dan derden Eduwaert*, 122: "Een deel Vlaminge te waeren,/die uten lande gebannen waeren."
78. See Jan de Klerk, *Brabantse yeesten*, 1:564-65; Jan de Klerk, *Van dan derden Eduwaert*, 122; *Breve chronicon Flandriae*, 8; and *Récit d'un bourgeois de Valenciennes*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels, 1877), 181.
79. *Chronique de Flandre*, 2:383-84.
80. Jan de Klerk, *Van dan derden Eduwaert*, 120. See also *Chronicon comitum Flandriae*, 212.
81. Jan de Klerk, *Van dan derden Eduwaert*, 123.
82. *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen*, 831.
83. *Chronicon comitum Flandriae*, 210: "...qui interim regit indebite et injuste..."
84. Adrien de Budt, *Chronicon Flandriae*, 326: Rex Francorum, intelligens Flandrensens Anglicis adhaerere velle, misit solemnes suos nuntios, offerens omnia quitare debita, ratione restarum et resignare villas de Duaco et Insula cum castellaniis; sed monitis regis acquiescere propter lanificium nolebant.
85. Jean le Bel, *Chroniques*, 1:179.
86. Jan de Klerk, *Van dan derden Eduwaert*, 123:
- Maer God sender sine genade,
Om wech te doene die quade,
Want hij haer quader daden

Niet langhre en woude gestaden.

See also Edmond de Dynter, *Chronicon ducum Brabantiae*, 2:631-32.

87. *Chronicon comitum Flandriae*, 212: Et finaliter in portu de Slusa applicuerunt dictae naves et galeae universae anno sequenti, videlicet MCCCXL, de quo propheta erat dudum Hildegardis prophetissa, quod caedes et incendia multa fierent ipso anno.
88. *Chronique des Pays-Bas, de France, d'Angleterre et de Tournai*, in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, iii, ed. J. J. de Smet (Brussels, 1856), 151: Mout y pierdirent li Englais, au commencement; mais il furent secourus des Flamens, et furent li Francois desconfis.
89. Jan de Klerk, *Van dan derden Eduwaert*, 124.
90. *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, in *Chronicon*, ed. H. Geraud, 2 vols. (Paris, 1843), 2:168; Richard Lescot, *Chronique*, ed. J. Lemoine, Société de l'histoire de France (Paris, 1896), 51-52; and *Les grandes chroniques de France*, ed. J. Viard, Société d'histoire de France, 10 vols. (Paris, 1937), 9:181.
91. *Grandes chroniques*, 9:180: "...pour ce qu'il avoit oy novvelles que le roy d'Angleterre devoit arriver à Escluse..."
92. *Grandes chroniques*, 9:182.
93. *Grandes chroniques*, 9:182 and *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ed. H. Moranville, 2 vols. (Paris, 1897), 2:120.
94. Jean de Venette, *Chronique*, ed. and trans. R. A. Maxwell (New York, 1953), 33. (For the Latin edition of this work see *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, 2:183).
95. *Chronographia regum Francorum*, 2:122.
96. *Chronique Normande de xiv siècle*, ed. A. and E. Molinier (Paris, 1882), 45: "Fut celle bataille grande et merveilleuse, et moult perdirent Anglois au premier, mais ilz furent rescoux par les Flamens et furent Francois desconfiz."
97. Richard Lescot, *Chronique*, 52: "Nostris bellatores, bene primitus se habentes, sed postea repulsi pre multitudine supervenientium Flamingorum."
98. *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, 21:166: Hoc anno calamitatis et miseriae, ignominiae et confusionis, inter duos reges Francorum et Angliae nihil laudabile patratum est, quia quidquid in eo factum est non de Spiritu sancto, sed ab angelo Satanae credendum est processisse.

Nam cum duobus seu tribus annis praecedentibus multa gravamina pauperibus ecclesiis fuerint illata, necnon et exactiones gravissimae communi populo, hoc eodem anno maximae confusiones convulnerunt, no tamen ad utilitatem rei publicae praedictorum regnorum in aliquo; sed, proh dolor! ad dedecus et confusionem totius christianitatis, ac sanctae et universalis matris Ecclesiae, cujus praefati principes principaliter et maxime deberent esse sustentamentum et fulcimen, hoc notum est accidisse. See also Jean de Venette, *Chronique*, 32 and the *Grandes chroniques*, 9:175.

99. Jean de Venette, *Chronique*, 32-33.
100. Jean de Hocsem, *La chronique de Jean de Hocsem*, ed. G. Kurth (Brussels, 1927), 294: "...dicente Terentio: Omnia prius quam bellum temptare sapientem decet."
101. Cuvelier, *Chronique de Bertrand Guesclin par Cuvelier, trouvere du XIVe siècle*, ed. E. Charrière, 2 vols. (Paris, 1839), 1:24.
102. See *Chronographia regum Francorum*, 2:89-93 and Jean de Venette, *Chronique*, 32-33.
103. Richard Lescot, *Chronique*, 50-51: "...rex Anglie, ut pecunias extorqueret pro auxilio Flamingorum qui sibi homagium facere cogitabant in Angliam transire tasset." This may be a double insult. Certainly Lescot thinks an evil has been committed by the English king in turning the Flemings away from their homage vows. But, it is possible that he also means to indict Edward for "extorting" money from his subjects, giving the word a decidedly illegal sense. In medieval legal French, however, the verb *extorquere* does not always carry such an illegal connotation. (See J. H. Baker, *Manual of Law French* (Avesbury, 1979), 107.)
104. Jean de Hocsem, *Chronique*, 295: "Rex Anglie tamen multos de suis perdidit, et in rebus maxima dampna sustinuisse narratur."
105. *Chronique des quatre premiers Valois*, ed. S. Luce, Société de l'histoire de France (Paris, 1862), 10-11: "Et comme vint à l'assembler, les Genevois s'en fuirent. Monseigneur Pierre d'Estelant, Hue Kerest et Beuchet alerent de bon cuer et de bon courage contre les Anglois." See also Jean de Venette, *Chronique*, 33.
106. *Chronographia regum Francorum*, 2:121-22: Prenominatus autem Barbavaria qui erat in galeis suis, percipiens Anglicos venientes, dixit prefatis admiraldo et Nicholao Bahucheti: "Domini mei, jam videtis regem

Anglie cum suo navigio venire super nos. Si michi credatis, omne navigium divertatur in mare altum; si enim hic remaneatis, Anglici qui ventum, solem et aque fluxum habent pro se, in tantum vos coartabunt quod minime vos poteritis juvare." Nicholaus autem Bahuceti, qui melius sciebat unum compotum quam guerras marinas facere, respondit ei: "Hesibundus enim sit qui recedet ab hinc et non prestolabit eventum belli."

107. *Chronographia regum Francorum*, 2:120-21. See also *Grandes chroniques*, 9:182.
108. *Grandes chroniques*, 9:184: Et avint ceste desconfiture par l'orgueil des II admirax, car l'un ne pooit souffrir de l'autre, et tout par envie; et si ne vouldrent croire le conseil de Barbevaire... si leur en vint mal, si comme plusieurs le tesmoignent.
109. *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, 2:169-70:

Nulla fides regni sociis, omnisque potestas Impatiens consortis erit, nec gentibus ullis Credite, nec longe fatorum exempla petantur Fraternali primi maduerunt sanguine muri.

Volens dicere et annuere quod quidquid dicatur seu fingatur, nullus vult habere socium in auctoritate, sed totam sibi attribueret auctoritatem.

110. The edition of Froissart's *Chroniques* by Kervyn de Lettenhove presents a side by side edition of the three Froissart redactions which differ in many respects.
111. Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 3:196: Ceste bataille dont je vous parolle, fu moult felenesse et moult orible; car batailles et assaux sur mer sont plus durs et plus fort que sus terre, car on ne puet fuir, ne reculer: si se convient deffendre et vendre et montrer se proëce.
112. Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 3:194: "Li roys d'Engleterre et li sien qui s'en venoient tout singlant, regardèrent et veirent deviers l'Escluse si grant quantitet de vaisiaux que des mas che sambloit droitement ung bois." See also 3:199, 203-04.
113. Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 3:202.
114. Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 3:194.
115. Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 3:200: Dont respondi li rois engles: "J'ai de lonch temps désiré que les peuisse combatre; si les combaterons, s'il plaist à Dieu et à saint Jorge; car voirement m'ont-il fait tant contraires que j'en voeil prendre le vengeance, se j'i puis avenir." Edward's speech in the first

redaction of Froissart's work is entirely different (3:194): Lors dist li roys: "Il les nous fault combattre, et se nous les poons desconfire, nostre guerre en avant en sera plus belle; car voirement sont-il moult re-songniet de nos amis et ont eue depuis qu'il se missent sur mer, et nous ont fet plusieurs contraires. Si les combaterons s'il plect à Dieu et à saint Jorge."

116. Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 3:194, 200, 204.
117. Ibid., 3:195: Et ces dames fist li roys bien et songneusement de CCC armures de fer et de Ve archers. Et puis pria li roys à tous que il volsissent penser dou bien faire et garder sen onneur, et chascun li eult en convent. See also 3:200.
118. Ibid., 3:195.
119. Ibid., 3:195: Quant li roys d'Engleterre et li marescal eurent ordonnet bellement et sage-ment leurs batailles, il fisent tendre et traire les voilles contremont, et vinrent sus destre pour avoir l'avantaige du soleil qui en venant leur estoit ou visiage.
120. Ibid., 3:195-96.
121. Ibid., 3:196, 201, 204-05.
122. Ibid., 3:205: Et là fu la bataille très-grande et très-périlleuse; car chil Normant et chil Gènevois, estoient tout esqueur et costumés de la mer, et trop bien en prenoient la painne, car en tout lor vivant il n'avoient fait aultre cose que poursiervir les aventures d'armes sus la mer. Aussi, au voir dire, Englois sont bons gens de mer, car il en sont fait et nourri, et trop bien en prennent la painne.
123. Ibid., 3:205: "Considérés se la en ce terme et espase, il n'i peurent pas avenir des grans fais d'armes."
124. Ibid., 3:202 lists the names of these gallant English soldiers. See also 3:197.
125. Ibid., 3:205: Pour lors li rois d'Engleterre estoit en la flour de sa jonèce et point ne s'espargnoit, mais s'aventuroit en la bataille aussi aventureusement comme nuls de ses chevaliers, et monstroient bien en faisaient armes que la besongne estoit sienne.
126. Ibid., 3:196: "Bien est voirs que messires Hues Kières estoit bons chevaliers et hardis, et messires Pierres Bahucès, et y fisent merveilles d'armes."
127. Ibid., 3:197. In the second version of this battle, Froissart reports that both admirals were executed. Quiéret was beheaded and Béhuçet was hanged from a mast. (See III:206.)

128. Ibid., 3:201-02: Là se commença bataille dure et forte de tous costés, et arcier et arbalestrier commencièrent à traire l'un contre l'autre diversement et roidement, et gens d'armes à approcier et à combattre main à main asprement et hardiment...Mais il s'esprouvèrent si bien et si vassaument... qu'il obtinèrent le place et l'yaue, et furent li Normant et tout cil qui là estoient encontre yaus, mort et desconfi, péri et noyet, ne onques piés n'en escapa que tout ne fuissent mis à bort. See Ibid., 3:197.
129. Ibid., 3:196-97: Et dura le bataille del heure de prisme jusques a revelée, et adont vinrent grant gent de Flandrès, car très le matin li bailleux de l'Escluse l'avoit fet segnefyer à Bruges et ès villes voisinnes. Si estoient les villes toutes esmutes et acouru à piet et à cheval et par le Roe, cheminans qui mieux pour aidier les Englés, et s'asamblèrent à l'Escluse grant quantité de Flammens et entèrent en nefes et en barges et en grans

vaissiaux espagnols, et s'en vinrent jusques à le bataille tout fresk et tout nouvel, et grandement reconfortèrent les Engles.

130. Ibid., 3:206: Finablement li Englois obtinrent la mer et la place, et furent chil esqumeur, Normant, Piquart, Gènevois, bidau et Provençiel desconfi, et trop petit s'en sauvèrent, car à la desconfiture, il ne porent. Cause pourquoi, je le vous dirai. Les Englois en venant les avoient enclos entre eus et l'Escluse. Se ne pooient requeler, fors sus lors ennemis, ne aler avant, ne rompre la navie d'Engleterre qui qvoit poupris tout la passage de la mer. Chil et aucun qui se quidièrent sauver par venir à l'Escluse, furent mort davantage; car li Flamenc qui avoient grant haine à euls pour tant que toute la saison il avoient cuvryet et héryet le passage à l'Escluse et robé et pilliet sus la mer et n'avoient en cure à qui, les tuoient otant bien sus la terre que en la mer et n'en avoient nulle pité.