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,"¹ and Jean Favier writes that "the weakness of the French navy, excellent in all other regards, was its command,"² 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," with Robin Neillands adding that this tight formation "therefore sacrificed their advantages of superior seamanship and manoeuvre." 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," 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." Jonathan Sumption alters this thesis slightly to include the drifting of ships, chained together, into the shore, thus "reducing the seacoast 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 shipbuilding 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." 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." 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.”

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 emissary to the Flemish towns to arouse support. The Flemings had responded by gathering in large numbers at Sluys. There they filled whatever seaworthy 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.”

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, while several, including the anonymous authors of the Annales de Bermundeseia, the Chronicon Angliae Petriburgensis, the Debât des herauts — d’armes de France et d’Angleterre, and Gregory’s Chronicle, as well as the Gesta
Edward 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.)

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.” 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 battle with Robert of Avesbury also noting that the French ships were chained together, 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.” 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." 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." 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, 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 Anonimalle 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, 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.

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 renown," but only Laurence Minot records Edward's presence as crucial to the final outcome:

Sir Edward, oure gude king wurthi in wall
Fagt wele on bat flude, faire mot him fall;
Als it es custom of king to comfort ham all
So thanked he gudely pe grete and pe small,
He thanked ham gudely, God gif him mede,
Bus come oure king in be Swin till bat 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 Klington, 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 Anonimalle 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.” 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.” Moreover, the poet Laurence Minot after pleading several times for prayers on behalf of Edward in his undertaking against the French writes happily:

\[\text{Pis was he bataile pat fell in he Swin,} \\
\text{Where many Normandes made mekill din;} \\
\text{Wele war pai armed up to pe chin;} \\
\text{Bot God and sir Edward gert paire boste blin,} \\
\text{Pus blinned paire boste, als we wele ken;} \\
\text{God assoyle paire sawls, sais all, Amen.}\]

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, 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:

\[\text{After this victory the king of England and France remained at sea for three days,} \\
\text{and then landed in Flanders, all men shouting: “Long live the king of the}\]

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 Flanders 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 ordered 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 promised. And thus, under the hope of celestial aid and the faithfulness of our justice, with our fleet coming to Sluys, we discovered the French fleet and our enemy having prepared for battle in a copious 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 yesten 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.”

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 yesten, 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.”

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 panegyric 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.”

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.” 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.”

All this praise for Edward is justified, claims the Breve chronicon Flandriae, simply because “he freed Flanders.”
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 Rijkmorie 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.”

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, and the Rijkmorie van Vlaenderen describes their leaders as evil men “without feelings.” Philip ruled “unduly and without justice,” avers the Chronicon comitum Flandriae, but it is Adrien de Bvdt 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 Donau and Lille with their castellanes.” 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,” 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.” In addition to this, the Chronicon comitum Flandriae reports that Sluys merely fulfilled part of the prophecies of the prophetess Hildegarde who prophesied that in the year 1340 “there would be much slaughter and destruction.”

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." Attached to this perception is an interesting anecdote mentioned by Jan de Klerk in his Van den derden Eduvaert. 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."  

**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 Continatio 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."  

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," 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." Richard Lescot adds: "Our soldiers, holding themselves well at first, were afterwards repulsed by means of a multitude of oncoming Flemings."  

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 Continatio 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.” 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.”

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 “moit de malo.” 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, 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.” 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.”

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,” 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, Barbavera, advice which would later prove to be prophetic, they refused to follow it. The Chronographia regum Francorum relates the story:

Moreover, Barbavera, 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.”

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 (I.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.”

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 group 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,” 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,” 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 venge on 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.” 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 Christofle. 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 crossbow counterparts and the Christofle 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. 

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, 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 adventuresly 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.” 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 arbalesiéres 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 hardly...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 bailleurs 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.
8. Robin Neillands, The Hundred Years War (London, 1990), 83.
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.
17. Packe, Edward III, 93.
20. Neillands, Hundred Years War, 84.
Bohmer (Stuttgart, 1868), 34.


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.


hoc decepti, sumum navigium dissolverunt et Anglicos, ut credebat fugientes, insequi nitebantur. See also French Chronicle, 76.


43. Geoffrey le Baker, Chronicon, 142-43.

44. The Anonimalle 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 Flemenqs estoient de bone volenté d’avoir venus à nous à la bataille du commencement tanque à la fin."


47. Minot, Poems, 17. See also French Chronicle of London, 77.


50. This letter may be found in Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 18:168.

51. Ranulph Higden, Polychronicon, 8:332.


53. Anonimalle Chronicle, 16: "Le roi Dengle-terre ovesse ccexii neofes assailla la grant maas des neofes de Franece et par la grace de Dieu les discomfitrent et ascunes pristernoun."


57. Robert of Avesbury, De Gestis, 333-34: Qua habita victoria, rex Angliae et Franciae remansit super mare per triduum, et tunc in Flandria applicuit, omnibus acclamantibus, "vivat rex Francorum et Angliae, benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini." Cum tamen ante contra ipsum propre suam moram diutinam in Anglia fuerant minuere provocati, et regina apud Gandavum existens plurimum periculis exposta, cum suis Anglica inibi qui fuerunt ad regem vero Angliae et Franciae in Flandria existente, omnes regio morbo vexati accedentes ipsius tacuunt continuo sunt sanati.


See Robert of Avesbury, De Gestis, 313: Sed Deus misericordiarum, videns nos in tantis periculos constitutos, gratius et clement quam humana ratio judicaret poterat, misit nobis magnum navale subsidium et inspiratuum numerum armatorum ac semper ventum prosperum juxta votum; et sic, sub spec coelestis auxilii et justitiae nostrae fiducia, dictum portum navigio venientes, invenimus dictam dassum et hostes nostros ibidem paratissemus ad praemiolum in multitudine copiosa, quibus, in festo Nativitatis Sancti Johannis Baptistae proximo praeferiti, ipse, spe nostra, Christus Deus, per conflictium fortium et validum, nos praevalegere concessisset, facta strage non modica dictorum hostium, capta etiam quodam modo tota classe, cum laesionem 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.


64. Geoffrey le Baker, *Chronicon*, 142.


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.


66. Jan de Klerk, *Van van derden Eduwaert*, 124:

Doe so worden gescouffert
Die Fransoise ende so begrepen,
Dat si sprongen ute hoopen
Ende verdroncken ute hoopen groot.


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..."


72. Jean le Bel, *Chroniques*, 1:179: "Maiz le roy Edowart se maintint sy vassaument, et faisoit de si grands processe de son propre corps que il resbaudissoit et donnoit cuer a tous les autres."

73. *Breve chronicon Flandriae, in Corpus chronicorum Flandriae, iii*, ed. J. J. de Smet (Brussels, 1856), 8: "atque Flandriam liberavit."


75. Jan de Klerk, *Van van derden Eduwaert*, 122:

Quamen Eduwaert ende siin liedie
Getogen over de zee
Mit ij. c. sciepen of mee
Alse die ghene die woude volstaen
Int gelof dat hij hadde gedaen.
Ende ten iersten dat hij vernam
Dat hij bij tlan t van Vlaerden quam,
Dede hi hem sonder letten
Opt lant van vlaerden setten.
Gelooft sy God, dat hij sprac.
Doen iu ute 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 Duyter, *Chronicon ducum Brabantiae*, ed. P. F. X. de Ram, 3 vols. (Brussels), 2631-32.


77. See, for example, Jan de Klerk, *Van van derden Eduwaert*, 122: "Een deel Vlaminge te waeren./die ute lande gebannen waeren."

78. See Jan de Klerk, *Brabantse yeesten, 1:564-65; Jan de Klerk, Van van derden Eduwaert, 122: Breve chronicon Flandriae, 8; and Récit d’un bourgeois de Valenciennes, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels, 1877), 181.


80. Jan de Klerk, *Van van derden Eduwaert*, 120. See also *Chronicon comitum Flandriae, 212.


82. *Rijmroniek van Vlaanderen, 831.

83. *Chronicon comitum Flandriae, 210: "...qui interim regit indebita et injuste..."

84. Adrien de Budt, *Chronicon Flandriae, 326; Rex Francorum, intelligens Flandrenses Anglicis adhaerere velle, misit solemnes suos nuntios, offerens omnia quittance debita, ratione restarum et resignare villas de Duaco et Insula cum castellanis; sed monitis regis acquiescere propter Ianificium nolebant.


86. Jan de Klerk, *Van van derden Eduwaert*, 123:

Maer God sender sine genade,
Om wech te done 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 MCCXXL, de quo propheta erat dudum Hildegardis prophetissa, quod caedes et incendia multa fierent ipsa anno*.


91. *Grandes chroniques*, 9:180: *...pour ce qu'il avoit oy noyvelles que le roy d'Angleterre devoir arriver a Escluse...*.


95. *Chronographia regum Francorum*, 2:122.


98. *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, 21:166: *Hoc anno calamitatis et miseriae, ignominae et confusionis, inter duos reges Francorum et Angliæ 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 actiones gravissimae communi populo, hoc eodem anno maxime confessiones convaluerunt, non tamen ad utilitatem rei publicae praedictorum regnorum in aliquo; sed, proh dolor! ad dedecus et confessionem totius christianitatis, ac sanctae et universalis matris Ecclesiae, cujus praefati principes principaliter et maxime deberent esse substantamentum et fulcimen, hoc notum est accidisse. See also Jean de Venette, *Chronique*, 32 and the *Grandes chroniques*, 9:175.


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 Flamingerorum qui sibi homagium faceret cognitant 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 *extorquer* does not always carry such an illegal connotation. (See J. H. Baker, *Manuel of Law French* (Avesbury, 1979), 107.)


Anglie cum suo navigio venire super nos. Si michi credatis, omne navigium divertatur in mare alatum; si enim hic remaneatis, Anglici qui ventum, solem et aque fluxum habent pro se, in tantum vos coartabunt quod minime vos poteritis juvare.” Nicholas autem Bahu-ceti, qui melius sciebat unum comitum quam guerras marinas facere, respondit ei: “Hesibundus enim sit qui recedat ab hinc et non prestolabit eventum belli.” 


108. *Grandes chroniques*, 9:184: Et avint ceste desconstifure par l’orgueil des îl admiraux, car l’un ne pooit soufrier 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 consorts erit, nec gentibus ullos Credite, nec longe fatorum exempla petantur Fraterno primi maduerunt sanguine muri.

Volens dicere et annuere quod quidquid dicatur seu fingatur, nullus vult habere solutum in auctoritate, sed totam sibi attribuere 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 mout felenesse et mout 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 proue.

112. Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 3:194: “Li roys d’Engleterre et li sien qui s’en venoit tout singiant, regarderent et veirent deviers l’Escluse si grant quantite de vaisseaux que des mas que samboit droite ment ung bois.” See also 3:199, 203-04.


115. Froissart (Kervyn de Lettenhove ed.), 3:200: Dont respondi li rois engles: “T’ai de lonch temps desire que les puissie combater; si les combaterons, s’il plait a Dieu a saint Jorge; car voirement m’ont-il fait tant contre reres que j’en veoi prendre la vengance, 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 desconscrire, nostre guerre en avant en sera plus belle; car voirement sont-il mout re sonnit de nos amis et ont este depuis qu’il se missent sur mer, et nous ont fet plusieurs contraires. Si les combaterons s’il plesst à Dieu et a saint Jorge.”


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 a tous que il volisissent penser dou bien faire et garder son omeur, et chacun li eult en conven. See also 3:200.

118. Ibid., 3:195.


120. Ibid., 3:195-96.

121. Ibid., 3:196, 201, 204-05.

122. Ibid., 3:205: Et là fu la bataille tres-grande et tres-périlleuse; car chil Normant et chil Génevois, estoient tout esquemc et costumés de la mer, et trop bien en prenoient la paime, car en tout lor vivant il n’avoient fait autrue cose que pour siervir les aventures d’armes sus la mer. Aussi, au voir dire, Engloit ont bons gens de mer, car il en sont fait et nourri, et trop bien en prennent la paime.

123. Ibid., 3:205: “Considérés se la en ce terme et espase, il n’i peurent pas avenir des grant 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 roys d’Engleterre estoit en la flour de sa jonée et point ne s’esparnoit, mais s’aventuroit en la bataille aussi aventureusement comme nuls de ses chevaliers, et monstrait bien en faisoient armes que la besogne estoit sienne.

126. Ibid., 3:196: “Bien est voirs que messieres Fues Kiéres estoit bons chevaliers et hardis, et messires Pierrez Bahuces, et y fisent merveilles d’armes.”

127. Ibid., 3:197. In the second version of this battle, Froissart reports that both admirals were executed. Quiéré was beheaded and Béhuchet 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 arbaléstrier commencèrent 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 vasaument... qu'il obtinrent 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 Flandres, car très le matin li bailieux de l'Escluse l'avoi fet segnefyer à Bruges et ès villes voisines. Si estoient les villes touttes esmutes et accoru à piet et à cheval et par le Roe, cheminans qui mieux pour aider les Engléis, et s'asamblerent à l'Escluse grant quantité de Flammens et entérent en nefs et en barges et en grans vaissiaux espanyols, et s'en vinrent jusques à le bataille tout fresk et tout nouvel, et grandement reconfortèrent les Engles.

130. Ibid., 3:206: Finalement li Englois obtinrent la mer et la place, et furent chil esquemuer, Normant, Piquart, Génevois, bidau et Provenciel desconfi, et trop petit s'en sauvèrent, car à la desconfiture, il ne poren. Cause pourquoi, je le vous dirai. Les Englois en venant les avoient enclos entre eus et l'Escluse. Se ne pooient requier, fors sus lors ennemis, ne aler avant, ne rompre la navie d'Engleterre qui vuoit poupris tout la passage de la mer. Chil et auquin qui se qudièrent sauver par venir à l'Escluse, furent mort da-vantage; car li Flamenc qui avoient grant haine à euls pour tant que toute la saison il avoient cuvryet et heryet 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.