

Contemporary Views of Edward III's Failure at the Siege of Tournai, 1340

The naval battle of Sluys, the first major conflict of the Hundred Years War, was fought on 24 June 1340. By the end of the day-long engagement which was described by many chroniclers using the adjectives 'grand and marvellous', 'most atrocious', 'terrible', 'great', and 'most harsh', the French had been soundly defeated. They had lost nearly all of their ships and, according to contemporary sources, between 20,000 and 40,000 men including both admirals. English losses were substantially less, recorded as being between 1,400 and 10,000.¹

News of the English victory at Sluys spread quickly. Edward III and his men celebrated aboard their victorious ships, as Jean Froissart reports, 'making much noise and great joy from the instruments which they had brought'.² The news of victory was equally celebrated in the Low Countries and in England. The English had won the first major engagement of the war against France, a kingdom which they hoped would quickly be conquered and the rightful king, Edward, restored to the throne.³ The Low Countries had moved a large footstep forward in their continued late medieval march to independence from France.

For Philip VI and the people of France, there was no such rejoicing. The French fleet had been decimated and many thousand French soldiers had been killed. Moreover, Edward had been allowed to land in the Low Countries and now had the ability to enlarge his force with the soldiers of the rebellious northern French duchies and counties. When Philip heard the news, the *Chronique Normande* reports, 'he and his men were very saddened by the victory of their enemy'.⁴

But, despite their respective joy or sadness, neither leader allowed himself to fall into inactivity. Edward, after briefly visiting his wife and new son in Ghent, quickly arranged to meet with the allied leaders of the Low Countries—William, count of Hainault and Holland, Jan III, duke of Brabant, and Jacob van Artevelde, the usurper leader of the county of Flanders—at Vilvoorde, outside Ghent, to plan how best to profit from his victory over the French.⁵ The Low Countries' allies, who had perhaps the most to lose in a counter-offensive from France, were still

¹ See Kelly DeVries, 'God, Leadership, Flemings, and Archery: Contemporary Perceptions of Victory and Defeat at the Battle of Sluys, 1340', *American Neptune* 55 (1995), 223-45.

² Jean Froissart, *Chroniques*, in *Oeuvres de Froissart*, ed. Henri Marie Bruno Joseph, Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove [hereafter Kervyn de Lettenhove] (Brussels, 1867), iii, 211. See also Jean le Bel, *Chroniques de Jean le Bel*, ed. J. Viard and E. Déprez (Paris, 1905), ii, 180; and *Récits d'un bourgeois de Valenciennes*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels, 1877), p. 182.

³ This seems to have been Edward's voiced intention in attacking France. Indeed, he wrote such in a letter to the citizens of Tournai. See note 113 below.

⁴ *Chronique Normande du XIV^e siècle*, ed. Auguste and Emile Molinier (Paris, 1882), p. 45. See also *Chronique des Pays-Bas, de France, d'Angleterre et de Tournai*, in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, iii, ed. J.J. de Smet (Brussels, 1856), p. 152; *Récits d'un bourgeois de Valenciennes*, p. 181; and Jean le Bel, ii, 180.

⁵ Almost all the original sources mention this allied war conference. For a good secondary source, see Henry Stephen Lucas, *The Low Countries and the Hundred Years' War, 1326-1347* (Ann Arbor, 1929), p. 404. Edward's son born at Ghent was John of Gaunt (Ghent).

concerned about the forces of Philip. While Edward had destroyed their enemy's navy, he had yet to face the armies of their former ruler. Moreover, two major French-controlled towns, St. Omer and Tournai, lay on their borders, and from them bands of French soldiers could conduct chevauchées into the allied countryside. The allied leaders demanded that the next assaults against the French should be made against these two towns.⁶

Edward agreed. He split the combined forces into two separate armies. The smaller force, composed mostly of Flemish foot-soldiers with a contingent of English longbowmen, were placed under the command of Robert of Artois. They were to attack and take the smaller French town of St. Omer. Edward himself would lead the remainder of the allied army against the strongly fortified town of Tournai. In this force were soldiers of the kingdom of England, the duchies of Brabant and Guelders, the counties of Flanders, Hainault, Holland and Zeeland, and the march of Jülich. Also present were a group of German soldiers sent by Emperor Lewis of Bavaria to aid Edward.⁷

The king of France had also not remained idle. Knowing the vulnerability of his northernmost towns and their desirability to the allies, Philip quickly dispatched troops to reinforce and fortify them. To St. Omer, he sent a strong contingent of French and renegade Flemish soldiers under the command of the counts of Armagnac and Burgundy,⁸ and to Tournai he sent the Count Raoul of Eu, constable of France, the count of Foix and more than 1,500 knights and men-at-arms and 1,000 foot soldiers.⁹ (He also sent contingents of French troops to Lille and Douai to protect those towns from English attack.) It was the responsibility of these forces to prepare their towns for siege by strengthening the urban defences, and to hold off the assaults of the allied soldiers until Philip could arrive with the main French army.

Robert of Artois's force was the first to encounter the French.¹⁰ Moving south to St. Omer, Robert's soldiers burned everything around their target. Among these, the town of Arques, site of a Flemish victory in 1303, went up in flames. Perhaps the sight of this burning town aroused a battle-fever in the French troops for they departed from the protective walls of St. Omer to attack the allies. Robert of Artois must have been surprised at the number of French troops who lined up against him on July 25. Still his own force clearly outnumbered the defenders of St. Omer, and he probably realized that a quick victory over this French force would give him the town without necessitating a lengthy siege.

⁶ Lucas, p. 404. See also Edouard Perroy, *The Hundred Years War*, trans. W.B. Wells (London, 1959), p. 106; Hans van Werveke, *Jacques van Artevelde* (Brussels, 1943), pp. 62-63; and Ferdinand Lot, *La France des origines à la Guerre de Cent Ans*, 17th ed. (Paris, 1948), p. 265. Jonathan Sumption's *The Hundred Years War: Trial by Battle* (Philadelphia, 1990), p. 339 also comments on this strategy, but he greatly and inaccurately enlarges the role of the Flemings in its planning and execution while at the same time giving almost no credit to even the presence of other Low Countries' and German allies let alone to any other influence.

⁷ Lucas, p. 405.

⁸ Lucas, p. 406.

⁹ Lucas, p. 411.

¹⁰ For the best secondary accounts of the battle of St. Omer see Lucas, pp. 406-8 and E. Déprez, *Les préliminaires de la Guerre de Cent Ans* (Paris, 1902), pp. 333-5. Sumption's account of this battle (pp. 340-3) also contains a good narrative of the event, but there are certain inaccuracies which advise a cautionary study. Original sources mentioning this battle will be listed below.

But victory was not to come to Robert at St. Omer. His force, mostly Flemish foot-soldiers, could not withstand the charges of the French, and they were pushed back to Arques. At Arques, Robert expected to find relief as he had left an array of troops to be his rear-guard. But the Flemings who had remained there as a rear-guard had seen the flight of their army and had also fled in rout. Arques only held the empty allied camp. The attack on St. Omer had failed; Robert of Artois and the few troops who remained with him fled to Tournai to assist with the siege.

Edward III was understandably dismayed when he heard the news of the 'fiasco' at St. Omer.¹¹ Still the English king held a strong force at Tournai, too strong for the French troops inside the town to attempt the victorious tactics of their colleagues at St. Omer. (Modern authors have estimated his force to be between ten and twenty thousand, although Edward himself claimed to have more than 120,000 troops with him at Tournai.¹²)

The inhabitants of Tournai were renowned for their faithfulness to the French king, and despite its strong fortifications, the town had faced numerous sieges before. It had never fallen.¹³ Never before, however, had Tournai faced such a large and determined army. By the end of July, Edward had succeeded in completely cutting off the food and water supplies of the town, and his troops completely surrounded it. Based on the limited food supplies possible and the large population, the English king justly anticipated a quick end to the siege.¹⁴

By mid-August, the town of Tournai was already starting to weaken. The food and water supplies were low, and the livestock in the town had already depleted the supply of hay and oats.¹⁵ The small French garrison was constantly fighting, trying to defend the town gates and walls from the many assaults made on them by the troops outside.¹⁶ On the outside, food and supplies among the besiegers were plentiful with the duchy of Brabant and the county of Flanders supplying the army with whatever it needed.¹⁷ Indeed, so confident of victory were the allies, that in August, William, the count of Hainault, was allowed to lead a chevauchée beyond the borders of his county into France.¹⁸ His troops were wildly successful in this endeavor. His army sacked and burnt the

¹¹ For Edward's initial actions at Tournai, see Lucas, p. 408; Perroy, p. 97; Werveke, pp. 62-63; and Ferdinand Lot, *L'art militaire et les armées au moyen âge* (Paris, 1946), ii, 336-37.

¹² For the numbers at Tournai, see Lucas, pp. 408-10. For Flemish numbers, see also J.F. Verbruggen, *Het gemeenteleger van Brugge van 1338 tot 1340 en de namen van de weerbare mannen* (Brussels, 1962); J.J. de Smet, 'L'effectif des milices Brégeoises et la population de la ville en 1340', *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire* 12 (1933), 631-36; and Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones (1984), p. 240. Edward III reported to Parliament that he had more than 120,000 troops at Tournai, but this certainly is an exaggeration made for the purpose of securing more funds for the war against France. For the reference to this letter see n. 141 below.

¹³ John Bell Henneman in his *Royal Taxation in Fourteenth-Century France: The Development of War Financing, 1322-1356* (Princeton, 1971), pp. 57, 63, 75, 112 discusses the faithfulness of the town of Tournai in providing taxes and troops to the French crown.

¹⁴ See Edward's letter to Parliament following his victory at Shyys (30 July 1340) found in Froissart, xviii, 167-70. See also Lucas, p. 408.

¹⁵ See Lucas, p. 413; Déprez, pp. 342-3; Sumption, pp. 352-4; and Werveke, pp. 64-5.

¹⁶ Lucas, p. 413 and Sumption, pp. 352-4. See also *Chronique Normande*, pp. 46-7 and *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen*, in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, iv, ed. J.J. de Smet (Brussels, 1865), 833.

¹⁷ See Lucas, p. 414 and Sumption, p. 353.

¹⁸ See Lucas, p. 412; Déprez, pp. 329-33; and Michael Packe, *King Edward III* (London, 1983), p. 97.

monastery and town of St. Amand, and they levelled the villages of Orchies and Seclin. Only at Marchiennes did they meet with any resistance, and this they quickly overcame, plundering and burning the abbey and village. They returned to Tournai with much booty and cattle. Other chevauchées were conducted by the allies, but none were as long or as successful as this one of the count of Hainault.¹⁹

By the beginning of September, the situation in Tournai had grown desperate. The garrison within the town had succeeded in smuggling out a message to the French king informing him of their dire condition.²⁰ Philip had gathered a large army together and was awaiting such a message at Arras. On 7 September he moved his army north to Bouvines, less than two leagues from the allied besiegers.²¹ From here he was able to keep track of their movements; however, despite his promise to do so, he never came forward to engage the enemy in battle.²²

The allied army had not been without its disagreements during the siege.²³ Primarily these disputes arose from the attitude of the Brabantine troops. Especially evident was the hostility between the Flemish and the Brabantine forces. Since the entrance of the Flemish towns into the alliance, the duke of Brabant had been jealous of their favoured position. The Flemings had received the wool staple which had been previously promised to the Brabantine town of Antwerp, and their leader, Jacob van Artevelde, had found a favouritism with the English king which the other, more aristocratic, leaders of the Low Countries had been unable to attain. Moreover, by September the Brabantine troops were weary of the siege and desired to return to their homes and families. The Flemings, on the other hand, were determined to see the siege through, hoping that the hunger of the town's inhabitants would soon drive them into submission. More than once the Flemings accused their Brabantine allies of allowing food into the city, and some contemporary sources report that in one meeting of allied leaders Jacob van Artevelde slew a Brabantine knight because of an insult which the latter had made against the Flemish leader.²⁴

The proximity of the French army caused further problems within the ranks of the allies. Their presence was not only a potential threat on the battlefield, but it was also a reminder that Edward had been unable to bring the French king to battle.²⁵ Moreover, promised money had not come from England to pay the troops, and the allied army seemed on the point of dissolution. The time seemed right for a peace conference.²⁶

¹⁹ Lucas, p. 413.

²⁰ Lucas, p. 413.

²¹ Lucas, p. 413 and Sumption, pp. 354-7. Philip also sent diplomats and letters to the towns of Flanders hoping that they would return to his side. See Déprez, pp. 333-5.

²² Lucas, p. 413 and Sumption, p. 357. This problem is discussed in greater detail, and with original sources, below.

²³ See Lucas, pp. 416-7; Sumption, p. 354; Werveke, pp. 64-5; Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique* (Brussels, 1948), ii, 116-7; and Alfred H. Burne, *The Crecy War* (London, 1955), p. 62.

²⁴ Lucas, p. 417 and Sumption, p. 354. See also below n. 78.

²⁵ See Lucas, p. 418.

²⁶ For Edward's money problems at the siege of Tournai see Lucas, p. 418; G.L. Harriss, *King, Parliament, and Public Finance in Medieval England to 1369* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 278-82; T.H. Lloyd, *The English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 155-56; Nathalie B. Fryde, 'Edward III's Removal of his Ministers and Judges, 1340-1', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 48 (1975), 150-3; and E.B. Fryde, *William de la*

This was not the first move made towards peace between the two armies. Pope Benedict XII had made many peace proposals, badgering both sides with his legates, William Amicus and William of Norwich. But, he had been unsuccessful.²⁷ Finally, he proposed to Jeanne de Valois, dowager countess of Hainault and current abbess of the monastery at Fontenelles, to meet with both kings in an effort to bring peace to the region.²⁸ Jeanne was the perfect choice for this legation. Not only was she the mother of Count William of Hainault, but she was both sister to the French king and mother-in-law to the English ruler. After many negotiations, Jeanne succeeded in bringing the opposing kings to an acceptable agreement. On 25 September 1340, representatives from both camps met at a small chapel at nearby Esplechin where they agreed to settle their differences.²⁹ The siege of Tournai had ended, and Edward was forced to leave the walls of the city in defeat.

By stopping the English from taking Tournai, the French were able to save face after the disaster of Sluys. They had broken the alliance and had sent the English king and his army back to England. Above all, Philip VI was able to regain some prestige and loyalty in the Low Countries. He had stopped the surge of war in his rebellious northern lands, and, in agreeing to the treaty of Esplechin, he had exacted little punishment against them.³⁰ Moreover, through all this Philip gained one very valuable ally in the Emperor, Lewis of Bavaria, who, after spurning his alliance with Edward III, swore lifelong friendship to the French king; among other things, Lewis promised to leave Philip in peaceful possession of all his territories and jurisdictions.³¹ The allies too suffered little by their inability to take the town of Tournai. The duchy of Brabant and the county of Hainault lost nothing by agreeing to the truce.³² Indeed, Philip restored to them all the villages and castles which he had captured in his movements north. But the county of Flanders profited even more by the agreement of Esplechin.³³ Philip, perhaps understanding the value of a treaty with this prosperous county, agreed to remove the interdict from the people of the county and to rescind the harsh economic punishments of the treaty of Athis-sur-Orge, agreed to in 1305 after the Flemish defeat at Mons-en-Pévéle. Flanders, in turn, agreed to accept Louis of Nevers back as their count, thereby lessening the influence of Jacob van Artevelde. (Artevelde's prestige

Pole: Merchant and King's Banker (+1366) (London, 1988), pp. 171-72. E.B. Fryde does insist, however, that it would be an exaggeration to put the blame for the failure to capture Tournai solely on a lack of money ... But Edward would have been in a much stronger position towards his allies if he had been able to pay a large part of the huge subsidies promised to them (p. 172).

On the financial crisis in England in the years prior to the siege see Harriss, pp. 270-93; E.B. Fryde, *William de la Pole*, pp. 135-69; E.B. Fryde, 'Financial Resources of Edward III in the Netherlands, 1337-40', *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire* 45 (1967), 1142-1216.

²⁷ For secondary accounts of the peace process at Tournai, see Lucas, p. 419 and Déprez, pp. 335-42.

²⁸ Lucas, p. 420.

²⁹ Lucas, pp. 420-2 and Sumption, pp. 357-8.

³⁰ Although the Flemings would remain close allies with the English for several years, the Brabantines and the Hennuyers both became allies of Philip VI and served with him at Crécy and Calais.

³¹ H.S. Offler, 'England and Germany at the Beginning of the Hundred Years' War', *English Historical Review* 54 (1939), 623. See also Packe, pp. 98-9.

³² Lucas, pp. 420-2; Déprez, p. 343.

³³ Lucas, pp. 420-2; Déprez, p. 343; and Pirenne, p. 116.

and influence, although seriously weakened by the loss at Tournai, would never be entirely diminished until his death in July 1345.³⁴)

Thus, it is only England which really was set back by the failure to take Tournai. For, more than merely losing his alliance with the Low Countries and Germany, Edward had suffered the dishonour of being unable to take advantage of his resounding victory at Sluys. He was made to retreat from the continent to London. Modern British historians are especially harsh in their criticisms of Edward on this point. Alfred H. Burne writes:

By [the truce of Esplechin], Edward's allies all acquired some slight advantages, but he gained nothing. Things were left as they were at the outset between France and England; everything remained in suspense. . . . The king of England would have to start all over again.³⁵

And May McKisack adds:

Thus ended the first phase of the war. Its only substantial achievements were the Flemish alliance and the destruction of the French fleet. The frontiers of France still remained intact and Edward's other costly alliances had brought him little advantage. His aim had probably been to frustrate Philip's designs on Gascony by diverting the war into northern France; but he had found himself helpless against an enemy who concentrated on defensive tactics and refused to be brought to battle.³⁶

Perhaps more importantly, this war, and especially the failed siege of Tournai, had thrust the English leader into severe financial difficulties. Throughout his entire stay in the Low Countries, Edward had been in a state of 'perpetual semi-bankruptcy' despite the huge loans made to him by his own subjects and from Low Countries' bankers.³⁷ The English government had promised him finances sufficient to carry on the war. But the promised funds had never arrived in the Low Countries. Initially, Edward showed patience in waiting for this money, writing home from Ghent as late as 31 October that he blamed no one for the delays in collecting the taxes to pay for his expedition. Shortly thereafter, however, Edward's patience ran out. By 18 November, he sent legates to Benedict XII laying charges against his chancellor, Archbishop John Stratford. Among other things, Edward accused his chancellor of wanting to see him 'betrayed and killed'.³⁸

³⁴ Events concerning the murder of Jacob van Artevelde in 1345 are recorded in Lucas, pp. 516-27 and Werveke, pp. 97-109.

³⁵ Burne, p. 63.

³⁶ May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1959), p. 130. See also Michael Prestwich, *The Three Edwards: War and State in England, 1272-1377* (London, 1980), p. 173 and P.S. Lewis, *Later Medieval France: The Polity* (London, 1968), p. 43.

³⁷ Lloyd, p. 155. See also Roy Martin Haines, *Archbishop John Stratford: Political Revolutionary and Champion of the Liberties of the English Church, ca. 1275/80-1348* (Toronto, 1986), pp. 271-2.

³⁸ Nathalie B. Fryde, pp. 153-4.

On 27 November, Edward set sail for England arriving there three days later. What followed is known as the 'Crisis of 1341'.³⁹ It is not the purpose of this study to analyze that crisis. Suffice it to say, that Edward used the failure of the siege of Tournai as the reason for which he purged the government of 'corrupt' officials and nobles hostile to his war aims. He replaced them with men favourable to war with France, and by the end of 1341, Edward was again planning an attack against the 'usurper' of his French crown.⁴⁰

All military historical logic indicates that Edward III should not have been defeated at the siege of Tournai in 1340. He had superior numbers, many local allies, good supplies, a relief army unwilling to come to battle with him, and a town on the verge of hopeless starvation. He also had strong morale as he had recently shown himself to be capable of military victory. A similar situation would exist at the siege of Calais in 1346-7, and that siege would be successful.⁴¹ So what happened at Tournai in 1340?

Among modern historians there is some dispute as to the causes of victory and defeat at the siege of Tournai, although most see Edward's financial woes to be at the heart of his failure to take the town. But this is only one of the reasons given for the defeat by contemporary commentators on the siege, and then it is mostly given by English authors. French and southern Low Countries' writers have extremely different views on what caused victory and defeat at Tournai. The French authors award the victory to their forces based on Philip VI's superior military tactics in not facing Edward in battle and thus giving time for a shaky alliance eventually to fall apart, on Jeanne de Valois, dowager countess of Hainault's, masterful diplomatic skills in bringing the two sides to a peace favourable to France, and on the presence of God on the French side against usurpers, invaders and rebels. The southern Low Countries' chroniclers see the defeat coming to the allies as a result of the treason of one of their own, Jan III, duke of Brabant, who broke the alliance and defected to Philip's side, thus forcing an acceptance of a peace treaty, when the town of Tournai was on the verge of capitulation. The only exception to this is Jan de Klerk, a Brabantine author of two historical works, *Brabantse yeeften* and *Van den derden Eduwaert*, both of which praise his duke for taking a prominent peaceful role in concluding the siege without further loss of life.

³⁹ Probably the best account of the Crisis of 1341 can be found in Haines, pp. 278-328. See also Nathalie B. Fryde, pp. 149-61; W.R. Jones, 'Rex et Ministri: English Local Government and the Crisis of 1341', *Journal of British Studies* 13 (1973), 1-20; and Déprez, pp. 349-52.

⁴⁰ See Michael Prestwich, 'English Armies in the Early Stages of the Hundred Years War: a Scheme in 1341', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 56 (1983), 102-13.

⁴¹ See Kelly DeVries, 'Hunger, Flemish Participation and the Flight of Philip VI: Contemporary Accounts of the Siege of Calais, 1346-47', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* n.s. 12 (1991), 129-81.

Modern Historical Commentators

In determining what caused the defeat at Tournai, almost all modern historians have looked at the allied force to find the answers. Certainly the close presence of the French king was important in influencing the allies to sign the treaty of Esplechin, and, more importantly, as H.S. Lucas states, Philip's proximity influenced the performance of 'numerous manifestations of loyalty to the king of France on the part of the inhabitants' inspiring them to resist the besiegers until peace could be made.⁴² But, most modern commentators on the siege believe that Philip's presence only played a part in the defeat because of Edward's inability to bring him and the French army to battle. As May McKisack writes:

Edward could not afford protracted sieges and piecemeal reduction of hostile territory. Time was always his enemy; the best hope for victory lay in the quick, decisive action which the enemy refused to risk.⁴³

Other modern historians look even more directly at the allied army for their causes of defeat. Some, like George Holmes, believe that Edward had 'simply run out of steam' after the victory at Shluis.⁴⁴ Others, however, look at more 'physical' factors in determining the reasons for the loss at Tournai. Edouard Perroy notes the lack of siege weapons among the besieging forces as a cause of this defeat.⁴⁵ Philippe Contamine, however, disagrees with this rationale claiming that the besiegers were indeed equipped with siege engines, and that these engines were used to batter down the gates of Tournai; they were, however, largely ineffective for this purpose.⁴⁶

Alfred H. Burne, among other modern historians, blames the loss on the problems of what Lucas called 'the motley character of the allied host'.⁴⁷ The constant bickering and conflicts between the various Low Countries' leaders virtually drove the alliance apart. Without the unity Edward had hoped for when he set up the alliance, the siege of Tournai was doomed to fail. Burne writes:

But the king of England also had his difficulties. When a number of allies are collected together it is seldom that trouble and friction does not arise between

⁴² Lucas, p. 414. See also Perroy, p. 106.

⁴³ McKisack, p. 130. See also Ferdinand Lot, *L'art militaire*, ii, 336; Werveke, p. 64; Packe, pp. 96-7; Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, p. 173; and William Longman, *The History of the Life and Times of Edward the Third* (London, 1869), i, 177.

⁴⁴ George Holmes, *Europe: Hierarchy and Revolt, 1320-1450* (London, 1975), p. 37.

⁴⁵ Perroy, p. 106.

⁴⁶ Contamine (p. 194) states:

The same year [1340], during the siege of Tournai, the besiegers had eight engines and the besieged seven, although they only killed a total of ten people. The besiegers' main aim was to break down gates, while the engines of the besieged were principally attempting to destroy the enemy artillery.

Most original sources concur with this. See below.

⁴⁷ Lucas, p. 418.

some of them, and Edward's heterogeneous army was no exception to this rule.⁴⁸

According to Pirenne, Sumption and Hans van Werveke, the chief problem among the allied host was the Flemish army and their leader, Jacob van Artevelde, who allowed himself to be so overwhelmed by his favoured status with Edward that he went to extremes to prove his command.⁴⁹

Most modern historians, however, blame the dire financial situation of the allies for the defeat at Tournai. Almost all believe that had Edward been able to supply his army as was promised him by Parliament in England, the town of Tournai surely would have fallen, especially without open confrontation with a French king who seemed unwilling to do battle. Lucas says it best when he writes:

Edward's own financial difficulties, which made him unable to discharge his obligations in spite of the insistent demands of his allies, must have seriously hurt his influence with the princes upon whose support he had to rely chiefly in defeating Philip.⁵⁰

In another work he would add: 'The financial exhaustion of the English Exchequer made any further prosecution of the war impossible for the moment at least'.⁵¹

Contemporary 'Foreign' Views

There are more contemporary 'foreign' historians who wrote about the siege of Tournai than concerned themselves with the battle of Sluys. Clearly this conflict held more significance for outsiders than did the naval victory of Edward III, possibly due to the presence of foreign, German, troops among the allied force. Three German historians, Jean de Winterthur of Switzerland and Giovanni Villani of Florence, all contemporaries of the siege, comment about the failure of the allies to take Tournai.

All three of these German historians, Heinricus von Diessenhoven, Johannes Victoriensis and Mathias von Nuwenberg, reporting the defeat at Tournai seem sympathetic to the allies. Although their accounts are short, each provides an interesting perception of the allied defeat. Johannes Victoriensis, for example, reports that the 'impending winter' forced Edward to break off his siege.⁵² Heinricus von Diessenhoven, however, has a different perception for the cause of

⁴⁸ Burne, p. 61.

⁴⁹ Pirenne, pp. 116-7; Sumption, pp. 344, 354; Werveke, p. 64.

⁵⁰ Lucas, p. 411.

⁵¹ Henry Stephen Lucas, 'The Sources and Literature on Jacob van Artevelde,' *Speculum* 8 (1933), 147. See also Sumption, pp. 344-45; Werveke, p. 65; Longman, i.177; Prestwich, p. 173; Haines, pp. 271-72; Lloyd, pp. 157-8; Nathalie B. Fryde, p. 151; Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c. 1300-c. 1450* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 13; Scott L. Waugh, *England in the Reign of Edward III* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 16.

⁵² Johannes Victoriensis, *Chronicon*, in *Fontes rerum Germanicarum*, iii (Stuttgart, 1868), p. 439:
Hoc anno rex Francie et Anglie ex partibus Pykardorum conveniunt. Tornacum civitas a rege Anglie obsidetur, sed instante hyeme cum treugis ab invicem discesserunt.

defeat. Heinrichus, the only one of the three to comment on the battle of Sluys, after giving an erroneous accounting of the numbers in both of the armies, reports that Philip VI 'did not dare to enter the field of battle against Edward, the king of England, who was prepared for battle'.⁵³ Not being able to fight, Edward was finally forced to retreat from the siege.

Mathias von Nuwenberg also blames Philip, but not for failing to come to battle. Instead, he accuses Philip of drawing out the peace process, hence making the peace come 'with the greatest difficulty'. Mathias reports that Benedict XII said concerning the French king: 'He did not want peace, and it was withdrawn by him'.⁵⁴

Jean de Winterthur's account is much longer than his German counterparts, but it is no less sympathetic to the allies and Edward III. Indeed, Jean notes that Edward's retreat from Tournai was 'laudable', and despite his setback there, the English king 'had triumphed gloriously and had clearly acquired throughout the world a name of immense glory'.⁵⁵ Philip had been forced to sign a peace treaty surrendering Gascony, thus satisfying Edward's goal in besieging Tournai, because he was humbled and frightened, having been beaten by the English king both on land and on the sea.⁵⁶ Jean then diverges into a discussion of God's presence with Edward. Quoting from many Biblical books, he reports that God had been with the English king and therefore the French were unable to defeat him:

For no one prevailed who went against him [Edward] because God was with him. If God was with him, who therefore could prevail against him? No one. For God, just as the holy scripture says, can save in few just as in many. For, although he [Philip] had a large population, God held little respect for the king of France.⁵⁷

The Italian, Giovanni Villani, is the most descriptive foreign commentator on this Low Countries' conflict. For example, he alone mentions the battle of St. Omer, recording the allied loss which he blames on the Yprois troops which were put to flight by the soldiers under the count

⁵³ Heinrich von Diessenhoven, *Chronicon*, in *Fontes rerum Germanicarum*, iv (Stuttgart, 1868), pp. 34-5: 'Rex vero Francorum . . . bellum canpestre non audens ingredi cum Anglorum rege Edewardo . . .'

⁵⁴ Mathias von Nuwenberg, *Chronica*, in (hereafter *MGH SS*) (nova series), iv (Berlin, 1924), p. 380: 'Dixit autem papa Benedictus de Franco: "Iste pacem noluit, et elongabitur ab eo".'

⁵⁵ Jean de Winterthur, *Chronicon*, ed. F. Baethgen, *MGH SS* (nova series), iii (Hannover, 1924), p. 175: 'Et sic rex Anglie superno sibi assistente presidio bellum suum ad laudabilem exitum perduxit; gloriose enim triumphavit et nomen glorie immense per mundi climata aquisivit.'

⁵⁶ Jean de Winterthur, p. 175:

Anno Domini MCCCXL, prout fama publica contestabatur, Rex Anglie, cum tam fortem civitatem Torn' per exercitus suos innumerabiles fame et aliis incomodis afflisset in tantum, quod iam quasi ipsam in manus suas resignare decrevisset, et terram circumquaque occupasset, dampnificasset et crebris diutinisque malis desolatam reddidisset, multos quoque bellando occidisset tam in terra quam in aqua, tandem rex Francie humiliatus, quia conterritus ad pacandum eum terram Vasconie, pro qua maxime, ut quidam aiunt, decertatio suscitata inter eos fuit, sibi restituit libere, quam prius multo tempore sibi ipsi tenere et contra iusticiam usurpaverat.

⁵⁷ Jean de Winterthur, p. 175:

Nam Deus quia erat cum eo, nemo prevalere qui ibat contra eum. Deus erat pro eo, quis ergo contra eum? Nullus. Deus enim, sicut sacra scriptura refert, potest salvare in paucis sicut in multis. Unde quamvis ingentem populum habuerit, tamen paucum habuit respectu regis Francie.

of Armagnac.⁵⁸ As for the siege itself, Villani reports a large number of troops in the allied army (80,000 Flemings, Hennuyers and Brabantines, 8,000 German cavalry plus an unrecorded number of English) and an equally large number of French within the town of Tournai (4,000 knights, 10,000 foot and 15,000 militia).⁵⁹ He also mentions the hunger within the city and the promise of aid from the French king. When Philip did arrive, however, he camped one league from Tournai unable to fight or to deliver food to the town because of the strength of the allied besiegers.⁶⁰

When it comes to perceiving what brought about an allied defeat, Villani turns to the actions of the duke of Brabant as his cause of defeat. Philip VI wanted peace, but he needed a confederate in the allied camp, so he approached Jan III, duke of Brabant. Edward III, however, refused to make peace, thinking that Tournai was on the verge of surrendering from starvation. Still the Brabantine duke pressed for peace. Villani claims that he had been bribed into this position by Philip: 'But the Brabantine contingent pressed for peace led by their duke who was there because of the corruption of money from the king of France'.⁶¹ Apparently this bribe worked, for Villani avers that by the time Edward ran out of money, the duke of Brabant had changed sides, and the English king was forced to make peace with his enemy.⁶²

Contemporary French Views

Most of the contemporary French chroniclers are extremely descriptive and exhaustive in their coverage of the siege of Tournai. For example, many histories of the siege also include some comment about the victorious battle of St. Omer. For most of these authors, the battle of St. Omer was simply a case of a more numerous and powerful French army overwhelming a smaller and less powerful Flemish force. The exceptions to this are the early fifteenth-century *Chronographia regum Francorum* and the late fourteenth-century *Grandes chroniques de France* which supply the longest and most detailed accounts of this battle.⁶³ The *Chronographia regum Francorum* records the French, in this case Artesian, tactic of feigned retreat which drew the Flemings out of their protective ditches onto the unguarded battlefield:

⁵⁸ Giovanni Villani, *Istorie Fiorentine*, in *Scriptores rerum Italicarum*, xiii, ed. L. Muratori (Rome, 1728), col. 837-8.

⁵⁹ Villani, col. 838.

⁶⁰ Villani, col. 838.

⁶¹ Villani, col. 839:

Ma i Brabanzoni sentendo il trattato, che menava il loro Duca, e per la corruzione della moneta del Re di Francia, come dicemmo dinanzi, secciono punta falsa, e subitamente si levarono da campo, e si torarono in loro paese.

⁶² Villani, col. 839:

Il Re d'Inghilterra e gli altri allegati veggendosi ingannato e fallito da' Brabanzoni, e al Re d'Inghilterra fallì moneta, che i suoi ufficiali di là il ne teneano a dieta e scarso, di subito compì il trattato il meglio che poté, facendo triegua insino a San Giovanni avvenire, rimettendosi della pace nel Papa, e nella Chiesa di Roma.

⁶³ *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ed. H. Moranville (Paris, 1894), ii, 129-35 and *Les grandes chroniques de France*, ed. Jules Viard (Paris, 1934), ix, 189-97. See also *Chronique Normande*, p. 46; *Continuatio chronici Guillelmi de Nangis*, ed. H. Geraud (Paris, 1843), ii, 170; Jean de Hocsem, *La chronique de Jean de Hocsem*, ed. Godefroid Kurth (Brussels, 1927), p. 295; and Richard Lescot, *Chronique*, ed. J. Lemoine (Paris, 1896), p. 52.

Many [French] nobles fled, leaving his lord [the duke of Burgundy] in camp in the hands of the enemy; only by the grace of God did he escape them. And the Flemings, as they had seen the *vexilla* retreat, all ran after them, believing that they had been defeated. The Artesians seeing that the Flemings had crossed over the ditches, changed their direction and ferociously attacked them. Therefore, a lethal battle was fought in which the Flemings were ultimately defeated.⁶⁴

And the author of the *Grandes chroniques* sees the aid of God on the side of the French as the ultimate reason for their victory.⁶⁵

There is among these contemporary French chroniclers also much commentary on the devastation of the allied troops around Tournai and on the chevauchées of the count of Hainault into northern France, including the assertion of Gilles li Muisit that the count of Hainault and his troops 'returned with much wealth and much booty' from these raids.⁶⁶ As well, both contemporary Jean de Venette and the near contemporary *Chronique Normande* mention that the army of Philip VI also conducted chevauchées in allied lands. Jean de Venette declares this to be a principle of just revenge: 'He devastated Hainault as the men of Hainault had devastated the parts of France near Hainault'.⁶⁷

Among the French authors, there is also much discussion about the town of Tournai and its inhabitants. The *Chronique Normande*, *Chronographia regum Francorum*, *Grandes chroniques* and Gilles li Muisit all state that Philip had purposefully aided the defence of the town by sending the constable of France, the count of Foix and a large contingent of troops to Tournai.⁶⁸ Gilles li Muisit, who lived in the town during the siege, records why they were sent:

And the lord king sent them to comfort the citizens and the inhabitants of the city of Tournai and to fight the enemy, because there was a rumour that the king of England and all those aligned with him proposed to besiege the city of Tournai, which indeed happened afterwards.⁶⁹

These chroniclers describe the town as 'potentissima' with its citizens well armed and its walls lined with many stone-throwing engines and other 'instrumenta bellicosa' (including possibly gunpowder artillery pieces) which 'made many attacks on the enemy'.⁷⁰ The *Chronique*

⁶⁴ *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ii, 131.

⁶⁵ *Grandes chroniques*, ix, 193-4.

⁶⁶ Gilles li Muisit, *Chronicon* in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, ii, ed. J.J. de Smet (Brussels, 1841), p. 226. See also *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ii, 126-29, 141-43, 154-56; *Chronique Normande*, p. 47; *Chronique de Tournai*, in *Oeuvres de Froissart*, vol. 25, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels, 1877), pp. 344, 346, 353; and Jean de Venette, *Chronique*, ed. and trans. R.A. Newhall (New York, 1953), p. 37.

⁶⁷ Jean de Venette, p. 37. (Latin from *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, ii, 190.) See also *Chronique Normande*, p. 47.

⁶⁸ *Chronique Normande* p. 45; *Chronographia regum Francorum* ii, 125-6; *Grandes chroniques* ix, 186-87; and Gilles li Muisit, p. 225.

⁶⁹ Gilles li Muisit, p. 225.

⁷⁰ Gilles li Muisit, p. 227. See also *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, ii, 171; *Chronographia regum Francorum* ii, 140; *Chronique de Tournai*, pp. 346, 357; and Jean de Hocsem, p. 296.

Normande even contends that these engines were so effective that they had kept Edward from taking the city during his eleven-week siege:

Edward had been before Tournai for eleven weeks and he had made many strong attacks on the gates and walls with his engines, but the engines of the city had in turn greatly damaged these engines.⁷¹

It should be noted, however, that the French writers commenting on the siege never underestimate the amount of hunger in the town. Two sources, the *Chronique de Tournai* and the *Chronicon* of Gilles li Muisit, are especially passionate in their discussion of this hunger as they seem to be written by witnesses of the hunger from within the walls of Tournai.⁷²

The *Chronique de Tournai* which is the more subdued of the two witnesses notes the high cost of food within the city (although he gives us no comparative context for these prices), and he reports that hunger had attacked all, both the rich and the poor.⁷³ Nevertheless, the inhabitants of the town had a high morale and were determined to defend Tournai until they all were dead. In letters written to their enemies, the people wrote 'that those of Tournai were of good spirit and united, and they would not surrender the town by force until they, their wives and their children were killed'.⁷⁴

Gilles li Muisit is much more descriptive in his comments on the food problems of his town:

Finally in the city there was a great want and a high cost for hay and oats on account of the many horses and beasts which were in the city, as many brought by the king's soldiers as those already in the town, so that a small bundle of hay cost twenty-five shillings and a ration of oats cost thirty shillings. There was wheat enough to ration, but a ration of wine cost eighteen pence. Meat, fish, eggs, butter, cheese and other victuals were very costly; and from day to day the cost increased because of the length of the siege. I remember that I saw at that time a ration of wine and two loaves of bread for the value of eight eggs.⁷⁵

But despite the scarcity of food, Gilles li Muisit reports that few humans died. After the siege was broken, he writes:

Some nobles desiring to see their friends who were in the city entered as fast as they could because the enemy had said that the besieged were dying from hunger in the city. And, for certain, many nobles had suffered a great penury, and a great many of their horses had died. But, blessed God, few of them were dead.⁷⁶

⁷¹ *Chronique Normande* p. 48.

⁷² *Chronique de Tournai*, pp. 359-61, 363-4 and Gilles li Muisit, pp. 227, 232. See also *Chronographia regum Francorum* ii, 139-40, 144, 149-51 and Jean de Venette, p. 37.

⁷³ *Chronique de Tournai*, p. 364.

⁷⁴ *Chronique de Tournai*, p. 360.

⁷⁵ Gilles li Muisit, p. 227.

⁷⁶ Gilles li Muisit, p. 232.

Almost nothing about allied tactics or problems is reported by the French chroniclers writing about the siege of Tournai. Very little interest is paid to the allied army itself except we are told that it was very large, and that it besieged Tournai 'strongly' assaulting the gates and walls of the town many times.⁷⁷ Moreover, only the *Chronographia regum Francorum* notes that there were any problems among the various allied leaders, and the anonymous chronicler of this work reports only the story of a Flemish and Brabantine argument at a war council which ended with the death of the Brabantine knight who had insulted Jacob van Artevelde. But, Edward is able both to soothe the fury of the Flemish leader and to keep the duke of Brabant from seeking revenge against him. The siege then proceeds as before.⁷⁸

As well, it is only the *Grandes chroniques* which reports that Edward returned to England and deposed many of his government officials. However, the author of this chronicle does not record that this was due to the shortage of funds Edward had faced at Tournai.⁷⁹

Much more is written by the French chroniclers about the king of France's presence at Tournai and his unwillingness to fight. Primarily they do not see Philip's reluctance as cowardice on his part, despite his adamant promise to relieve the siege by force. It was simply a wise tactic performed by a good general who knew that the city of Tournai would not fall into allied hands; Philip did not wish to sacrifice his own men for a situation which patience would rectify anyway.⁸⁰ Moreover, only the *Chronographia regum Francorum* and the *Grandes chroniques* record a letter of challenge to single combat which Edward sent to Philip and Philip's refusal to accept this challenge, but neither chronicle seems very impressed by them.⁸¹

Philip, the king of France, was good and honourable, while, in contrast, the allied leaders, especially Edward III and Jacob van Artevelde, were evil. Edward's assumption of the arms and crown of France was unjust and illegal leaving Philip VI with 'not a little scandal and indignation' despite the loss of the English king at Tournai.⁸² However, Edward's evil was not nearly so great as that of Jacob van Artevelde. Indeed, several years after the Flemish leader's death, Nicholas Oresme, in his late fourteenth-century commentary on *Le livre de politiques d'Aristotle*, uses Artevelde as the definition of a demagogue. He writes:

A *Demagogue* is he who through personal adulation or flattery turns the people to his will, and he who inspires a rebellion against the princes or the prince. There was such a man in Flanders named *Jaques d'Artevelde*.⁸³

⁷⁷ See *Grandes chroniques*, ix, 206; *Chronique Normande*, p. 46; *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, ii, 171; and Richard Lescot, p. 53.

⁷⁸ *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ii, 152-3.

⁷⁹ *Grandes chroniques*, ix, 209-10.

⁸⁰ Gilles li Muisit, p. 228. See also *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ii, 148, 152.

⁸¹ *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ii, 135-7 and *Grandes chroniques*, ix, 198-202.

⁸² Jean de Venette, p. 33 (Latin in *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, ii, 184).

⁸³ Nicholas Oresme, *Le livre de Politiques d'Aristotle*, ed. A.D. Menut, in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Association*, new series, 60, part 6 (1970), p. 371.

The greatest evil of Artevelde was to be seen in his defiance of the papal interdict issued against the Flemings and his attempted murder of any clerics who adhered to it. Jean de Venette, who lived at the time of Artevelde, although writing twenty years after his death, notes:

At this time [shortly before the siege of Tournai] Philip, king of the French, seeing the Flemings in rebellion against their count and the kingdom of France, begged the Church to lay an interdict on Flanders. And the church did so. This interdict was very faithfully and obediently observed by all the clergy—to their great peril, because that Jacques, who was tyrannically ruling over all Flanders, endeavoured to kill the clergy who obeyed the interdict. But God, the protector of the obedient, did not permit this.⁸⁴

Ultimately this evil, and the goodness of the French king, Philip, leads some French chroniclers to see God on their side. Interestingly, the number of French comments on God's role are significantly fewer than those seen in the records of other Hundred Years War victories. For, other than the abovementioned reference to God's desire to save the Christians in both armies made by Gilles li Muisit,⁸⁵ only the *Chronographia regum Francorum* is persistent in its claims of God's presence on the side of the French. Even then it is not God's presence with the French army outside of Tournai which impresses this French chronicle; rather it is the 'godliness' and virtue of the army and inhabitants within Tournai which generates the most comment. On several occasions, the author of the *Chronographia regum Francorum* reports the inhabitants of Tournai giving praise to God or to his saints,⁸⁶ and when he notes an instance of some soldiers giving their food to the poor, it is given 'in honorem Dei'.⁸⁷

Ultimately, it is the peace process itself and the work of Jeanne de Valois, dowager countess of Hainault, which gets most of the credit for the French victory at Tournai. Although the *Chronique Normande* and Jean de Venette mention only the conclusive peace meeting of the opposing kings,⁸⁸ and contemporary Richard Lescot claims that peace came about because of the persistent contact between Benedict XII and Philip VI,⁸⁹ other French writers are convinced of Jeanne's role as the peacemaker of the siege of Tournai. For example, the continuator of Guillaume de Nangis's chronicle, writing c. 1340, notes that several peace conferences had been held for two weeks under the auspices of papal legates before the arrival of the countess of Hainault, and that during that time, no peace proposal had been made.⁹⁰

The countess of Hainault was the perfect legate for peace. Not only was she related to nearly every leader fighting on both sides (the duke of Brabant and Jacob van Artevelde excepted), she also, according to Cuvelier, written during the late fourteenth century, 'desired peace very

⁸⁴ Jean de Venette, p. 33 (Latin found in *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, ii, 183). See also pp. 36-7.

⁸⁵ See n. 80 above.

⁸⁶ See, for example, *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ii, 146.

⁸⁷ *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ii, 150.

⁸⁸ *Chronique Normand*, p. 48 and Jean de Venette, p. 37.

⁸⁹ Richard Lescot, p. 53.

⁹⁰ *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, ii, 171.

much'.⁹¹ The *Chronographia regum Francorum* written even later, reports that she, hearing that Philip planned to attack the allies, went 'tearfully' to the French king to ask him to halt his attack until she could try to bring about a peaceful, non-violent truce.⁹²

The *Chronographia* further comments that after gaining a promise from Philip to delay his attack for three days (despite his threat to decapitate her rebellious son, William of Hainault, if peace was made), Jeanne went to Edward III seeking a peace conference.⁹³ Edward responded to her requests by gathering his allies together in a peace council. After the duke of Brabant and Robert of Artois's brief debate on the subject—Jan III wanted to make peace and to return home without further warfare, while Robert believed that Tournai was on the verge of surrendering from hunger—Jacob van Artevelde spoke against making peace. But Jacob's anti-peace sentiments were quickly changed after Jeanne, uttering nearly the same insult which had meant the death for the Brabantine knight at the hands of Jacob van Artevelde, threatened God's disfavour on the allies. She is reported to have said: 'God should turn away from you since, on behalf of the speech of a rusticus, so much blood of Christians might be spilled'.⁹⁴ Peace was agreed to.

There seems to be no doubt in the minds of most of these chroniclers that peace was made only through Jeanne's persistence. Cuvelier writes: 'The lady of Hainault so pained herself / that truces were made which each agreed to'.⁹⁵ And Gilles li Muisit, obviously grateful to be relieved from the turmoils of the siege, remarks:

With the most holy and most noble woman, the countess of Hainault, sister to the king of France and mother to the queen of England and to the count of Hainault, who assumed the Cistercian habit and professed obedience to the monastery of Fontenelles near Valenciennes, called Lady Jeanne, attending to them, truces and concords were agreed to in the parochial church of Esplechin.⁹⁶

Even Philip himself, in a letter written on 25 September 1340 to the Pope, where he asks Benedict to remove the Flemish interdict, affords some credit to Jeanne whom he said made 'certain requests' of him in this regard during her peace councils.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Cuvelier, *Chronique de Bertrand Guesclin par Cuvelier, trouvère du XIV^e siècle*, ed. E. Charrière (Paris, 1839), i, 25. See also *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, ii, 171-2.

⁹² *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ii, 158.

⁹³ *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ii, 158.

⁹⁴ *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ii, 159. See also *Grandes chroniques*, ix, 207.

⁹⁵ Cuvelier, p. 25.

⁹⁶ Gilles li Muisit, p. 228.

⁹⁷ This letter is found in Froissart, xviii, 176-7. Philip begins his letter:

Nostre très-chière et amée suer la contesse de Haynau et nostre très-chier et foyal cousin le conte de Flandres, pour le dit conte et pour tout le pays de Flandres, nous ont fait certaines requestes contenant la fourme qui s'ensieut.

Copies of this peace treaty are included in *Grandes chroniques*, ix, 208-9; Gilles li Muisit, pp. 228-31; and *Continuatio chronici* of Guillaume de Nangis, ii, 171-72.

Contemporary English Views

When analyzing the perceptions of defeat at the siege of Tournai, there is a need to separate the English historians from their Low Countries' counterparts. Although fighting on the same side at Tournai, the perceptions of victory and defeat recorded by these writers differ greatly. Indeed, in analyzing the perceptions of defeat at the siege of Tournai a larger difference between the English and the Low Countries' commentators becomes apparent. For one thing, the Low Countries' writers are more thorough in their commentaries on the siege of Tournai. This may derive from the fact that the siege was unsuccessful, or it may come from the direct involvement of the allies at Tournai. Because of this more thorough coverage of this affair by the Low Countries' chroniclers, an analysis of their writings will follow that of the English authors.

Among the English writers commenting on the siege of Tournai, there is only a small concern with much description or narrative in their coverage of the failed siege. Indeed, it seems that for William of Worcester's fifteenth-century *Boke of the Noblesse* accuracy is not particularly necessary as he writes:

Also in semblable wise in the yere of Crist M.iiij C.xl. the xiiij. yere of king Edwarde the thrid, after the saide king had wonne the gret bataile of Schluse ayenst Philip de Valois his adversarie, and besieged Tourenay in Picardie, whan the saide Philip de Valois and the Frenshe lordis were gretly rebuked and put abak, they desired a trux of king Edwarde . . .⁹⁸

Moreover, only a few contemporary English sources even mention the battle of St. Omer,⁹⁹ and among those, only Thomas Gray's *Scalachronica* records it as a French victory.¹⁰⁰ Adam Murimuth's *Chronicle*, on the other hand, mentions an initial loss by Robert of Artois but then reports that Robert's army was reinforced by many other English soldiers, and that they eventually defeated the French and took the town. He writes:

Those who had fled from the village of St. Omer entered it. And thus, the final victory remained with the lord Robert and his army through the help of God and the bravery of the English.¹⁰¹

Finally, while *The French Chronicle of London* does not go to the extremes of Murimuth in declaring the battle of St. Omer an allied victory—he gives no indication of loss or victory in this affair—he does record the deaths of 210,000 French there.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ William of Worcester, *The Boke of Noblesse*, ed. J.G. Nichols (London, 1860), p. 36.

⁹⁹ See *The French Chronicle of London*, in *Croniques de London*, ed. George James Aungier, Camden Series, 28 (London, 1864), pp. 78-9; Geoffrey le Baker, *Chronicon Galfridi le Baker de Swinbroke*, ed. E.M. Thompson, (London, 1899), p. 146; Adam Murimuth, *Continuatio chronicorum*, ed. E. M. Thompson, Rolls Series (London, 1899), pp. 108, 220; Thomas of Burton, *Chronica monasterii de Melsa a fundatione usque ad annum 1396*, ed. E.A. Bonds, Rolls Series (London, 1867), ii,46; and Thomas Gray, *Scalachronica*, ed. J. Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1836), p. 171.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Gray, p. 171.

¹⁰¹ Adam Murimuth, p. 108.

¹⁰² *French Chronicle of London*, pp. 78-9. See also Thomas of Burton, ii,46.

Significantly more is written about the devastation of the allies around Tournai. This devastation receives attention by even the shortest accounts of the siege (including the only reference to the siege of Tournai in a memorial verse written about the reign of Edward III which mostly describes the battle of Sluys).¹⁰³ Thomas Walsingham's early fifteenth-century *Historia Anglicana* contains the most descriptive account of this devastation:

The same year [1340] in the months of July, August and September, Edward, the king of England, entered France with his army. He deformed not a few villages by fire, devastated them by blade, took booty and besieged the city of Tournai armed greatly with arms and victuals.¹⁰⁴

There is also a great amount of commentary devoted to the chevauchée of William of Hainault, although again much descriptive detail is missing.¹⁰⁵ However, the chevauchée does impress the mid-fifteenth century author of *Gregory's Chronicle* enough that the destruction of St. Amand alone is noted with the mention of the siege of Tournai.¹⁰⁶

While little is mentioned about the town of Tournai itself and its inhabitants in the writings of the contemporary English chroniclers,¹⁰⁷ they do seem acutely aware of and understandably concerned about the hunger in the town. Henry Knighton, for example, reports that many of the town's inhabitants were struck by the need for food.¹⁰⁸ *The French Chronicle of London* gives a more descriptive statement on the status of the inhabitants of Tournai during the siege, including a list of prices for victuals in the town:

And the people of the village were nearly destroyed by the great hunger which was in Tournai. Because the running water of a good river which was accustomed to pass through the city was dammed and held back, neither a horse nor any living beast remained alive in the city. And the hunger was so

¹⁰³ This verse, from the poem 'Memorial Verses on the Reigns of Edward III and Richard II', can be found in *Political Poems and Songs relating to English History Composed during the Period from the Accession of Edward III to Richard III*, ed. Thomas Wright, Rolls Series (London, 1859), i,456. See also Thomas of Burton, ii,46; *Eulogium historiarum sive temporis*, ed. F.S. Haydon, Rolls Series (London, 1858), i,205; *Vita Edwardi secundi*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, vol. 2, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series (London, 1882), p. 293; and Thomas Walsingham, *Ypodigma Neustria*, ed. H.T. Riley, Rolls Series (London, 1876), p. 293.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H.T. Riley, Rolls Series (London, 1863), i,228.

¹⁰⁵ See *French Chronicle of London*, pp. 79-80; Adam Murimuth, p. 115; Geoffrey le Baker, pp. 147-8; Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, i,230; and Robert of Avesbury, *De gestis mirabilibus regis Edwardi III*, ed. E.M. Thompson, Rolls Series (London, 1889), p.316.

¹⁰⁶ *Gregory's Chronicle, 1189-1469*, in *Historical Collections of a Citizen in London in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. James Gardiner, Camden Society (London, 1876), p. 81. Robert of Avesbury (pp. 316-17) and the *French Chronicle of London* (p. 80) give us a much larger report of the chevauchée of William of Hainault. Robert records a rather lengthy list of places which the count destroyed, and the *French Chronicle of London* reports the numbers of and prices received for the goods and chattels plundered.

¹⁰⁷ For example, only Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana* (i,228), *The Vita Edwardi secundi* (p. 293) and the *Eulogium historiarum* (i,46) records Tournai as an 'urbem munitissimam'. The *French Chronicle of London* (p. 79) notes 'les toures et les fort mures, esglises, clochers, fortz sales, beaus mavautes, et riche habitacions, par tot la dite cité de Tormeye'.

¹⁰⁸ Henry Knighton, *Chronicon* ed. J.R. Lumby, Rolls Series (London, 1891), ii,19. See also Thomas Walsingham, *Ypodigma Neustria*, p. 280.

great that a quarter of wheat cost four pounds sterling, a quart of wine cost two marks, a chicken's egg six pence, two onions one penny.¹⁰⁹

The burghers of Tournai even tried to write to the French king telling him of their plight, notes the same source, but their messenger, attired in the clothes of a poor man, was captured by Henry of Lancaster, the earl of Derby, and his information brought no relief from Philip, only confidence to the allies.¹¹⁰

While the French contingent inside the town of Tournai invokes little commentary from the English chroniclers of the time, the presence of Philip and his army outside the walls of the town and the allies' inability to bring them to combat is much discussed by them. While Philip is considered to be evil, it is not some diabolical sin of which the French king is guilty. Instead, these writers, in supporting Edward's claim to the French crown, must consequently see Philip as the 'occupant' of the crown, the usurper of what should rightly be Edward III's, and this is the sin of which he is guilty.¹¹¹

Edward himself states the same sentiment in a letter which he wrote to the townspeople of Tournai during the siege.¹¹² After the English king calls his opponent a 'vir magnificus dominus', he explains that Philip should not occupy the throne. Edward then reports a long list of Philip's 'errores' among which included fighting against the English king and his allies at Tournai. Edward's intention in this siege is thus explained: the sole reason for his siege of their town is to gain back his crown and thereby to preserve the great French 'res publica'. He writes:

We will take care in our progress to preserve our indemnity and your *re publica* and to support it most joyfully in justice and the leniency of peace through the help of God. And we will restore fully to you whatever liberties were taken away which you had more completely obtained in the time of our predecessor of blessed memory, the king of France.¹¹³

The main concern of the English chroniclers reporting on the French position at Tournai, however, is the fact that although Philip was present with a large army in close proximity to the allied force, he would not come to battle against them. For the contemporary biographer of Edward III, Robert of Avesbury, this is simply not comprehensible, as the French king delays for so long that his own army is faced with problems of hunger and thirst:

The lord Philip did not dare to attack or to resist them in defence of the people of this land who had suffered an injury of this kind [the chevauchée of the count of Hainault], but he remained continually in the same place apart from the siege, until with more than twenty thousand men in his army, on account

¹⁰⁹ *French Chronicle of London*, p. 79.

¹¹⁰ *French Chronicle of London*, p. 80.

¹¹¹ This term ('occuper de la couronne') is used in *The Anonimale Chronicle, 1333 to 1381*, ed. V.H. Galbraith (Manchester, 1927), p. 17. Geoffrey le Baker (p. 146) calls the French king 'tyrannus'.

¹¹² This letter can be found edited by Kervyn de Lettenhove in Froissart, xviii, 173-5.

¹¹³ Found in Froissart, xviii, 175.

of the multitude of them and this long delay, being destroyed by hunger and thirst, at the insistence of this lord Philip, truces were made.¹¹⁴

This draws a comment from *The French Chronicle of London* that Philip was 'a coward and an exhausted knight', and that he had to send for 'a lady' to make his peace for him.¹¹⁵

Another activity concerning the French king which draws much attention from the English chroniclers is the sending and receiving of letters from Edward challenging Philip to single combat, combat with one hundred knights on each side or combat with as many knights as he could choose.¹¹⁶ We know later that Philip responded to Edward that he would gladly fight such a duel providing the stakes were each king's realm, an acceptance which Edward turned down.¹¹⁷ However, it is Philip's initial response, to refuse to accept the letter of challenge because it was not addressed to him as king of France, but rather to him as Philip of Valois, that gains the most mention by the English writers. Thomas Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana*, Robert of Avesbury's *De gestis mirabilibus regis Edwardi III* and Adam Murimuth's *Chronica* contain full copies of the letters,¹¹⁸ while several other sources, Geoffrey le Baker's *Chronicon*, Thomas Gray's *Scalachronica*, Thomas of Burton's *Chronica monasterii de Melsa*, the *Chronicon Lanercost* and the *Anonimale Chronicle*, contain paraphrases of Edward's challenge and Philip's initial response to it.¹¹⁹

About Edward's allies at the siege, very little comment is made by the English writers. For example, only Henry Knighton and Thomas Gray indicate that there were any problems among the allies. However, Knighton's remark, that the duke of Brabant had somehow changed sides during the conflict, comes only in his conclusions regarding why Edward acceded to the treaty of Esplechin, and this conclusion is subservient to that of the lack of money to continue the venture. Knighton claims that Edward signed the treaty because he was uncertain of the fidelity of the duke of Brabant, who although he imagined himself to be faithful to King Edward, nevertheless turned to the king of France.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, Thomas Gray is more determined in his perception that the allies had somehow caused the defeat. Gray notes explicitly that Edward was forced to sign the peace treaty 'because his allies would remain at Tournai no longer'.¹²¹

A similar lack of comment is given to the peace conferences and the role of Jeanne de Valois in this process. Both Robert of Avesbury's and Henry Knighton's accounts include the

¹¹⁴ Robert of Avesbury, p. 317. Thomas Walsingham, *Ypodigma Neustria* (p. 280) claims further that many of Philip's soldiers died from this hunger.

¹¹⁵ *French Chronicle of London*, p. 81.

¹¹⁶ For these letters see Froissart, xviii, 170-3 and *Foedera, conventiones, etc.*, ed. T. Rymer, 3rd ed. (London, 1739), ii, 80.

¹¹⁷ See Déprez, p. 331 n.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, i, 228-30; Robert of Avesbury, pp. 314-6; and Adam Murimuth, pp. 109-14.

¹¹⁹ Geoffrey le Baker, pp. 145-6; Thomas Gray, p. 171; Thomas of Burton, ii, 46-7; *The Anonimale Chronicle*, p. 17; and *Chronicon de Lanercost, 1201-1346*, ed. J. Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1839), p. 334.

¹²⁰ Henry Knighton, ii, 19.

¹²¹ Thomas Gray, p. 171.

complete peace treaty, and other chroniclers mention the conferences.¹²² However, the English authors are always certain to indicate that Edward signed this peace treaty only because he was forced to do so because of his financial problems. For example, the *Anonimale Chronicle*, written c. 1381, notes that peace was made under the auspices of two cardinals, but that Edward agreed to it only 'because he had debts and excessive expenses, and his money was depleted'.¹²³

As for the role of Jeanne de Valois, as mentioned above, *The French Chronicle of London* negatively views Philip's use of Jeanne de Valois in the peace process because of the French king's exhaustion and cowardice.¹²⁴ Other contemporary English chroniclers are more kind in their remarks, but still they attribute no undue significance to the countess's peacemaking attempts. The *Eulogium historiarum* praises the 'noble meditating' of Jeanne,¹²⁵ and Henry Knighton tells us that she came to Edward to plead for peace 'on bended knees'.¹²⁶ But later chroniclers, Thomas Walsingham and Thomas of Burton, mention only that Jeanne was present during the peace proceedings.¹²⁷

Before analyzing directly the perceptions of defeat among the English chroniclers commenting on the siege of Tournai, something should be mentioned about the sentiments of these writers concerning the role of God in the defeat. While there is little reference to God aside from the mention by Edward III to Philip VI in his letters of challenge that God would decide the victor of their single combat,¹²⁸ there certainly is a feeling among these English writers that Edward's intention in besieging Tournai is just. As mentioned above, in writing to the burghers of Tournai, Edward claimed that he only wished to preserve the French republic and to return the crown of France to himself as its rightful holder.¹²⁹ After the siege had failed, however, and he was forced to contend with the defeat in a letter to Benedict XII, Edward altered his opinion somewhat on the 'righteousness' of his quest against the town of Tournai. In this letter, written 10 November 1340, Edward, after thanking the Pope for his intercession in the peace process and for reminding the English king of the 'various dangers and crimes' of war, acknowledges his mistakes in attacking the French instead of proceeding against the Infidels.¹³⁰ He explains to Benedict:

But evil pierced and lodged inside my mind which, as was said before, came out in the present war, especially when Infidels were trying to invade the lands of Christians.¹³¹

¹²² Henry Knighton, ii, 19-22 and Robert of Avesbury, pp. 317-23.

¹²³ *Anonimale Chronicle*, p. 17. See also Adam Murimuth, pp. 115-6, 220 and Thomas Walsingham, *Ypodigma Neustria*, p. 280.

¹²⁴ See n. 115 above.

¹²⁵ *Eulogium historiarum*, i, 205.

¹²⁶ Henry Knighton, ii, 19.

¹²⁷ Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ii, 228 and Thomas of Burton, ii, 47.

¹²⁸ See the letter from Edward to Philip found in Froissart, xviii, 171. See also n. 116 above.

¹²⁹ See n. 113 above.

¹³⁰ An edition of this letter can be found in Déprez, pp. 421-3.

¹³¹ Déprez, p. 422. The Infidels described here might be the Ottoman Turks whose rise on the borders of Byzantium was being noticed by the kingdoms of Western Europe at this time.

Almost in penance, the English king then relates the conditions of the peace and promises to uphold them. In closing his letter, the defeated king requests: 'May the Most High preserve us in the rule of His Holy Church in our time and forever'.¹³²

Before leaving this subject, it is necessary to mention two further sources which refer to God's role at the siege of Tournai. First, Laurence Minot, the mid-fourteenth-century English political poet, devoted a poem to the siege of Tournai, as he had done for many other early fourteenth-century military engagements.¹³³ But, whereas his poems on other conflicts were written after the English victory (or defeat in the case of Bannockburn) and praised the participants of the battle, his verses on the siege of Tournai, which he entitles 'Herkins how king Edward lay With his men bifor Tournay', appear to have been written before the siege had ended.

Minot, addressing the town of Tournai itself, begins by expressing how the once-beautiful town now knows only sorrow:

Towrenay, 3ow has tight
 To timber trey and tene A bore, with breinis bright
 Es broght opon 3owre grene: þat es a semely sight,
 With schilterouns faire and schene: þi domes day es dight,
 Bot 3ou be war, I wene. When all yowre wele es went
 3owre wo wakkins ful wide, To sighing er þe sent
 With sorow on ilka syde: Ful rewofful es owre rent,
 All redles may þe ride; þe harmes at þe have hent
 Now may þe hele and hide.

He then promises the town that it will fall to the English king:

All bare er þe of blis,
 No bost may be 3owre bote, All mirthes mun þe mis,
 Oure inn sall with 3ow mote, Who sall low clip and kys
 And fall owre folk to fote: A were es wrought, i-wis,
 lowre walles with to wrote. Wrote þai sal lowre dene,
 Of dintes þe may 3ow dowt; 3owre biginges sall men
 brene,
 And breke 3owre walles about. Ful redles may þe ren,

¹³² Déprez, p. 423.

¹³³ This poem may be found in Laurence Minot, *Poems*, ed. J. Hall (Oxford, 1887), pp. 17-20. Other engagements written about by Minot include the siege of Calais (1346-7) and the battles of Sluys (1340) and Bannockburn (1314).

With all þowre rewful rent; With care men sall þow ken
Edward þowre lord to lout.

Minot tells Tournai that Philip will come, but that he will arrive too late and the town will hate him:

On bere when þe er broght,
þan cumes Philip to late, He hetes, and haldes þow noht,
With hert þe may him hate.
Therefore, the poet pleads with the town to surrender granting Edward his will:
A bare now has him soght
Till Turnay þe right gate, þat es ful wele bithoght
To stop Philip þe strate,

Ful still Philip was fain he moght
Graunt sir Edward his will.

Minot ends his poem on the siege of Tournai with a prayer to God that Edward might be granted this victory and his just crown as king of France:

King Edward, frey fode,
In Fraunce he will noht blin. To mak his famen wode
þat er wonand þarein. God, þat rest on rode
For sake of Adams syn, Strenkith him main & mode
His reht in France to win

And have. God grante him graces gode,
And fro all sins vs save. Amen.

A second source which should be mentioned is *The Brut*, a Middle English fifteenth-century chronicle, which encompasses the whole of English history up to its time including the tales of Arthur. Its account of the siege of Tournai is not unlike many of the other more contemporary sources, but it does include one story that none of the other writers reported. Edward, this source reports, in returning to England to chastize his councillors for not sending him the needed funds to pursue the victory at Tournai, encounters storms on the Channel conjured up by French 'nigromancye'. Edward, in desperation, prays to Mary for relief and it comes to him. Hence, it seems, God is still on the side of the English king:

And as he sayled toward Engelond, in þe hye see, þe moste mishappes, storms
and tempeste, thundres & lightynge, fil to hym in þe see, þe whiche was seyð
þat it was done & areysed þoruȝ evel spirites made by sorcery and

Nigromancye of hem of Fraunce. Wherefore þe Kinge hert was ful of sorwe & angwysshe, weyling & sighyng, & said vnto oure lady on þis wise. 'O blessid lady, sent Mary! what is þe cause þat euermore, goyng into Fraunce, alþinge & wederes failyn to me ioyful & likyng & gladsome, & as y wolde have hym; but alwey turnyng into Engelond ward, alþinges fallen vnprofitable & harmful?' Neuer þe latter, he, scapyng alle þe perilles of þe see, as God wolde, come by nyght to þe tour of London.¹³⁴

In analyzing the allied defeat at Tournai, the English authors perceive only one dominant cause of defeat. Edward's failure can be attributed to his lack of money during the siege. Rarely in historiography is there such a unity among a group of national authors in their perceptions of defeat. Nearly all the English chroniclers who write about the siege of Tournai note that Edward's lack of financial assistance from England made him accept a truce instead of pursuing a siege he surely would have won had he been able to persist in the endeavour.

Even the shortest accounts of this action remark on Edward's lack of funds at Tournai. Using nearly the same words in describing the influence that this had on Edward they write, as exemplified by contemporary Ranulph Higden: 'But finally *ob defectum pecunie* which his proctors in England had not sent, Edward left Tournai'.¹³⁵

Other, larger accounts record this as the reason for Edward's acceptance of peace. Although these may contain a bit more detail, their conclusions are the same. Geoffrey le Baker, for example, reports that the soldiers in Edward's army had not been paid for fifteen days:

The king to be sure had with him only a few English soldiers, but all the others were paid soldiers (*stipendiarii*), to whom nothing had been paid for fifteen days because the anticipated money from England had not arrived.¹³⁶

And *The Brut* claims that the source of this lack of finances was the corruption and deceptions of Edward's councillors in England:

And in þe xvj. ere of his regne folwyne, in þe wynter tyme, þe king, duelling still oppon þe forsaied sege, sent oft into Engelond to his tresorer & oper purveyours for gold & meny, þat shulde be sent to hym þer in his nede; but his procuratours & messagers cursidly & ful slowly served him at his nede, & him deceyved.¹³⁷

Both *The French Chronicle of London* and Robert of Avesbury conclude that this led Edward to accept the peace offered to him. The anonymous author of *The French Chronicle of London* writes:

¹³⁴ *The Brut or the Chronicles of England*, ed. F.W.D. Brie, Early English Text Society (London, 1908), ii,295-6.

¹³⁵ Ranulph Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. C. Babington and J.R. Lumby, Rolls Series (London, 1885), viii,336. See also Thomas Walsingham, *Ypodigma Neustria*, p. 280; *Anonimale Chronicle*, p. 17; *Vita Edwardi secundi*, p. 293; *Chronicon de Lanercost*, p. 334; and Thomas Otterbourne, *Chronica regum Angliae*, ed. T. Hearne (Oxford, 1732), i,129.

¹³⁶ Geoffrey le Baker, p. 147.

¹³⁷ *The Brut*, ii,295.

There had been nothing from his own treasury nor from the loans which were granted to the kingdom of England to aid Edward to maintain his war against the king of France in the whole time since his passage there when he conquered his enemy on the sea. And as there was nothing from the treasury of England he had to meet and to agree to the bad treaties which were made by his council.¹³⁸

Robert of Avesbury agrees:

It is right that lord Edward, the king of England, consent to these truces, being destitute of sufficient funds, by which he needed to take care of his own necessities and to pay the owed wages of his obedient soldiers.¹³⁹

Finally, Edward himself acknowledged the lack of funds as the chief cause of his loss at Tournai. He had already written to Parliament following his victory at Sluys asking for funds to continue the war in the Low Countries.¹⁴⁰ (These funds had been promised to Edward before he had set sail for Flanders.) But again, during the siege, when this needed financial aid still had not arrived, Edward petitioned Parliament for the money to continue his fighting in the Low Countries chastizing his councillors for their inactivity and warning them of the dire consequences which would come to his army if they were not paid:

[At Tournai] there are around 100,000 armed Flemish men and Sir Robert of Artois is at St. Omer with 50,000. Above this, is all our other allies and their forces. In order to govern and to lead this host, a great sum of money is necessary, besides the debts which we found it necessary to pay on our journey to Tournai. You hold yourselves dearly and each of you primarily wish to make the laws under which we afterwards will have a great peril which is to come if we do not soon see the aid of money and of goods to give to this land and to our allies and to the soldiers who are also retained by us who will retreat from us if they are not paid. And if our allies are not paid, they will join in this battle with our enemy and their malice and their power will recoil against us driving our land, us, our children and all the nobles and others to perdition.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ *French Chronicle of London*, p. 82.

¹³⁹ Robert of Avesbury, p. 317. See also Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ii,230; Adam Murimuth, p. 116; and Henry Knighton, ii,19.

¹⁴⁰ This letter is edited by Kervyn de Lettenhove in Froissart, xviii,167-70.

¹⁴¹ *Ronli parliamentorum, 1278-1503*, vol. 2 (London, 1783), 14 Edward III, 8.

Contemporary Southern Low Countries' Views

As mentioned, in looking at the Low Countries' chroniclers and their perceptions of defeat, we will find entirely different reasons put forward for the loss. Of all the writers reporting the siege of Tournai, none are more descriptive in their accounts than those from the Low Countries. Even without including the long and detailed narratives of Jean le Bel and Jean Froissart, the writings of the contemporary chroniclers from Flanders, Hainault and Brabant still provide us with the most descriptive accounts of the siege. Despite Froissart's contention that both sides claimed victory after Tournai—the French because they prevented the allies from taking their town, and the allies because they had endured for so long in the siege of a large and important town within the enemy's realm¹⁴²—and although these regions profited from the treaty of Esplechin, it is evident in these writings that the siege of Tournai was a failed enterprise; the allies of England had suffered loss as much as had their ally, Edward III. Yet the perceptions of defeat which we find in these Low Countries' sources are often very different from those which we found in analyzing the contemporary English chroniclers.

The large amount of coverage on the siege itself extends, as it did with the French chroniclers, also to the battle of St. Omer. This battle is commented on by nearly every Low Countries' author who reports the siege of Tournai.¹⁴³ Unlike their English counterparts, however, none of these chroniclers ever records the battle of St. Omer as an allied victory. Indeed, most seem ready to give us their own perceptions concerning what caused the defeat. While the late fifteenth-century chronicler, Adrien de But, notes only that the 'fortuna belli' had shifted to the side of the French and Philip VI,¹⁴⁴ contemporary Jean le Bel claims that the cause of defeat should be laid at the feet of the allied leader at St. Omer, Robert of Artois, who preferred to face a more experienced cavalry-based army on the battlefield than to carry on a siege. This caused the 'moult merveilleuse aventure' which Jean labels as 'si sauvage'.¹⁴⁵ The *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen*, written around the turn of the fifteenth century, sees the defeat coming from the effective defensive weapons of the town itself,¹⁴⁶ and Jean Froissart, writing in the last half of the fourteenth century, believed that the defeat came because the Flemish militia had been 'bewitched'.¹⁴⁷ It is left to the early sixteenth-century historian Nicholas Despars to add a new, most interesting rationalization of defeat into this story. Despars reports that Robert of Artois was lured from his protective

¹⁴² Froissart, iii,318.

¹⁴³ See Froissart, iii,296-305; Jean le Bel, ii,188-90; *Chronique de Pays Bas*, p. 152; *Chronique de Flandre*, pp. 386-92, 417, 624-9; Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, ed. J.G. Heymans (Nijmegen, 1983), p. 130; *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen*, pp. 832-3; Adrien de But, *Chronicon Flandriae*, in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, i, ed. J.J. de Smet (Brussels, 1837), p. 328; and J. Nicholas Despars, *Cronijke van den lande ende graefscpe van Vlaenderen*, ed. J. de Jonghe (Bruges, 1840), ii,350-1.

¹⁴⁴ Adrien de But, p. 328.

¹⁴⁵ Jean le Bel, ii,189.

¹⁴⁶ *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen*, p. 832: 'Want hi was an dingelsce side.
Maer de stede was wel voorsien
Van liede van wapinen, geloves myen.'

¹⁴⁷ Froissart, iii,301.

defences at Arques by a counterfeit letter that was delivered to him promising that St. Omer was ready to surrender to his army. Then when he approached the city to take custody of it, he was attacked by the French army of the count of Armagnac and the duke of Burgundy and defeated. He writes: 'a counterfeit letter had brought them into such a danger, that they lost three thousand of their soldiers'.¹⁴⁸

Much is also written about the devastation of the allies around Tournai and the chevauchée of the count of Hainaut. We are told that the destruction of both was great. As Jean le Bel writes concerning the devastation: 'I could never number all the *villes* and *villetes* which were burned and devastated because the siege lasted so long'.¹⁴⁹ To Jan de Klerk in *Van den derden Eduwaert* the chevauchée reminded him of what the apocalypse must look like:

Now may well the hour come / which Christ spoke of / that still will come the time / that in this world / people will rise up against other people / and one will kill another / . . . / This time has indeed come. / Yes, now it is certain / that Christianity is divided into two peoples. / The French are one / and the other is Germanic. / Now see how God awakens his judgement / on this Christianity / that he may take revenge for their sins.¹⁵⁰

In discussing the town of Tournai, although the Low Countries' chroniclers have left us no description of the town itself, possibly because of their own familiarity with it, they do seem impressed by its strong fortifications and ample artillery and by the fortitude and bravery of its citizens. These courageous people united themselves and defended their town against the many assaults of the besiegers despite their lack of food, water and other supplies.

Concerning the fortifications and the defensive artillery of Tournai, Jean Froissart records that one of the principal responsibilities of the constable of France, the count of Foix and the other soldiers sent to prepare the town for siege was to repair its fortifications and to set up machines to guard the walls (including, claims the first redaction of Froissart's *Chroniques*, gunpowder artillery pieces):

They departed from the king of France and came to Tournai. There they were received joyously. They then concerned themselves with the gates, the walls, the towers and the defences of the city, and they repaired any flaws which they

¹⁴⁸ Nicholas Despars, ii,350-1: '... voorscreven contrefaicten brieve in zulck een dangier ghebrocht hadde, als voorzeit es, ten verliese van drie duyzent harer lieden'.

¹⁴⁹ Jean le Bel, ii,184. See also pp. 185, 198-202; Froissart, iii,224-5; 228-31; 250-70; 273-6; *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen*, pp. 833-5; Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, p. 131; *Récits d'un bourgeois de Valenciennes*, pp. 184-5; *Chronique de Pays Bas*, p. 153; *Chronique de Flandre*, p. 418, 595-6, 601-3; Nicholas Despars, ii,354-6; *Chronicon comitum Flandriae*, in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, i, ed. J.J. de Smet (Brussels, 1837), p. 213; and *Breve chronicon Flandriae*, in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, iii, ed. J.J. de Smet (Brussels, 1856), p. 9.

¹⁵⁰ Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, p. 131:

Nu mach wel comen siin die stonde, Die Christus sprac met sinen monde Dat noch soude comen die tijt, Dat in dese werelt wijt Volc iegen volc soude opstaen Ende een rike dander verslaen . . . Oft dese tijt iet comen es. Ja hij nu, sijt seker des. Want kerstenheit es gedeelt in ij. en. Die Walsche tongen die es een, Dander die Dietsche algeheel. Nu siet hoe God siin oordeel Op dit kerstenheyt verweert, Daer hij die sonden mede wrect.

found. And they also looked after the artillery and the engines, the cannons and the *espringalles*, and they put them in place.¹⁵¹

So effective were the defences of Tournai, that the allies themselves tried to use their own artillery to bring down the walls and to gain entrance to the town. The mid-fifteenth-century Brabanter Edmond de Dwynter describes the attacks of these weapons, attacks which sometimes included reports from the artillery protecting the town:

And the king of England attacked the city with engines and other diverse kinds of instruments (for continually the repeated shots of stone smashed the towers and walls. Several times he even placed iron battering-rams on the gates or the *antemuria*. And those fighting inside Tournai, aiming their dreaded engines, fired on the enemy from the gates and the towers, defending themselves strongly with javelins and missiles and stones.)¹⁵²

So dire had the allied situation become, the mid-fifteenth-century *Chronique de Pays-Bas* reports, that Edward III called an expert on siege artillery to him to discuss tactics to be used against the town. Among other things which this man proposed was a 'dragon' made of wood which would spew out 'Greek fire'. It is said that he made this dragon 'par arte magique' and that it did destroy some of Tournai by fire. The English king then paid this engineer 'a great sum of money' to build more of these machines, but the engineer had fled, and despite a fervent search for him by the English king, he was never seen again. The anonymous chronicler reporting this tale does assure us, however, that this engineer died 'de malle mort' for his sins.¹⁵³

The Low Countries' chroniclers concern themselves much with the character and bravery of the inhabitants of Tournai during this siege. These authors are fully aware of the lack of food within the town, although naturally they do not have the first-hand knowledge of the *Chronique de Tournai* and Gilles li Muisit in this regard. They do report the fact that many of the besieged inhabitants suffered from a lack of food. As the siege continued, the situation grew so bad that desperate measures were tried by the people within the town walls. For example, on one occasion, Jean Froissart reports, several men and women from the town escaped through the Brabantine lines to Philip VI in Arras to ask him to intercede in the affair and to relieve the besieged town. But although Philip promised to do this, gathering a large army and camping at Bouvines, near Tournai, he did not attempt to relieve the siege.¹⁵⁴

Another interesting story reported by Edmond de Dwynter and Jan de Klerk in *Van de derden Eduwaert* also reflects the situation within the town of Tournai.¹⁵⁵ Well into the siege, an unnamed

¹⁵¹ Froissart, iii,218. See also *Recits d'un bourgeois de Valenciennes*, pp. 182-3. It is not inconceivable that there were gunpowder weapons at the siege of Tournai as cannons were being made there and elsewhere in the Low Countries at this time. See L. Lacabane, 'De la poudre à canon et de son introduction en France,' *Bibliothèque de l'école de chartes* 2nd ser., 1 (1844), 45-46 and Kelly DeVries, 'Gunpowder Weaponry and the Rise of the Early Modern State,' *War in History* (forthcoming).

¹⁵² Edmond de Dwynter, *Chronicon ducum Brabantiae*, ed. P.F.X. de Ram (Brussels, 1857), ii,637.

¹⁵³ *Chronique de Pays Bas*, pp. 153-4.

¹⁵⁴ Froissart, iii,246.

¹⁵⁵ Edmond de Dwynter, ii,637-8 and Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, pp. 132-3. Dwynter's story, written in Latin a century after the *Van den derden Eduwaert*, undoubtedly borrows much from the earlier Brabantine work.

Franciscan from the town approached Edward to ask that 'in honore Mariae Virginis' the English king provide him with fish to feed the pregnant women of the besieged town. After listening to the petition of this friar, Edward was so touched by the situation of these women that he provided the requested food. Edmond de Dynter writes:

The king, inclining favourably to the humble prayers of these women, loaded two carts with fresh sturgeon, salmon and herring which he sent into the city for these women, commanding that [the friar] should divide these fish evenly among the humble and noble pregnant women, as he wished the war not to disturb them.¹⁵⁶

Eventually the hunger in Tournai drove the town to the brink of surrender. After peace was made, Froissart comments:

The good city of Tournai was unhurt, but it was in great pain and peril because all its supplies were depleted and it could not have endured the siege longer than three or four more days.¹⁵⁷

The inhabitants of the town had indeed endured an eleven week siege despite their great hunger and the inaction of their king; and it was this fact that greatly impressed many of the Low Countries' chroniclers. Chief among those brave inhabitants of the besieged town were the French soldiers who had been sent to prepare the town for the siege. Of these troops the *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen* reports:

And know then that the men against the city / did many great assaults. / But those inside, I believe, / had prepared themselves well. / There were very good soldiers in there.¹⁵⁸

Froissart also notes the bravery of these soldiers:

The nobles were valiant men, of large stature and good sense. They thought so well and so wisely of this castle and this town that their honour protected it excellently and grandly. Because through no assault, nor any combat, nor any skirmish which was made, did a noble leave. But bravely night and day did they provide defence and council.¹⁵⁹

Jean le Bel sees bravery also among the townspeople as well as among their garrison. For, although some inside the town wanted to surrender it to the allies rather than hold out until Philip delivered some relief, the majority of the inhabitants of the town trusted their king and hoped that he would come soon to relieve the siege.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Edmond de Dynter, ii,637-8.

¹⁵⁷ Froissart, iii,317.

¹⁵⁸ *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen*, p. 833:

Ende weet, dat men up de stede Menich groet assaut dede. Maer die van binnen, gheolves mien, Waren daer jegen wel voersien. Daer lagen in vele goede lieden.

The *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen* then proceeds to list the names of several of these French nobles who were responsible for the protection of the town.

¹⁵⁹ Froissart, iii,305.

¹⁶⁰ Jean le Bel, ii,191-2.

When it comes to discussing Philip VI and his role in the defeat at Tournai, although the Low Countries' chroniclers also record the sending and receiving of Edward's letters challenging the French king to battle and his refusal to meet Edward's demands—indeed, *Van den derden Eduwaert* reports that Philip VI did not wish to fight the English king because he knew that Edward's claim to the throne was more just than his own, and he feared that he would thus lose the ordeal¹⁶¹—they are mostly bothered by one looming question. If Philip had a larger army than the allies, as Jan de Klerk in *Brabantse yeeften* reports,¹⁶² and if he knew that the people of Tournai suffered grievous hunger, why did he not come to battle against the allied army? It seems to these writers that Philip meant to attack the allies. (Indeed, Jan de Klerk reports it so.¹⁶³) Why else would he gather his army and march to Bouvines, within sight of the town and the besieging army's camp? Yet there the French army remained militarily inactive.

Several of these chroniclers comment on this inactivity and Philip's seeming reluctance to fight against the allies. At least two of the writers, Jan de Klerk, the author of the contemporary Middle Dutch poem, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, and the anonymous author of the early fifteenth-century *Chronicon comitum Flandriae*, see this maneuver as something other than cowardice on Philip's part. Indeed, Jan de Klerk believes that the inactivity of the French was wise:

Philip lay at this time / two miles away from Tournai / between two rivers / so that no one could reach him. / There he daily saw the enemy / both pillage and burn / so that the smoke flew over his head. / And his pride was great. / Still he with wisdom / let this also alone / so that he would wait in his place / to do damage to the enemy. / He stayed a long time / and then the winter's cold came.¹⁶⁴

As well, the *Chronicon comitum Flandriae* does not accuse Philip of cowardice for his reluctance to do battle. The author of this work reports rather that the French king 'as it seemed, did not

¹⁶¹ Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, p. 126.

¹⁶² Jan de Klerk, *Brabantse yeeften of rijmchroniek van Brabant*, ed. J.F. Willems and J.H. Bormans (Brussels, 1854), ii, 568.

¹⁶³ Jan de Klerk, *Brabantse yeeften*, ii, 565-6.

¹⁶⁴ Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, pp. 132-33:

Philips lach tesser wilen
 Bij Dornike op .ij. milen
 Tusschen .ij. rivieren alsoe,
 Datmen hemme nie mochte comen toe,
 Daer hij dagelijcs sach de viande
 Beide met roeve ende mit brande,
 Dat hem die roec vloech over thoest.
 Alsoe was hem die moot groot,
 Nochtan dat hij mit wijsheiden
 De dinc also dede beleyden,
 Dat hij wachten soude siin stade
 Den vianden te doene scade
 Ofte toete dat hise verduren soude
 Ende dat quame des winters coude.

intend to free the town of Tournai from the siege by power of arms, although he was only two miles from it, but rather to leave from the place without war but through a treaty of peace'.¹⁶⁵

Other Low Countries' chroniclers, however, are not so kind to the French or to their king. Nicholas Despars claims that Philip would have fought against the allies, but his nobles feared death.¹⁶⁶ The *Chronique de Pays-Bas* reports that Philip would have attacked but he feared 'trayson' among his soldiers.¹⁶⁷ And early sixteenth-century author, Philippe Wielant, claims that the French king was reluctant to engage the allies because he felt himself and his army to be in 'grant dangier,' he made peace, it is said, to avoid this danger.¹⁶⁸ The most harsh words against the idleness of the French army in this affair come from Jean le Bel. In discussing the French nobles and soldiers taking credit for the victory afterwards, when they were back home in France, Jean, who had seemingly met some of these individuals, denies them any validity whatsoever in these claims. Indeed, he chastizes them for their cowardice and inactivity:

Thus each of the parties involved in the battle attributed the honour [of victory] to himself, over which many debates and arguments were held in taverns, nobles' chambers and elsewhere between companions and people who wished to understand the feats and honour of arms. There one wished to take one side and the other another. But some marveling about this wished to know how it was that these nobles who were put into such great pain and danger did such great deeds at the siege of Tournai. They were there so long that the supplies of the town were well depleted. And seeing well that the king of France could not pass over the river against their will, he did not relieve the siege. And so they did not fulfill the intention for which they had come.¹⁶⁹

What then do the Low Countries' chroniclers perceive was the cause of defeat at the siege of Tournai? Certainly many of these writers comment on the peace conferences. Indeed, some of these records contain the most explicit and detailed accounts of the peace process at Tournai.¹⁷⁰ There is also ample praise paid to the countess of Valois for her peacemaking efforts. Jan de Klerk's *Van den derden Eduwaert* reports that Jeanne used 'al hair macht' to bring about peace between the two kings,¹⁷¹ a peace which, Jean Froissart reports, she wanted with only the purest of motives: 'Because that good woman saw on the two sides all the flower and honour of the

¹⁶⁵ *Chronicon comitum Flandriae*, p. 213. The account of the siege of Tournai found in the *Chronicon comitum Flandriae* is surprisingly small when compared to its record of the other battles of the early fourteenth century. Why this is so can not be explained.

¹⁶⁶ Nicholas Despars, ii, 352.

¹⁶⁷ *Chronique de Pays Bas*, p. 155.

¹⁶⁸ Philippe Wielant, *Recueil des antiquités de Flandre*, in *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, iv, ed. J.J. de Smet (Brussels, 1865), p. 425.

¹⁶⁹ Jean le Bel, ii, 209.

¹⁷⁰ See, for example, Jean le Bel, ii, 204-7; Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, pp. 133-8; *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen*, p. 835; Adrien de But, p. 328; and *Chronique de Pays Bas*, p. 155.

¹⁷¹ Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, pp. 133-4.

world's chivalry', she was determined that no battle should be fought between them.¹⁷² Moreover, Edmond de Dwynter credits her for bringing both sides together in the peace conferences and insisting that a truce should be signed.¹⁷³ But he is alone in this conclusion. The other Low Countries' historians feel mostly that this treaty, which was certainly good as it released the Flemings from the interdict spoken against them, was merely a formality; the allies had already lost the siege of Tournai.¹⁷⁴

Among the Low Countries' writers, there is also little sympathy for the English chroniclers' perception of defeat: that the lack of English financing caused the allied loss. For other than the contention of the contemporary *Breve chronicon Flandriae* that the lack of funds did indeed cause the defeat of this siege,¹⁷⁵ the other contemporary authors of this region either neglect to mention the allied financial situation at all, or, as with Jean Froissart, the Bourgeois of Valenciennes and Jan de Klerk, mention it only as an afterthought to the peace process. (Indeed, the citation of money problems appears only in one redaction of Froissart's *Chroniques* with the other two redactions mentioning nothing about it.¹⁷⁶) For example, Jan de Klerk in *Van den derden Eduwaert* claims, after describing the peace process in detail, that Edward thought of his financial situation only after his allies, save Jacob van Artevelde, had agreed to the truce:

The king thought in his mind / that this counsel was in part truly good / as he had no silver or gold / by which he might / pay his soldiers / if they were to continue this war. / Because to him nothing had come / out of his kingdom, so he well knew / that the need was there / that he agree also.¹⁷⁷

Thus we arrive at the perception of defeat held by most of the chroniclers of Flanders, Brabant and Hainault: that under the pressure of a lengthy siege and interregional jealousies, the alliance of Low Countries' leaders had dissolved and had forced the resolution of the siege before Tournai could be taken. Here it is important to separate these accounts even further along geographical lines removing the Brabantine authors from their Flemish and Hennuyer counterparts

¹⁷² Froissart, iii,305-6.

¹⁷³ Edmond de Dwynter, p. 638.

¹⁷⁴ Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, pp. 139-40; *Rijmkroniek van Vlaenderen*, p. 835; Adrien de But, p. 328; and the *Chronicon comitum Flandriae*, p. 214 all mention the repeal of the interdict against the county of Flanders as an important part of the peace treaty.

¹⁷⁵ *Breve chronicon Flandriae*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁷⁶ Froissart, iii,311; *Récits d'un bourgeois de Valenciennes*, pp. 185-6; and Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, p. 138.

¹⁷⁷ Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, p. 138:

Die coninc dachte in sinen moet,
Dat dese raet een deel waer goet,
Want hine hadde silver no gout,
Daer hij niet mochte siin scout
Sinien lieden betalen voert
Also toten orloge hoirt.
Want hem en quam goet en geen
Uut sinien lande als hem wel scheen,
So datten die noot dwanc daer toe,
Dat hij dit ane ginc also.

as they predominantly support their duke, Jan III, in this matter, while the other Low Countries' authors wish to place the blame for defeat on his treachery.

First, it must be acknowledged that none of these writers blame Edward III or the English army for failure to take the besieged town or for failing to hold the alliance together. Indeed, as we have seen above with the story of the English king's kindness to the pregnant women inside Tournai, Edward is always seen as kind and honourable.¹⁷⁸ Jan de Klerk's *Van den derden Eduwaert* even reports that the first part of the siege increased Edward's stature among his allies: 'For about the first month or more / he [Edward] had done himself great honour'.¹⁷⁹

Furthermore, the Low Countries' writers who reported this siege often praise the chivalry and bravery of the English army. The *Chronique de Pays-Bas* records an example of this by relating a story of an English squire who promises his lady that he will take a crossbow quarrel from each tower of Tournai to exemplify his love for her; in his effort to do so he is killed:

A squire of London said that he had promised a lady, his beloved, that, as King Edward besieged a town in France, he would take a quarrel from each tower or die in the process; which act he would do for her. There [at Tournai] he armed himself and mounted a horse. He took along a crossbow and quarrels, and he proceeded to ride to the gate of Sainte-Fontaine. Afterwards, he went from tower to tower, to the gate of Bourdeil, where he passed the Scheldt river at Marvis, and passed it again at Caufours, until he had come to the gate at Blengenoisse. There was at that gate an arbalestrier who had seen him and had fired an *espringalle* into his [the squire's] body; afterwards [the arbalestrier] was killed. But so blessed was he [the squire] that he finished his journey all the way back to the gate of Sainte-Fontaine from where he had begun. After this, he went to the tent of King Edward. There he drew the quarrel from his body and died. All the lords sorrowed greatly. Afterwards they sent the quarrel by which he was killed to his beloved lady and told her the story of his death.¹⁸⁰

Likewise, nothing negative about William, count of Hainault, is written by these chroniclers. Indeed, the many accounts of his chevauchée into France only serve to praise him and his military ability.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, in their discussions of the peace conferences, these chroniclers never mention the count of Hainault as if the presence of his mother precluded mentioning his action regarding the truce.¹⁸²

There is also a lack of criticism among these writers concerning the Flemings or their leader, Jacob van Artevelde. The only remark that could be taken as such is found in the

¹⁷⁸ See n. 135 above.

¹⁷⁹ Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, p. 131: 'Omtrent eene maent ofte mere, / Dede hij [Eduwaert] hem selven grote eere'.

¹⁸⁰ *Chronique de Pays Bas*, p. 154.

¹⁸¹ See n. 149 above.

¹⁸² For references to the peace conferences, see n. 170 above.

Brabantine *Van den derden Eduwaert* when Jan de Klerk claims that 'had the Flemings understood the peace treaty / they would not have taken so long to agree to it'.¹⁸³

It is the Brabanters and their duke, Jan III, who elicit the most commentary from the Low Countries' chroniclers recording the siege of Tournai. Most blame the duke's actions for causing the rift in the alliance. However, as mentioned above, neither of the two contemporary Brabantine sources written by Jan de Klerk which record the siege, *Van den derden Eduwaert* and *Brabantse yeeften*, report negative impressions of their duke. There is no record at all in these rhyming chronicles of conflict between the Brabantine duke and the other allied leaders. In fact, *Van den derden Eduwaert* paints an entirely different image of Jan III reporting his power and authority in assembling a fine army from his duchy; he was a leader angry only because his was the final group of allies to arrive at Tournai:

The duke came there / because he knew / that his land was so large / that it was necessary / that they must follow him. / In fact, the duke was greatly incensed / that it had taken them so long. / Thus the duke set up camp in front of the town / with the most beautiful army that had ever / been seen coming out of any land.¹⁸⁴

In both of these sources, the duke of Brabant reappears in a predominant role during the peace conferences. Both claim that when Jeanne de Valois was stymied in her peacemaking efforts, she turned to Jan to assist her. The *Brabantse yeeften* explains why he was chosen: 'And there was also no prince / there better than he / because all the leaders there / in each party were without strength'.¹⁸⁵

For his aid the countess promises Jan that people would continually speak of his prowess in this matter. *Van den derden Eduwaert* repeats Jeanne de Valois's speech to the duke: 'And if someone breaks the war / people will speak of him forever'.¹⁸⁶ Thus the duke agrees to intercede

¹⁸³ Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, p. 139: 'Alse dit die Vlaminge hebben verstaen, / En wouden sijs niet ane gaen'.

¹⁸⁴ Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, p. 125:

Die hertoge hij quam na,
Want also alsiet versta
Was siin gemeente so groot,
Dat het hem dede den noot,
Dat sij na moesten volgen.
Des was die hertoghe zeere verbolgen,
Dat sij so lange maecten dat.
Dus viel die hertoghe voir die stad
Metten scoensten heer dat verdien
Uut enegen lande je wart gesien.

¹⁸⁵ Jan de Klerk, *Brabantse yeeften*, ii, 567:

Ende dat oec gheen prince en si
Diere beter toe ware dan hi;
Want alle die heren, te waren,
In elke partie sine maghe waren.

¹⁸⁶ Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, p. 134: 'Ende consti doirloge gebreken, / Men soude hem ewelijc eere spreken'.

with his allies on her behalf. He, with Jeanne, Lewis, king of Bavaria (who had recently become Philip's ally), and the bishop of Liège, then approaches the other allied leaders and secures their agreement to the truce.¹⁸⁷

These two sources are alone, however, in praising the duke of Brabant. The other Low Countries' chroniclers record the opposite impression. These writers, for example, mention problems with the duke of Brabant which began earlier than the peace meetings. Froissart acknowledged above all that the people of Tournai in escaping the town to bring news of its situation to Philip VI, did so through the Brabantine lines.¹⁸⁸ But this is not the only controversial situation which is mentioned by these writers. It is reported, for example, that twice during the siege the duke argued with other allied leaders. For example, Froissart records an argument between the duke and the count of Hainault which took place at an assembly of allied leaders including Edward III. There William of Hainault charged the Brabantine force with shirking their responsibilities in that 'they did not wish to acquit themselves very sufficiently'.¹⁸⁹ Naturally such an accusation offended the duke, and Edward needed to soothe his rage.

As well, the *Chronique de Pays-Bas* records that yet on another occasion the duke of Brabant was charged by an unnamed accuser of 'comforting the town of Tournai with food and other necessities'. The anonymous chronicler follows this with a lament: 'Such and other things happened often during this siege'.¹⁹⁰

Not all of the problems at Tournai are blamed on the duke himself, but on his army instead. It appears from the Low Countries' sources that the soldiers of the towns of Brabant were especially persistent in their requests to return home. Indeed, Froissart reports that soldiers from Louvain and Brussels were especially earnest in these petitions. But when these requests were delivered to the 'mareschal del host' he tells them that such petitions 'were neither honourable nor reasonable', and after holding a conference among themselves they consented to remain at the siege.¹⁹¹ Still, when peace became a possibility, with the French force lying at such close proximity, money running out and Jeanne de Valois attempting to bring everyone to agreement on a truce, the Brabantines, led by their duke, were the first to express a willingness to raise the siege and to return home. Jean le Bel and Froissart both name the duke of Brabant as the prominent peacemaker among the allies speaking for peace whenever he could; neither of these, however, cites him as Jeanne de Valois's special envoy for this purpose.¹⁹² Moreover, after peace was made, the joy of these Brabantine troops is especially noted. Froissart writes: 'When the truce was accorded and sealed on both sides, each returned to their camps. And among the Brabantines there

¹⁸⁷ Jan de Klerk, *Van den derden Eduwaert*, pp. 136-38.

¹⁸⁸ See n. 154 above.

¹⁸⁹ Froissart, iii,271: 'Si sambla as seigneurs, spécialement au conseil le roy engls, que li Braibenchon ne se volloient mies acquitter trop souffissamment.'

¹⁹⁰ *Chronique de Pays Bas*, pp. 154-5:

Durant ledit siège, le duc de Braibant . . . fu retés qu'il confortoit la ville de Tournay de vivres et d'autres nécessité: dont il se seut bien escuser. . . Tés chosses et aultres avirent plusieurs durant ledit siège.

¹⁹¹ Froissart, iii,272-3.

¹⁹² Jean le Bel, ii,207-8 and Jean Froissart, iii,305-16.

was much joy because they had sat there unhappy for such a very long time'.¹⁹³ Le Bel adds that it was only a short time later that they 'commenced to leave quickly, because they had such a great desire to do so'.¹⁹⁴ They were the first troops to depart from the scene of the allied defeat.

* * * * *

It is evident that three different versions of the siege of Tournai arise among the contemporary writers commenting on it. While the historical coverage of the events of the siege itself does not differ much between the English, French and Low Countries' sources—the battle of St. Omer, the chevauchée of William of Hainault, the hunger of the town, the arrival and inaction of Philip VI and the peace meetings are all emphasized in these narratives—the perceptions of what caused victory and defeat at the siege differ markedly along geographical lines. The French perceive victory to have come to their king because of his tactical wisdom—in not falling for Edward's ploy by going to battle against him—the presence of God on his side against evil would-be-usurpers of the throne—the English, and rebels, the Flemish, Hennuyers and Brabantines—and ultimately the adept peace negotiations led by Jeanne of Hainault. The English perceive defeat to have come to their king because of a lack of funds which their Parliament unwisely failed to appropriate for the war on the continent. And, finally, the Low Countries' chroniclers, with the exception of the Brabantine Jan de Klerk, perceive defeat to have come to their forces and to Edward III because of the treachery of the Brabantines and their leader, Jan III, whose treasonable collusion with Philip VI and Jeanne of Hainault led to an unwanted and unwarranted truce which, in turn, denied them the prize of Tournai, a town about to surrender from starvation.

¹⁹³ Froissart, iii,310.

¹⁹⁴ Jean le Bel, ii,207-8.