

Unedited and Understudied English Chronicles on Ethics, National Identity, and War, 1327–77

A Research Report to the Society for the Study
of Medieval Languages and Literature

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In my research I investigate national identity and the ethics of war in English historical and political texts written during the reign of Edward III (1327–77). Many presume that English writers had no reason to complain during this period of English success against their enemies (most important of which were the French and the Scots). They contrast this with English literature that complained directly and loudly about the conduct of war, mostly in terms of its perceived immorality, during a period of costly English defeats in the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries. Texts written during the mostly victorious reign of Henry V (1413–22) seem to be equally silent on any moral problems of war. However, it is clear that English writers during Edward III's reign considered many issues of war, variable notions of national identity (both of the English and other peoples), and also how these issues might affect each other. I am investigating all of the English historical (e.g. chronicles) and political texts (e.g. newsletters and incidental poems) written during 1327–77 to explore the nuances of varied opinions on these and related matters. It is especially important for me to look at unedited texts as they often show strikingly different attitudes from those that are commonly studied (often in convenient editions).

During my 16–19 March research trip to Oxford I examined several manuscripts with unedited texts, as well as variants of other edited texts that have not been discussed previously, listed at the end of this document. In addition to examining these manuscripts personally, I also took photos of all the folios listed so that I can investigate them in depth over the subsequent months. Most of these texts are unedited (such as those in Bodley 101, Laud misc. 722, and most in CCC 78), while some (such as Higden's *Polychronicon*, Tynemouth's *Historia aurea*, and the *Long* and *Short Anglo-Norman Prose Bruts*) are edited from only a handful of manuscripts, none of which are those here, which have several important variations hitherto unnoticed. There is much work yet to be done on these texts, but the work I have done so far has yielded interesting results (such as 'Chronicle of England to 1347' labeling the Scots as rebels, which has implications on their deserved treatment in war).

I am grateful for the research bursary generously granted to me by the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature. Access to images of these texts will allow me to flesh out my investigation of varied conceptions of national identity and ethics of war. As a result of this opportunity my PhD thesis will benefit greatly, as will my planned postdoctoral work on editing some of these texts.

List of Manuscripts Consulted in Oxford¹

Bodleian Library

ASHMOLE 796

fols 218v–227v [‘A’ continuation of Higden’s *Polychronicon*,
Intermediate Version, 1340–77]

ASHMOLE 1804

fols 49r–104v [*Long Anglo-Norman Prose Brut*, Brutus–1333]

BODLEY 101

fols 11–12r [chronicle on English kings to 1377]

fols 18r–18v [*Cronica Anglie* to 1327]

fols 32r–35v [*De gestis Anglorum regum Gallicorum et Scotorum
bellis et aliis infinitis miseris*, 1274–1367]

fols 36r–56v [chronicle of England to 1347]

fols 57r–70v [*De Anglia id est Britannia maiore a Bruta dicta*,
Brutus–1377]

BODLEY 240

pp. 559–82 [Tynemouth’s *Historia aurea*, 1327–35 portion]

BODLEY 462

fols 21r–34r [Tynemouth’s *Historia aurea*, 1339–47 extract]

fols 131r, 132v, 133v, 137v, 146v–148v [Tynemouth’s *Historia aurea*,
1338 entries integrated into Walsingham’s *Cronica*]

DIGBY 201

fols 215v–226r [‘A’ continuation of Higden’s *Polychronicon*,
Intermediate Version, 1340–77]

LAUD MISC. 619

fols 153r–159v [‘A’ continuation of Higden’s *Polychronicon*, Long
Version, 1340–77]

LAUD MISC. 722

fols 38v–88r [*Long Kirkstall Abbey Chronicle* to 1360]

RAWLINSON B 152

fols 38v–51r [‘St Albans A’ continuation of Higden’s *Polychronicon*,
1343–77]

Corpus Christi College

MS 78

fols 2ar–6r [short Anglo-Norman text on the battle of Poitiers, 1356]

fols 147r–164v [Edward I portion (1272–1307) of *Short Anglo-Norman
Prose Brut*, full text starts with Brutus at fol. 8r]

fols 164v–189r [Anglo-Norman continuation, 1307–77]

fols 189r–214r [Anglo-Norman continuation, 1377–97]

¹ All texts are in Latin unless noted otherwise.