OXFORD MEDIEVAL TEXTS

Vita Edwardi Secundi

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY
WENDY R. CHILDS

OXFORD MEDIEVAL TEXTS

General Editors

J. W. BINNS W. J. BLAIR

D. D'AVRAY M. LAPIDGE

VITA EDWARDI SECVNDI

THE LIFE OF EDWARD THE SECOND

This page intentionally left blank

VITA EDWARDI SECVNDI
THE LIFE OF EDWARD THE SECOND

RE-EDITED TEXT
WITH NEW INTRODUCTION, NEW HISTORICAL NOTES,
AND REVISED TRANSLATION BASED ON
THAT OF N. DENHOLM-YOUNG
BY

WENDY R. CHILDS

CLARENDON PRESS · OXFORD

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP
Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in
Oxford New York
Auckland Bangkok Buenos Aires Cape Town Chennai
Dar es Salaam Delhi Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi Kolkata
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai Nairobi
São Paulo Shanghai Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto
Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries
Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

First published 2005

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available
Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available
ISBN 0-19-927594-7
1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2
Typeset by Anne Joshua, Oxford
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
Biddles Ltd, King's Lynn, Norfolk

PREFACE

There have been three previous editions of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, in 1730, 1883, and 1957. The last, by N. Denholm-Young for Nelson's Medieval Texts, also included a translation and is still, justly, widely used, although out of print. My first task, therefore, is to record what changes have been made in this new edition. First, the Latin text, classicized by previous editors, has now been wholly revised from Hearne's eighteenth-century transcript, and returned as far as possible to fourteenth-century orthography. The text has also been provided with a full *apparatus criticus*. The introduction is entirely new, and takes account of the many works on the reign since 1957; I have also provided new and more extensive historical notes, an index of quotations and allusions, a concordance with previous editions, and a new general index. The translation has been fully checked and a number of changes have been made for accuracy and style, but this is the part which bears the strongest links with N. Denholm-Young's edition of 1957. In numerous passages his choice of words was difficult to improve.

My many obligations to other scholars, past and present, will be apparent throughout the introduction and the historical notes, and I am grateful to them all. Here, however, I would like particularly to thank the staff of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, who willingly made Hearne's transcription in MS Rawlinson B. 180 available to me, and also provided a photocopy, which made the work of checking the text so much easier. I would also like to thank all friends and colleagues who have answered questions, large and small, and those who have unconsciously helped by prompting my thoughts and further questions in general discussions. Among my colleagues at Leeds, I would particularly like to thank Dr Catherine Batt, Dr W. Flynn, Mr Ian Moxon, Professor Ian Wood, and Dr A. D. Wright. Among those outside Leeds, my thanks are due to Dr Paul Brand, Professor Chris Given-Wilson, Dr J. R. Maddicott, Professor Seymour Phillips, and Professor Michael Prestwich, some for responses to direct questions, some for comments on conference papers as long ago as 1995. Particular thanks must, of course, go to the General Editors of Oxford Medieval Texts. My debt here is great and twofold. One is

to the present editors, who have made excellent suggestions for improvement in the later stages of the work, and have seen the edition to the press. The second is to those who were editors when I began, Dr Diana Greenway, Miss Barbara Harvey, and Professor Michael Lapidge. Their encouragement, advice, and criticism in the early stages were invaluable. My debt to Miss Harvey is particularly great, not only for her encouragement to undertake the edition, but also for her continued interest and comments which have saved me from error and led to great improvement. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs Ann Dale and Mrs Margaret Walkington, who helped with early typing of the text, and to thank Dr Bonnie Blackburn for making further valuable suggestions as she copy-edited the text.

When I started the new edition a decade ago, I certainly did not expect it to take so long. Unfortunately, it was overtaken by other demands, but perhaps the delays have made it a better volume, as I have had greater opportunities to seek advice. Any errors which remain will show where I failed to take it.

W.R.C.

July 2003

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

Ann. Lond.	*Annales Londonienses*, in Stubbs, *Chronicles*, i
Ann. Paul.	*Annales Paulini*, in Stubbs, *Chronicles*, i
Anon.	*The Anonimalle Chronicle 1307–1334, from Brotherton Collection MS 29*, ed. Wendy R. Childs and John Taylor, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, cxlvii for 1987 (1991)
Aylmer and Cant, *York Minster*	G. E. Aylmer and R. Cant (eds.), *A History of York Minster* (Oxford, 1977)
Barrow, *Bruce*	G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, 3rd edn. (Edinburgh, 1988)
BIHR	*Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*
BL	British Library
Bracton, *De Legibus*	*Henrici de Bracton de Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae*, trans. S. E. Thorne from the edition of G. E. Woodbine, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1968–77)
Brid.	*Gesta Edwardi de Carnarvan, auctore canonico Bridlingtoniensi*, in Stubbs, *Chronicles*, ii
The Bruce	John Barbour, *The Bruce*, ed. and trans. A. A. M. Duncan (Edinburgh, 1997; repr. with corrections, 1999)
BRUO	A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to AD 1500*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1957–9)
Brut	*The Brut*, ed. F. W. Brie, EETS, original ser., cxxxi (London, 1906)
Cary, *Medieval Alexander*	G. Cary, *The Medieval Alexander* (Cambridge, 1956)
CChR	*Calendar of Charter Rolls*
CChW	*Calendar of Chancery Warrants*
CCR	*Calendar of Close Rolls*

CDS	*Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, ed. J. Bain, iii (Edinburgh, 1887)
CFR	*Calendar of Fine Rolls*
Chaplais, 'Duché-Pairie'	P. Chaplais, 'Le Duché-Pairie de Guyenne: l'hommage et les services féodaux de 1303 à 1337', in his *Essays in Medieval Diplomacy and Administration* (London, 1981), ch. 4
Chaplais, *Gaveston*	P. Chaplais, *Piers Gaveston: Edward's Adoptive Brother* (Oxford, 1994)
Chaplais, *Saint-Sardos*	P. Chaplais (ed.), *The War of Saint-Sardos (1323–1325): Gascon Correspondence and Diplomatic Documents*, Camden Society 3rd ser., lxxxvii (London, 1954)
Childs, 'Resistance and treason'	W. R. Childs, 'Resistance and treason in the *Vita Edwardi Secundi*', in M. Prestwich, R. H. Britnell, and R. Frame (eds.), *Thirteenth-Century England VI* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 177–91
Childs, '"Welcome"'	W. R. Childs, '"Welcome, my brother": Edward II, John of Powderham, and the chronicles, 1318', in I. N. Wood and G. A. Loud (eds.), *Church and Chronicle: Essays Presented to John Taylor* (London, 1991), pp. 149–63
CIPM	*Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*
CMI	*Calendar of Miscellaneous Inquisitions*
Cod.	*Codex Iustinianus*, see *Corpus Iuris Civilis*
Cole, *Docs. Illus.*	H. Cole (ed.), *Documents Illustrative of English History in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1844)
Cont. Trivet	*Nicolai Triveti Annalium Continuatio; ut et Adami Murimuthensis Chronicon, cum ejusdem continuatione: quibus accedunt Joannis Bostoni Speculum Coenobitarum et Edmundi Boltoni Hypercritica*, ed. A. Hall (Oxford, 1722)
Corpus Iuris Canonici	*Corpus Iuris Canonici*, ed. A. Friedberg (Leipzig, 1881)
Corpus Iuris Civilis	*Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. P. Krueger, T. Mommsen, and R. Schoell, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1900–4)
CP	G. E. Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage*, revised V. Gibbs *et al.* (London, 1910–59)

CPL	*Calendar of Papal Registers, Papal Letters*
CPR	*Calendar of Patent Rolls*
Davies, *Opposition*	J. Conway Davies, *The Baronial Opposition to Edward II: Its Character and Policy. A Study in Administrative History* (Cambridge, 1918)
Decretal. Gregorii IX	*Decretalium Gregorii IX*, see *Corpus Iuris Canonici*
Decretum	*Gratian, Decretum*, see *Corpus Iuris Canonici*
Denholm-Young, 'Authorship'	N. Denholm-Young, 'The authorship of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi*', *EHR*, lxxi (1956), repr. in his *Collected Papers* (Cardiff, 1969), pp. 267–89
Denton, *Winchelsey*	J. H. Denton, *Robert Winchelsey and the Crown 1294–1313: A Study in the Defence of Ecclesiastical Liberty* (Cambridge, 1980)
Dig.	*Digesta Iustiniani*, see *Corpus Iuris Civilis*
DNB	*Dictionary of National Biography*
Doherty, *Isabella*	P. Doherty, *Isabella and the Strange Death of Edward II* (London, 2003)
EcHR	*Economic History Review*
EETS	Early English Text Society
EHD	*English Historical Documents*, iii: *1189–1327*, ed. H. Rothwell (London, 1975)
EHR	*English Historical Review*
Eubel, *Hier. Cath.*	C. Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica*, i: *1198–1431* (Regensburg, 1913)
Fleta	*Fleta*, ed. H. G. Richardson and G. O. Sayles, 3 vols., Selden Society, lxxii, lxxxix, xcix (London, 1953, 1972, 1984)
Flores	*Flores Historiarum*, ed. H. R. Luard, 3 vols. (RS, London, 1890)
Foed.	*Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae et Cuiuscunque Acta Publica*, ed. T. Rymer, ii (RC, London, 1816–69)
Fryde, *Tyranny*	N. Fryde, *The Tyranny and Fall of Edward II 1321–1326* (Cambridge, 1979)
Gransden, *Historical Writing*	A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, i: *c.550–c.1307* (London, 1974); ii: *c.1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London, 1982)
Green, *Alexander*	P. Green, *Alexander of Macedon, 356–323 B.C.: A*

	Historical Biography (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991)
Haines, *Orleton*	R. H. Haines, *The Church and Politics in Fourteenth-Century England: The Career of Adam Orleton c.1275–1345* (Cambridge, 1978)
Hamilton, *Gaveston*	J. S. Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston, Earl of Cornwall 1307–1312: Politics and Patronage in the Reign of Edward II* (Detroit, 1988)
Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander*	J. A. Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander. A Commentary* (Oxford, 1968)
HBC	*Handbook of British Chronology,* 3rd edn., ed. E. B. Fryde, D. E. Greenway, S. Porter, and I. Roy (RHS, London, 1986)
Hearne, *Trokelowe*	T. Hearne, *Johannis de Trokelowe annales Eduardi II. Henrici de Blaneforde chronica et Eduardi II vita a monacho quodam Malmesburiensi fuse enarrata* (Oxford, 1729)
Hist. Roff.	*Historia Roffensis*, text and trans. for 1321 in N. Pronay and J. Taylor, *Parliamentary Texts of the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 161–3, 166–7
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
Inst.	*Institutiones Iustiniani*, see *Corpus Iuris Civilis*
Itin.	*The Itinerary of Edward II*, ed. E. Hallam, List and Index Society, ccxi (London, 1984)
Keen, *Laws of War*	M. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1965)
Kingsford, *Song of Lewes*	C. L. Kingsford (ed.), *The Song of Lewes* (Oxford, 1890)
Lanercost	*Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. J. Stevenson, Bannatyne Club, lxv (Edinburgh, 1839)
Lay Taxes	M. Jurkowski, C. L. Smith, and D. Crook, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales 1188–1688*, PRO Handbook, xxxi (London, 1998)
Le Baker	*Chronicon Galfridi Le Baker de Swynbroke*, ed. E. M. Thompson (Oxford, 1889)
Legg, *Sarum Missal*	J. Wickham Legg, *The Sarum Missal. Edited from Three Early Manuscripts* (Oxford, 1916; repr. 1969)
Let. Bk. E	*Calendar of Letter-Books Preserved among the*

	Archives of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter Book E, ed. R. R. Sharpe (London, 1903)
Lib. Cust.	*Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis*; *Liber Custumarum*, ed. H. T. Riley (RS, London, 1860)
List of Sheriffs	*List of Sheriffs for England and Wales from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1831*, PRO List and Indexes, ix (London, 1898)
Lunt, *Financial Relations*	W. E. Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England to 1327* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939)
Lydon, 'Impact'	J. Lydon, 'The impact of the Bruce invasion', in A. Cosgrove (ed.), *A New History of Ireland*, ii: *Medieval Ireland 1169–1534* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 275–302
McNamee, *Wars*	C. McNamee, *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, England and Ireland, 1306–1328* (East Linton, 1997)
Maddicott, *Lancaster*	J. R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster 1307–1322: A Study in the Reign of Edward II* (Oxford, 1970)
Murimuth	*Adae Murimuth Continuatio Chronicarum*, ed. E. Maunde Thompson (RS, London, 1889)
OMT	Oxford Medieval Texts
Parliamentary Texts	*Parliamentary Texts of the Later Middle Ages*, ed. N. Pronay and J. Taylor (Oxford, 1980)
Patterson, *Chaucer*	L. Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (London, 1991)
Phillips, *Pembroke*	J. R. S. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke 1307–1324: Baronial Politics in the Reign of Edward II* (Oxford, 1972)
PL	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Patres . . . Ecclesiae Latinae*, ed. J. P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64)
Plac. Abb.	*Abbreviatio Placitorum*, ed. G. Rose and W. Illingworth (RC, London, 1811)
Prestwich, *Ed. I*	M. Prestwich, *Edward I* (London, 1988)
PRO	Public Record Office, London, *see* TNA
PW	*Parliamentary Writs and Writs of Military Summons*, ed. Sir F. Palgrave, ii (RC, London, 1827–34)
RC	Record Commission
RHS	Royal Historical Society

RP	*Rotuli Parliamentorum*
RS	Rolls Series
Sext.	*Sexti Decretalium*, see *Corpus Iuris Canonici*
SHR	*Scottish Historical Review*
Smith, *Appointments*	W. E. L. Smith, *Episcopal Appointments and Patronage in the Reign of Edward II* (Chicago, 1938)
SR	*Statutes of the Realm*, ed. A. Luders *et al.*, i (RC, London, 1810)
Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*	E. L. G. Stones (ed.), *Anglo-Scottish Relations 1174–1328: Some Selected Documents*, OMT (1970)
Stubbs, *Chronicles*	*Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols. (RS, London, 1882–3)
TBGAS	*Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*
TNA	The National Archives, London (formerly Public Record Office)
Tout, *Chapters*	T. F. Tout, *Chapters in Medieval Administrative History*, 6 vols. (Manchester, 1923–35)
Tout, *Ed. II*	T. F. Tout, *The Place of the Reign of Edward II in English History*, 2nd edn. (Manchester, 1936)
TRHS	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
Vita, 1st edn.	*Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. N. Denholm-Young (London, 1957)
Walther, *Carminum*	H. Walther, *Initia Carminum ac Versuum Medii Aevi Posterioris Latinorum* (Göttingen, 1959)
Walther, *Proverbia*	H. Walther, *Proverbia Sententiaeque Latinitatis Medii Aevi*, 5 vols. (Göttingen, 1963–9)
Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes*	J. F. Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property, 1290–1334* (Cambridge, Mass., 1934)
Wright, *Reynolds*	J. R. Wright, *The Church and the English Crown 1305–1334: A Study Based on the Register of Archbishop Walter Reynolds* (Toronto, 1980)

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

THE MANUSCRIPT

i. Hearne's transcript

THE chronicle known as the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* (a title given to the work by its first editor, Thomas Hearne) is now known to us only through Hearne's transcript made in 1729. The discovery, editing, and loss of the manuscript were fully described from Hearne's own letters and papers by its second editor, Bishop Stubbs, and only a résumé is necessary here.[1] Mr James West of the Inner Temple acquired the manuscript among others which had once belonged to Gervase Holles, a life-long collector of manuscripts who died in 1674. When and where Holles had acquired it, and precisely how it came to West, are now unknown. The manuscript contained a number of chronicles and chronicle extracts and some miscellaneous writings. In October 1728 West lent it to Thomas Hearne for a pronouncement on its age and authorship. In January 1729 Hearne described it to West as being composed of two distinct parts, probably originally separate and possibly first bound together by Gervase Holles in the seventeenth century. The first part was largely made up of a chronicle which ran from 1066 to 1347 and was essentially a compilation of known chronicles, but the second part contained an independent 'large and full' chronicle of the reign of Edward II, which Hearne decided to transcribe for publication. By July 1729 he had finished his transcription and by January 1730 it had been printed.[2] Already nine leaves were missing from this second part: two for the year 1316, six which covered 1322 from the execution of Lancaster in March to the rebellion and arrest of Robert Ewer at the end of the year, and one for 1324 between the attempted escape of Maurice Berkeley from Wallingford castle and Robert Bruce's request for a full treaty. Hearne kept the manuscript a little longer as he found the first part, although mainly a compilation, more interesting than he had at first thought and decided to transcribe that too. (Stubbs identified the sources of this part as mainly the Premonstratensian Barlings chronicle to 1282,

[1] Stubbs, *Chronicles*, ii, pp. xxxi–xliii.

[2] Hearne, *Trokelowe*, pp. 95–250.

Geoffrey le Baker to 1336, and the *Eulogium Historiarum* down to 1347.)

Hearne returned the manuscript safely to West in June 1730, but in January 1737 a fire in the Temple burned several chambers, including West's, together with many of his books and manuscripts to the total value of £1,800. The Temple fire was described as a 'public loss', just as the fire at the Cotton Library had been. West's losses presumably included this manuscript, which has not been seen since. Thus the manuscript, containing one of the most interesting and important accounts of the reign of Edward II, is now preserved for us only in Thomas Hearne's transcript of 1729 and publication of 1730.

Hearne's transcript of the section now known as the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* is to be found in the Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS B. 180. This transcript and Hearne's marginal notes are faithfully reflected in the publication of 1730 and it is clear that Rawlinson B. 180 served as the printer's copy. Hearne's paragraph marks, commas, and brackets are all clearly later additions superimposed on his original transcript, which was written as one continuous piece with only full stops and question marks as punctuation.[3] On his transcript Hearne also marked up the folio numbers, the line endings, and the original paragraph marks of the fourteenth-century manuscript. These marks are all still visible in Rawlinson B. 180 but were not transferred to the printed version. From them it is possible to reconstruct the line lengths and lines per folio of West's manuscript. Rawlinson B. 180 has itself lost a leaf since 1730, and for the final passages on the queen's refusal to return to England we are now dependent on Hearne's printed copy alone.

Hearne's transcript of the first part of West's manuscript is also in the Bodleian Library, as Rawlinson MS B. 414. From a study of these transcripts together with Hearne's letters and notes, Stubbs described the original manuscript borrowed from West as of 165 written leaves (making no allowance for the losses Hearne noted). Fos. 1–62 contained the consecutive derivative chronicle from 1066 to 1347; fos. 63–84 contained a long extract from William of Guisborough (called Hemingburgh by Hearne); fos. 85–91 contained scraps from William of Newburgh (which Hearne did not transcribe) and a list of the abbots of Malmesbury, written in a 'modern hand', according to

[3] Apart from the inset of the verses, the only exceptions to the writing as a continuous piece without paragraphs come with new paragraphs at the beginning of 1316 (this is also the change to fo. 126 of the original manuscript), and at the beginning of 1320.

Hearne. Finally fos. 92–165 contained what we now know as the *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, which Hearne described as beginning with a large illuminated letter E. There is a minor problem with this folio numbering, but the shape of the manuscript is clear.[4] Hearne also recorded that at the end of the *Vita* there was a deed relating to Malmesbury Abbey, which he copied, and that on the *recto* of the last leaf appeared

G. Holles
meis, mihi } 1648.[5]

Hearne and Stubbs both expressed regret at the loss of the leaves, and we can only echo them. The loss of the long passage for 1322 is particularly unfortunate; we are left with only the beginning of the author's lament for Lancaster in 1322, and we lose entirely any comments on the further executions, the parliament at York, and the Scottish expedition. The loss of the passage for 1323 deprives us of Harclay's execution, and possible further comments from the author on acceptable resistance and treason.

ii. The date of West's manuscript

Hearne described the whole manuscript as being written in a fourteenth-century hand or hands, and his experience and general accuracy as an editor have led subsequent scholars to accept his view. However, West's manuscript itself was certainly not written early in the fourteenth century nor by the original author of the *Vita*. In his manuscript the section on Edward II was followed without any break by a short continuation down to 1348, which was drawn mainly from Higden's *Polychronicon*. Since Hearne made no comment on a change of hand for that continuation, it is likely that one hand wrote the whole section 1307–48. If so, the text of the *Vita* which comes down to us must be the work of a scribe writing sometime after 1348.[6] It is nonetheless just possible that the two parts of this text were

[4] On Rawlinson B. 180 Hearne wrote 'fo. 92' twice at the beginning of his transcript (on fo. 162 top left margin, fo. 162^{v} mid-right margin at line 13). There is sufficient text between them to make clear that he is not referring to material on the same folio. Subsequent folio numbers follow consecutively and at regular intervals from the second mention of fo. 92, but are crossed through to fo. 123 inclusive as if for correction. The *Vita* must therefore have been contained either on fos. 91–165 or 92–166 of the original manuscript.

[5] Stubbs, *Chronicles*, ii, pp. xxxviii–xxxix.

[6] Ibid., p. xlv.

written by different scribes, as there appears to be a different usage of paragraph marks in each: Hearne regularly marked paragraph marks in his transcript of the text for 1307–26, but recorded none in the continuation to 1348. However, even if the two sections had been in different hands, it is still clear that the text for 1307 to 1326 cannot be the author's original text. A number of the simple errors which Hearne found in the manuscript indicate slips which are likely from a copyist but unlikely to have been written by the author; and the few places where words in the text are so garbled as to make no sense are extremely unlikely to have been written by the original author, even in an unrevised text.

Hearne was a careful transcriber. As well as marking folio numbers, line endings, and paragraph marks, he made about 500 marginal notes on the wording of the manuscript which indicate that he had looked particularly closely at the text. His notes fall into four main categories. First, a word or words in the margin followed by *MS* indicate the original manuscript spelling where Hearne had incorporated a correction directly into the text as he made the transcription (*c.*320 instances). Secondly, a simple *sic* in the margin records where he thought something in the manuscript was odd but did not change it (*c.*39 instances). Thirdly, *F.* (*faueo*) or *malim* with an alternative shows that he favoured another reading but had made no change in the text (*c.*90 instances). Finally, a variety of comments (*malit nonnemo . . .*, *malint forsitan alii . . .*, *potest etiam . . . legi*, *siue . . .*, *uel . . .*, *nescio an . . .*, *conieceram . . .*, and *adieci . . .*, *addidi . . .*) indicate other possible alternative readings and some additions of words to make sense (*c.*78 instances). There remain a few mistakes noted by later editors which were not commented on by Hearne. It is now impossible to be sure in these cases whether Hearne accurately transcribed a faulty text without making a note or whether he himself made some of these errors, as for instance where a letter is misread, as in the desires of the rich being as *pernis* (thighbones) rather than the more likely *pennis* (feathers).

Most errors are easily explicable copying mistakes, where, for instance, *ut* may be a misreading of the abbreviation for *uel*, or a *titulus* (and therefore an abbreviated *m* or *n*) is missed. With minimal adjustment the text makes sense, but there are a few instances where the errors are less easily explicable and where the manuscript does not make sense. It is easy for copying errors to creep in at any time, but if, as is almost certain, the text was copied as a whole after 1348, the date

of the copy possibly compounds the problem. A major shift in script was taking place in the mid-fourteenth century and a young copyist, particularly if he copied fast or lazily, might have increasing difficulties in reading a manuscript written decades before, possibly by someone trained in the 1270s and 1280s.

iii. The date of composition of the Vita

There has naturally been much more debate about the more interesting question of the date and method of composition of the original text than there has been about the date of the manuscript copy. Since the author himself tells us nothing about this, everything has to be drawn from internal evidence. It has been generally accepted that the author finally stopped writing sometime between December 1325, when the narrative of the chronicle ends, and late September 1326, when Isabella invaded, an event about which the author appears to know nothing. This completion date was accepted with only minor reservations by Stubbs, Denholm-Young, and Gransden, and there is no reason to dispute it.[7] Stubbs (although reserving the possibility of a later date) noted that the text indicated no knowledge of the final disasters of the reign and the accession of Edward III, although the author used the literary convention of forward comment.[8] Denholm-Young further elaborated the arguments for completion by 1326, pointing out that it was unnecessary to associate the passage against purveyance *sub anno* 1316 with the *Speculum Regis*, written (as it was then believed) between 1330 and 1333; that the text was without doubt written before 1334, when the next Gascon pope was elected, before 1329, when Robert Bruce died victorious, before 1327, when Edward III became king, and before October 1326, when Walter Stapledon was murdered; otherwise the author's forward comments concerning those figures and his use of *rex senior* for Edward I make no sense at all.[9]

However, it has also often been accepted in the past that the

[7] Ibid., pp. xliv, xlv; *Vita*, 1st edn., pp. xvii–xviii; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, ii. 31. Professor Given-Wilson, the most recent writer on the dating of the *Vita*, accepts this as the *terminus ante quem* while arguing convincingly for contemporaneous composition: see C. Given-Wilson, '*Vita Edwardi Secundi*: Memoir or journal?', in *Thirteenth Century England*, vi, ed. M. Prestwich, R. H. Britnell, and R. Frame (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1997), pp. 165–76, at 165–72.

[8] He also remarked that the content became fuller as it approached 1325, as it often does as a writer nears his own time, but this is not in fact marked in this chronicle after 1322.

[9] *Vita*, 1st edn., pp. xvi–xviii.

chronicle was probably written as one piece in the months immediately before it finally breaks off. It has been seen as a memoir of a man in retirement in 1325–6, suddenly cut short, possibly by his death, with passages left unexpanded and unrevised. Several passages end in the word 'etcetera', which might suggest that the author intended to go back to write more.[10] Lack of revision is suggested by the story of Gaveston, which contains a number of repetitious passages; and the most obvious unrevised passage is on the death of the earl of Gloucester at Bannockburn. It is also true that the work has several characteristics of a literary memoir in its conscious writing for posterity, in its tendency to follow a narrative through as far as possible, and in its extended commentary and recapitulation. Yet certain discontinuities, a lack of information about future events, some detailed paraphrases of debates, occasional verbatim passages, apparent changes of opinion, and the tenses used indicate a greater immediacy in the writing. Both Stubbs and Denholm-Young acknowledged this and accepted the possibility that the author had kept notes on which he based his final text. However, in the end both editors emphasized their view that the author was writing at the end of a career, from an accurate and well-stocked memory as much as from notes, and perhaps with access to a library for some of his verbatim material.

There is, however, good reason to challenge this view. If the author's occasional summing-up is (as Denholm-Young says) careful not to go beyond the point in his narrative, why can we not take that at its face value and accept that he is summing up exactly to the end of his knowledge so far, rather than using an unnecessarily artificial literary device? Moreover, just as his comment on England possibly never having again a Gascon pope makes nonsense if it was written after 1334, so his warning to Despenser under 1313 to beware of Lancaster and leave England to escape makes nonsense if he already knew of Lancaster's death in 1322. There are other suggestions that the author lacked information at the time when he was writing. With his tendency to run a story through if he could, it is odd that he should record Gaveston's execution and the Dominican retrieval of his body in 1312, without noting his subsequent burial in 1314 if he had known that. Other retrospective annalists noted *sub anno* 1312

[10] See below, pp. 122–3, 166–7, 174–5, 212–13. These might, however, equally indicate that the author was drawing on newsletters or alluding to biblical or other well-known sources, which he did not intend to repeat.

both Gaveston's execution and his burial two years later.[11] His writing of summer 1313 also provides an untidy record of the Canterbury election in two sections. He clearly stopped writing when the king and queen were still abroad, after 23 May and before 16 July, and his first note of Winchelsey's death on 11 May certainly shows no knowledge of Reynolds's provision on 1 October. His later bitter tirade about this makes it extremely unlikely that he would not have expanded on Reynolds's appointment, if he had known of it when he first mentioned Winchelsey's death. His narrative of Edward Bruce in Ireland is chronologically accurate but is similarly spread over two years with other material interspersed between the events.

If we allow greater weight to the notion of notes or a journal and are prepared to see compilation and composition as continuing throughout the years of the reign, why not take one step further and accept the *Vita* as a fully contemporary chronicle, written up bit by bit as time passed? This solves the problems, raised by previous editors, of the historic present and of forward comments which do not go beyond the year they refer to. It solves the problems of repetition and lack of revision. It also explains the slight, but perceptible, changes of attitude to individuals as time passes. It is unlikely that an author looking back over a decade and a half could chart these nuances so carefully, especially if his recollection was coloured by the outcome of the events of 1321–2. The appearance of a 'memoir' comes from the fact that the author was not merely a 'jotter' but a man with an analytical tendency, a literary mind, and an interest in the value of history. He wrote, as he tells us, with a view to explaining to posterity why things happened the way they did. He thus takes time every so often to sum up Edward's achievements and to comment extensively on the developments of his reign so far. Professor Given-Wilson has recently provided an extremely convincing argument for the *Vita* as a 'journal' of a man who wrote up his thoughts regularly through the reign, and provides many more instances to uphold the case.[12] Even if some readers still prefer to argue for a final composition in 1325–6, it seems clear that the author must have been using contemporary notes to such an extent that the work closely reflects his attitudes as events took place rather than simply

[11] See for instance *Brid.*, p. 44.

[12] Given-Wilson, '*Vita Edwardi Secundi*: Memoir or journal?', pp. 165–76.

in retirement. Once its immediacy is recognized the *Vita* becomes even more valuable to historians, in charting very precisely one informed observer's reactions over two decades to the changing political scene. It reveals his times of hope and despair, his changes of attitude to individuals or groups in response to particular circumstances, his growing disillusion with Lancaster, and both his tolerance and exasperation with the king.

We might then legitimately ask whether it is possible to see exactly when he wrote each passage. When did he first begin, and how did he continue? Did he write regularly or at erratic intervals? This is not easy to work out. The closer the examination the more the discontinuities appear. The initial decision to write probably came around 1310–11, although possibly as late as 1312–13, and was no doubt prompted by the drama of the exile or the murder of Gaveston. Certainly the events of the first three or four years seem telescoped in time and are written with almost exclusive attention on Gaveston. It would not be difficult to postulate a man who watched the growing trouble with Gaveston and who, either when it erupted in 1310 with demands for general reform, or when it culminated in the Ordinances (or even possibly when events had moved further to Gaveston's death) decided that these were unusual times and worth recording for posterity. Exactly where the first break in writing comes is nonetheless difficult to assess. For instance, it would be possible to read the first section to 1311 as a backward look prompted by the need to explain the appointment of the Ordainers and the king's current campaign in Scotland. The following reflection on Gaveston's unpopularity, which repeats some of the earlier remarks about his Gascon origin, the earldom of Cornwall, and his arrogance, strongly suggests discontinuity, and that this is a new passage written some time after the previous one; this would explain the repetitions. However, it might also be possible to argue for the passage as a final reflection summing up the situation in late 1311 in which repetitions were acceptable. Either would be possible. Professor Given-Wilson has made a further suggestion, that the passage 'so that the condemnation of one may may instruct others, and the downfall of the one condemned become a lesson to others' may indicate that this section was written as late as 1313, after Gaveston's death. Yet, shortly afterwards, the author writes as if Piers is still alive: 'I fear that his pride will bring about his ruin.' The condemnation in this passage may therefore be the exile in

November 1311 rather than the death in June 1312.[13] The *Vita* abounds in such problems, and its internal dating may take some time to work out in detail. Professor Given-Wilson has made a very plausible possible division into eight sections written up in general every two or three years, but has warned that these sections may themselves have depended on notes made more frequently. It may prove impossible to work out the precise dating more closely than this, but the importance of this view of the *Vita* is immense. It means that we can use the *Vita* more subtly, to monitor constantly changing attitudes to central politics and personalities.

iv. Contemporary historical sources of the Vita

The text appears to be unique and totally independent as a chronicle. The author did not plunder any of the chronicles known to modern scholars; nor was his work quoted by other writers of the Middle Ages or beyond. As N. Denholm-Young said, 'he reveals no sources and leaves few traces'.[14] His lack of dependence on other chronicle sources is not surprising if he was writing contemporaneously up to 1326, since most known major fourteenth-century accounts of Edward's reign were written after 1327. Those composed before 1325 include the *Annales Londonienses*, the early sections of the *Annales Paulini,* and possibly the continuation of the *Flores Historiarum* by Robert of Reading (although Dr Gransden has argued for this as a retrospective chronicle written at the behest of Isabella and Mortimer). None of these has verbal similarities with the *Vita*, although inevitably they cover some of the same events.

The author does reveal clear traces of documentary sources. He quoted five verbatim, three of which can be traced and are clearly quoted accurately. Only the clause in the Ordinances which exiled Gaveston was from a mainstream political document; the other four were ecclesiastical in origin: the letter of 'a certain regular of admitted authority' against the king's oppressions, the decretal of Boniface VIII 'Concerning Penalties' cited after the seizure of the cardinals by Gilbert Middleton, a letter of support from Henry of Lancaster to the bishop of Hereford, and the letter from the bishops asking Isabella to come home in 1325.[15] The balance of these documents suggests that

[13] Ibid., pp. 175–6; and see below, pp. 26–7, 28–9.
[14] Denholm-Young, 'Authorship', p. 267. See also *BRUO*, iii. 2224–5.
[15] See below, pp. 34–7, 129–31, 142–5, 232–3, 244–7.

he may have had access to an ecclesiastical library rather than to an aristocratic muniment chest, but he also paraphrased Lancaster's letter of excuse in 1317 and the accusations against the Despensers in 1321.[16] In both he isolated the issues neatly and accurately, which suggests that he also had access to these documents and time to peruse them. Other documents, perhaps newsletters, are suggested by the unrevised passage on Gloucester's death at Bannockburn which indicates two attempts to adapt another source, and by the use of *etcetera* after details of the battles of Myton-upon-Swale and Boroughbridge.[17] Otherwise he seems to write from his own experience and from information given by associates close to events, as he occasionally suggests with phrases such as 'I heard' rather than the more general *ut dicitur*.[18] The accuracy of his chronology and his understanding of the often intricate issues he describes confirm that he was on the spot, or had excellent informants, especially for the middle years of the reign.

v. The authorship of the Vita, *and its literary sources*

Hearne associated the *Vita* with Malmesbury Abbey because a list of abbots of Malmesbury ('in a modern hand') and a copy of a charter of an abbot of Malmesbury were written on the blank sheets at both ends of the text in West's manuscript. This proves only, of course, that West's manuscript probably belonged to the Abbey at some time. How the text of the *Vita* got there is quite unknown. It is always possible that the original author or a later owner of the text or the owner of the copy of the text was a corrodian, or a visitor, or a benefactor of the abbey. The *Vita* itself was certainly not composed by a monk. The author had not the slightest interest in monastic life. Stubbs suggested a university teacher or a retired civilian.[19] Denholm-Young suggested a secular clerk and nothing is more likely. Someone so well informed could well be one of the fairly small group of educated professional clerks working in royal, baronial, or ecclesiastical circles, and if so he is likely to be someone whose name has come down to us in one context or another. After an ingenious piece of detective work, Denholm-Young suggested John Walwayn, DCL, canon of Hereford and of St Paul's, agent of the earl of Hereford, royal clerk from 1314, and briefly treasurer in 1318, who

[16] See below, pp. 136–9, 192–5.
[17] See below, pp. 90–3, 166–7, 212–13.
[18] See below, pp. 18–19.
[19] Stubbs, *Chronicles*, ii, pp. xliii, xlvi–xlvii.

had retired and died by 1326.[20] In the absence of any evidence apart from that in the text itself, it was probably too audacious to name a name, and there are some problems in accepting Walwayn as the author. One might expect someone present at the parliament of 1316 to have written more positively about it. One might expect someone given to inveighing against the corruption of the papacy in providing unsuitable bishops and who was apparently disappointed in his hope of the bishopric of Durham (if Graystanes is correct in suggesting that Hereford put him forward in 1317), at least to have noted the appointment of Beaumont to that see. One might not expect someone who had lost his recently gained job during the purge of officials in autumn 1318 to have responded to that purge with quite such enthusiastic and vehement denunciation of government corruption. Yet Walwayn fits a substantial number of the criteria in training, west country connections, and career. If it is not he, then someone with a career very like his is needed to fit the bill.

From the text itself emerges a picture of an Englishman whose strictures on modern youth in 1315 suggest, if not old age, at least a certain maturity: a man at least in his forties and probably in his fifties. His strong criticism of corruption and simony in the Church, given vent when he recorded the appointments of Reynolds to Canterbury and Burghersh to Lincoln, have suggested a man frustrated in his career; but as this was a period when the debate over the wealth and poverty of the Church was vigorously aired he may simply be genuinely incensed at financial corruption in the Church. Elsewhere he certainly showed that he did not like to see Church wealth sucked into royal taxation. He admired Winchelsey's stand against Edward I, and he was critical of the clerical tenth granted to Edward II in 1316, writing that 'the goods of the church are the goods of the poor', and again that 'the wealth of the church . . . should be for the poor'.[21] This sounds less like the view of a man aiming at a bishopric than one strongly sympathetic to the views of the friars (although the two need not be mutually exclusive). However, he lamented corruption among the laity as much as among the clergy, and wrote throughout with a strong moralistic tone, especially castigating the sins of pride and avarice. The career of Gaveston allowed him free rein on the first and the career of the Despensers on the second. But he also referred generally to the

[20] Denholm-Young, 'Authorship', *passim*; *Vita*, 1st edn., pp. xix–xxviii.

[21] See below, pp. 132–3, 134–5; see also Gransden, *Historical Writing*, ii. 32.

aristocracy's greedy expansion of patrimony; to the corruption of courtiers and of those who held the king's assizes; to Lancaster's reputation destroyed by his allegedly taking a Scottish bribe of £40,000; and to the greed of Stapledon when treasurer.

As all commentators on the *Vita* have remarked, the writer was conventionally well educated. He used clear, uncluttered Latin, but the whole text indicates a conscious intention to write literary history, a commentary on the history of his times. As history was part of classical rhetoric, this invited the medieval writer to use a number of literary devices and ornamentations. Not only did the author of the *Vita* make occasional use of the historic present (as at the battle of Bannockburn), but he made more frequent use of direct speech between characters to enhance the drama of events. He sometimes used direct speech to a character in his narrative, as when he warned Gaveston to beware of Lancaster in 1309, and more frequently to his audience, whether to explain the hatred of Gaveston in 1312, or to suggest that Stapledon would do well not to return to France in 1325. His most ornate devices were reserved for his longer digressions, which provided explanations of motives, laments, and homilies on sin. There he used parallel constructions to produce both rhythms and rhymes. Denholm-Young remarked that the author's use of rhymed prose jarred on modern ears, but 'rhythmic cadence and rhymed endings' were particularly suited to tirades.[22] Rhymed couplets can also be found scattered elsewhere than in tirades, often providing moralistic closures of episodes, as for example the comments on the Welsh propensity for rebellion in 1316, and the mistakes of the Bristollians, also in 1316.[23]

His phrasing, whether consciously or unconsciously, often echoed biblical and liturgical vocabulary (*in conspectu . . .*; *manus . . . erat cum illis*), and with many quotations and allusions. For his many biblical allusions, the author drew most heavily on the Old Testament. He cited almost all books except the later prophets, but used particularly frequently the Books of Kings and the Psalms. His relatively few references to the New Testament were mainly to Matthew and Luke,

[22] *Vita*, 1st edn., pp. xix, 99 n.

[23] Hearne and Stubbs drew attention to four of the earlier couplets by printing them as verses, a practice which Denholm-Young continued (*Vita*, 1st edn., pp. 13, 23, 28, 29). As not all examples of rhymes were so printed, and as to print them all would certainly 'jar the modern ear', three of these four early examples have been returned to continuous prose in this edition. Denholm-Young's rhyming translations are retained where appropriate.

with a scattering of examples drawn from the epistles. The author also had a highly developed legal sense. His familiarity with civil law is shown through a dozen references and clear allusions, and also through his use of civilian vocabulary such as *concussio*, *patrocinium*, *pedaneus iudex*, and *mala mansio*.[24] This is hardly surprising if Walwayn, DCL, were the author. Even if he were not, English common law treatises of this period such as Bracton's *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae*, copied and circulated after 1268, and the *Fleta* (*c.*1290) show Roman law to be well known to English lawyers, and several of the Roman law tags used by the author also appear in Bracton and *Fleta*.[25] His references to natural law also come ultimately from Roman law, possibly mediated through canon law. He made four specific references to canon law, and referred to Marcher law and the laws of war.[26] Throughout he was keen to discuss legality. His descriptions of the arguments of the barons and of the king frequently explain their legal points, and he seems to have a strong interest in the precise definitions of treason.[27] Beyond theology and law, he knew something of astrology, recording the explanations for the rains of 1316 given by those 'wise in astrology'.[28] He knew and quoted some of the contemporary moralistic Latin verses of his day,[29] and, not surprisingly, he was familiar with moralistic sermons against the vices. His denunciations of vices and his laments on people and events reflect strongly the sermon style of the time. His digression on avarice in particular seems to be closely modelled on sermons, even to the use of the exemplum of a 'good man', and elsewhere his use of *figura* in relation to material drawn from the Old Testament complies with the precise usage of the word advocated by a contemporary sermon theorist such as Robert of Basevorn.[30]

[24] See below, pp. 20–1, 156–7, 194–5, 242–3; these were pointed out by Denholm-Young, *Vita*, 1st edn., notes to pp. 10, 91, 114, 142.

[25] See e.g. below, Text, nn. 250, 336, 469.

[26] For further comment on his legal interest, see below, pp. lii–lv, and index of quotations.

[27] For further discussion of his views on treason, see below, pp. lii–lvii.

[28] See below, p. 122–3.

[29] See below, pp. 110–11.

[30] See below, pp. 132–3, 170–3. For the use of *figura* in sermons see Robert de Basevorn, *Forma Praedicandi*, cap. xlix, in T. M. Charland, *Artes Praedicandi: Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge*, Publications de l'Institut d'études mediévales d'Ottawa, vii (Paris, 1936), pp. 231–323. An English translation is available by L. Krul, 'Robert of Basevorn, *The Form of Preaching* (1322 A. D.)', in *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, ed. J. J. Murphy (Berkeley and London, 1971), pp. 109–215, at pp. 205–7. I am indebted to Yuichi Akae for this reference to Basevorn.

The author was also familiar with classical Latin authors and Greek history. He quoted from Claudian, Horace, Juvenal, Lucan, and Palladius, and referred frequently to the Trojan War and the reign of Alexander the Great for comparisons. This again is not surprising. Forerunners of the 'classicising friars', such as John of Wales and Nicholas Trevet, were beginning to intensify interest in classical learning in England during his lifetime,[31] but the interest in classical material was far from new. It had been strong since the mid-twelfth century, and was shown not only in the direct study of classical texts, but also in new universal histories such as the mid-thirteenth-century *Speculum historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais, and in the retelling of classical stories in legendary histories, epics, and romances.[32] The range of classical literature and historical information available to English authors and their interest in it can be seen, for example, in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* from the twelfth century, in the Franciscan John of Wales's *Breviloquium* on the virtues of ancient princes and philosophers and *Compendiloquium* of the lives of illustrious philosophers from the mid-thirteenth century, and in Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, which was being written in Chester at about the same time that our author was completing his work.[33] These works themselves became, in their turn, sources of information on antiquity: John of Wales drew on John of Salisbury, and Higden drew on both. All were widely read and so helped to spread knowledge yet further. Preachers, who also used classical exempla, spread basic information about classical figures and history even beyond the literate classes.[34] By the reign of Edward II, through these various means, classical stories and allusions were pervasive and commonplace in the cultural baggage of literate society, and familiar in outline to many beyond it.

The Trojan War and the reign of Alexander the Great were

[31] B. Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity* (Oxford, 1960), ch. 3.

[32] Ibid., pp. 15–26, 41–65.

[33] See John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. C. J. Nederman (Cambridge, 1990), pp. xix–xxi, and the prologue to Book I, pp. 3–8; J. Swanson, *John of Wales: A Study of the Works and Ideas of a Thirteenth-Century Friar* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 101–6, 123, 164–6, 189, 196–200; J. Taylor, *The Universal Chronicle of Ranulf Higden* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 39–44, 72–81. For John of Wales's role as a forerunner of the English 'classicising friars' see Smalley, *English Friars*, pp. 51–5.

[34] This is visible, for example, in the Franciscan preaching handbook *Fasciculus Morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook*, ed. and trans. S. Wenzel (University Park, Pa., 1989). For Alexander the Great there, see pp. 94–7, 98–101; for the Trojan war, see pp. 264–5.

particularly popular episodes from Greek history, accessible not only through Latin writers such as Virgil, Quintus Curtius, or Orosius and, more recently, Vincent of Beauvais, but through increasing numbers of romances. The drama of the fall of Troy encouraged one of the earliest vernacular romances, the *Roman d'Eneas*, a retelling of Virgil's *Aeneid* in Anglo-French for the court of Henry II.[35] Troy also provided the basis for Geoffrey of Monmouth's legendary *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*c.*1136), which traced the foundation of Britain to Brutus, descendant of Aeneas.[36] The reign of Alexander similarly passed from Latin histories into vernacular romances,[37] and by the 1330s romances of both Troy and of Alexander were to become available not only in French but also in English.[38] Aspects of classical history were thus familiar to both the author and many in his potential audience.

Our author drew on the Trojan war for the example of Achilles, who quarrelled with his fellow Greeks and failed to bring them help in their need (a parallel used for Lancaster's failure at Berwick); Achilles also had in Patroclus a close friend whose death he avenged (a parallel used for Edward's friendship with Gaveston). The fall of Troy offered parallels for the betrayal of the king and of a city (Berwick). The history of Alexander the Great provided two more parallels for treason, with Philotas's failure to tell Alexander of a plot, and Alexander's death by poison at the hands of traitors. Interpretations of these classical stories in the Christian world could be complex, and elements of this complexity are visible in the *Vita*. Aeneas, especially for the writers of foundation legends, was 'noble

[35] The literature on the story of Troy in the Middle Ages is substantial. Excellent brief introductions may be found in Lee Patterson, 'Virgil and the historical consciousness of the twelfth century: The *Roman d'Eneas* and *Erec et Enide*', in *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison, 1987), pp. 157–95, at 157–83; Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (London, 1991), pp. 86–99; F. Ingledew, 'The Book of Troy and the genealogical construction of history: The case of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*', *Speculum*, lxix (1994), 665–704.

[36] The Trojan exiles appeared in the legendary histories of several northern peoples, linking them with antiquity and legitimizing their rulers; see Gransden, *Historical Writing*, i. 204 and note; Patterson, *Chaucer*, pp. 90–3. For the use of the *Aeneid* by Norman writers see Ingledew, 'The Book of Troy and the genealogical construction of history', pp. 677 and n., 682–5. For the development of Scotland's foundation legend in this period see below, pp. 224–5.

[37] Cary, *Medieval Alexander*, pp. 16–77. One of the best known 12th-c. retellings was the Latin *Alexandreis* by Walter de Châtillon, which our author may have known (see below, Text, nn. 72, 287, 336).

[38] Smalley, *English Friars*, pp. 21–6.

Aeneas', a prince who fought as long as possible against overwhelming odds, but for others, including in this period Trevet and Higden, Aeneas was the cowardly betrayer of his city through his flight.[39] Our author uses both 'noble Aeneas' and 'Aeneas the traitor' according to need.[40] His references to Alexander were more one-dimensional: he took the view that Alexander was simply the greatest conqueror the world had ever seen, who was nevertheless betrayed by his followers, but another view among moralists and theologians was that Alexander's overweening ambition and other vices brought his early death as just punishment.[41]

History was constantly in the author's mind. Apart from his references to Greek history, he mentioned the conquests of England by Julius Caesar, the Saxons, and the Normans, seeing all as the outcome of internal discord. He cited British history through Geoffrey of Monmouth and he alluded twice to the prophecies of Merlin.[42] He referred to the characteristics of English kings back to Henry II, and mentioned histories in Latin and French of Richard I at Acre.[43] But, like any educated administrator or politician, he was particularly sensitive to the political events of recent decades, and he drew most parallels with events in the reigns of Henry III and Edward I.[44] His information on Edward I's later reign would certainly be first-hand and he might even be old enough to have childhood memories of the aftermath of Henry III's civil war. In any case his knowledge of that would undoubtedly feel immediate through parental experiences, just as aspects of the war of 1939–45 still seemed familiar to some in the 1990s. His world of allusion, however, was largely sober and rational. Unlike a number of chroniclers he paid

[39] Ingledew, 'The Book of Troy and the genealogical construction of history', pp. 677 and n., 682–5; Patterson, 'Virgil and the historical consciousness of the twelfth century', pp. 176–7.

[40] See below, pp. 24–5, 168–9.

[41] For the varying interpretations of Alexander's life, see Cary, *Medieval Alexander*, pp. 83–105, 118–25, 173–81.

[42] Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote his history *c.*1136. Tracing British origins to Brutus, descendant of Aeneas of Troy, he provided the British with a direct link to the world of antiquity; he then worked through legendary and historical British kings to the death of Cadwallader in the 7th c. He inserted a section on Merlin's prophecies at book vii. 1–4 (*The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. A. Griscom (London and New York, 1929), pp. 383–97). His work became very popular, and was incorporated in the early sections of the popular Brut chronicle of England. For references to Merlin in the *Vita*, see below, pp. 110–11, 118–21.

[43] See below, pp. 62–3, 68–9.

[44] See below, pp. 32–3, 76–7, 128–9, 158–9, 168–9.

no attention to portents and prophecies, and was scathing about the Welsh belief in Merlin.

The author's geographical point of interest is certainly the west country, but the exact focus is less clear, as Denholm-Young demonstrated. Some of the interest in the Marches after 1320 may be explained simply as that of the informed political observer, aware of the area's importance; similarly the large number of references to the earls of Gloucester, Hereford, and Warwick, to Amory, Audley, the younger Despenser, and the Mortimers may reflect their national role as much as their local one. However, the long narrative of the Bristol rebellion and of Llywelyn Bren's rising, the several references to Maurice Berkeley, the picking out of Giffard and Willington among those captured at Bannockburn suggest a stronger local interest. The Marcher passages are also well informed, as are the passages on Bristol and Bren. The author knew precisely why the Marchers hated Despenser, he discussed the details of Marcher law, and provided names of Marcher castles. His comments on the wild and rebellious Welsh also smack of local prejudice.[45] There are fairly long digressions into rebellions by Banaster (Lancashire), and Ewer (Hampshire and the south), but in these the author displays little specific geographical knowledge compared with his work on the west country. Within the west country, Denholm-Young argued strongly for the writer's interest in the earl of Hereford rather than the earl of Gloucester, although some of his points seem a little forced. The use, for instance, of 'bishop of that place' immediately after a reference to the city of Hereford seems quite acceptable as literary style, while if the author worked for Hereford, it seems discreet to the point of absurdity to make no personal comment on the earl, when he praises both Gloucester and Warwick.

The author's career had certainly placed him in political circles. He was too politically aware and politically informed, especially for the middle years, to be far from the centre. His paraphrases show that he has had access to important political documents. His information on each parliament is accurate; his appreciation of the points in the debates was sharp. He was indeed someone 'in the know'. He made the point that, although the magnates' debate was not made public in 1310, 'he heard' the outcome,[46] a more positive statement than the usual impersonal, 'as it is said'. Experience is suggested by his

[45] See below, pp. 56–7, 118–21. [46] See below, pp. 18–19.

comment that mediators exaggerated the danger of civil war in 1312, and that mediators often twist the messages they bear.[47] Experience at the centre clearly left him critical of court corruption, and with admiration for Archbishop Melton, who maintained his integrity at court.[48] He maintained a relatively tolerant and balanced view of most political individuals, being able to rehearse the arguments both in favour and against the positions of Gaveston, the king, Lancaster, and the rebel barons. His position comes through clearly as that of someone highly critical of the court, and sympathetic to the baronage, but not sympathetic to baronial lawlessness and rebellion, and certainly not to Lancaster's flirtation with the Scots.[49]

THE REIGN OF EDWARD II AND THE VALUE OF THE *VITA*

i. The reign of Edward II

The reign of Edward II is one of the most dramatic in the Middle Ages. In his twenty-year reign Edward faced defeat in the Scottish war, failure in France, and utter disaster at home: repeated threats and open violence against his favourites, a revolutionary reform programme, civil war, and finally deposition. Part of Edward I's legacy (unfinished war with Scotland, a £200,000 debt, recent resistance from 1297 onwards) meant that his successor might expect a rough ride at first, but there was no inevitability that the reign should end in deposition. Financial and political developments under Edward I offered the potential for solving the problems he left. Ultimately Edward II brought about his own downfall. The reign exemplifies comprehensive breakdown in the relationship between king and barons. It is precisely here that the *Vita* is so valuable, since the author's predominant interest was in secular politics at the highest level.

ii. Recent historiography

Since the last edition of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* in 1957, there has been no change in the position of the text itself as a major literary source for the reign. No new accounts or chronicles have been found, although a full text of the short continuation of the French prose Brut

[47] See below, pp. 54–5, 138–9.
[48] See below, pp. 236–7.
[49] See below, pp. 168–75.

has been published for the first time.[50] However, a surge in the publication of monographs in the last three decades has led to changes in interpretations of the reign.

For a generation before 1957, when N. Denholm-Young wrote his introduction to the *Vita*, the works of J. Conway Davies and T. F. Tout held general sway. Both had emphasized constitutional and administrative developments, and in Tout's case his interest in administrative developments led to an interpretation which emphasized principled baronial opposition to what was termed 'household government'. Not all agreed. B. Wilkinson's work continued to emphasize the importance of broader constitutional ideas and Denholm-Young's short but forceful introduction to the *Vita* criticized the 'household theory' and did much to put personal politics at the centre once more. Denholm-Young took, perhaps, too extreme a swing when he denied the reformers any moral purpose and took so narrow a definition of 'constitutional' that he denied that the author of the *Vita* had any constitutional interest at all. However, his views marked a distinct move away from the constitutional emphasis of the previous generation of historians.[51] The surge of interest in the reign from 1970 brought excellent new studies, which have reassessed baronial motivations, Edward's inheritance, and his character, as well as the precise significance of many of the events. The interest in personalities is shown by the number of biographies, which have proved a useful approach to the politics of the reign. The best of them are wide surveys of the political world, providing a full context for the actions of their subject. J. R. Maddicott, J. R. S. Phillips, J. S. Hamilton, and P. Chaplais have looked at Lancaster, Pembroke, and Gaveston; R. Haines, J. Denton, J. Wright, and M. Buck turned to the bishops of the period. N. Fryde looked more broadly at the last years of the reign, drawing on work in the financial area. M. Prestwich's work has transformed views of Edward II's inheritance. More recently C. Valente has reassessed the documents of the deposition, P. Doherty has reassessed the role of Queen Isabella, P. R. Dryburgh has written on Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, and R. M. Haines has published a new study of the reign.[52] Works on

[50] *The Anonimalle Chronicle 1307–1334, from Brotherton Collection MS 29*, ed. W. R. Childs and J. Taylor, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, cxlvii (1991).

[51] *Vita*, 1st edn., pp. xi–xii.

[52] J. R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster 1307–1322* (Oxford, 1970); J. R. S. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, 1307–1324* (Oxford, 1972); J. S. Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston, Earl of Cornwall 1307–1312: Politics and Patronage in the Reign of Edward II*