

Historein

Vol 2 (2000)

Heterodoxies: Constructions of Identities and Otherness in Medieval and Early Modern Europe



Rival Constructions of 'Frenchness' in the French Religious Wars, 1560-1590. The reading of Pierre de l'Estoile

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doi: [10.12681/historein.120](https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.120)

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To cite this article:

Gaganakis, C. (2001). Rival Constructions of 'Frenchness' in the French Religious Wars, 1560-1590. The reading of Pierre de l'Estoile. *Historein*, 2, 157-172. <https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.120>

*Rival
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The reading of
Pierre de l’
Estoile.*

In memory of Bob Scribner

Costas Gaganakis

It is by now a commonplace among historians that Protestantism was the first major movement to fully and systematically use the new medium of the printing press.¹ Following on Luther’s steps, the leaders of the Reformation became actively engaged in a multilayered printing and disseminating mechanism which produced an unprecedented mass of printed material and provoked an equally massive—though somewhat belated—response from the Catholic side. With the emergence of Calvin as the leader of the French Reformation movement and the constant influx of French refugees, the city of Geneva was eventually transformed into a hub of a European printing network, devoted to the dissemination of the Calvinist message.²

Besides the rejection of Catholicism on dogmatic grounds, the initial aim of Protestant propaganda was to establish the historical continuum of the “new religion” within the framework of an alternative history of Christianity, and on the other hand to underline the “obvious relation” between the ancient Christian martyrs and the persecuted reformed Christians of the sixteenth century. This would serve to identify the Catholics with the enemies of Christianity and actually reverse the grave accusation of heresy. In the 1560s, the exiled French Protestant leadership in Geneva sought to boost the moral of Protestant enclaves in France by means of a “martyrization” of the Huguenot struggle for survival.³ Yet the Calvinists were called quite soon to answer to accusations of treason and rebellion against the king and the kingdom of France.

On the eve of the Wars of Religion, a great number of Frenchmen identified their “patrie”

with the kingdom of France, incarnated in the person of the monarch. The French king not only symbolized the unity of the nation but he also endowed it with a mystical dimension.⁴ Any act which was considered detrimental to royal authority amounted to high treason (*lèse majesté*), and this served as a powerful deterrent to noble factionalism. In 1535, the fluid repertoire of treasonous acts was further expanded to include the act of heresy as a capital crime.⁵ Philip Benedict has recently noted that French political culture inherited from the Middle Ages was deeply impregnated by views that were totally opposed to the acceptance of religious divergence within the French kingdom.⁶

In the period that followed the death of Henri II, French Protestant propaganda moved into two distinct directions: A full-fledged attack on the "abominations" of the Catholic faith, which became the primary task of Protestant polemicists and, on a secondary level, a justification of what was quickly presented by the rival camp as an act of sedition against the king and kingdom. The vitriolic, totally uncompromising and occasionally triumphant tone of the Calvinist confessional attack differed sharply from the more cautious and overtly conservative tone of the Calvinist political propaganda of the period 1559-1562. These were years of aggressive Calvinist advance; the destruction of the old religion and of its practitioners seemed imminent.⁷ Yet the onslaught on "papal heresy" was not paralleled by a similar attack against the hostile policy of the French crown.

The tone of Calvinist propaganda was not only set by Calvin's aversion to any form of radical millenarianism. It equally reflected the opposition of leading French nobles to the rise of the House of Guise as political patrons of the young and frail François II. Calvinist polemicists sought to exploit the tension created between the *princes de sang* and the ultra-Catholic Guise by calling upon the king of Navarre and the prince of Condé to assume their responsibilities towards the kingdom—and the Huguenot cause. The hesitating Antoine de Bourbon and Condé became targets of a "patriotic" campaign, which combined straightforward *remonstrances* and *supplications* with thinly disguised criticism or quite open sarcasm.⁸

In March 1560, a Huguenot attempt to "liberate" François II from his captors in Amboise failed, unleashing the first wave of the pamphleteering wars between Catholics and Protestants. Huguenot leaders were quite aware that their attempt against the royal court was verging on sedition and that it could easily serve the purposes of the rival camp—as it did. Their propaganda campaign, carefully prepared *before* the "tumult of Amboise" and addressed both to Frenchmen and foreign princes, presented the Huguenot conspiracy as a service to king and country, proof of the fullhearted loyalty of the Calvinists towards the crown.⁹

To Huguenots, loyalty to the crown was the core element of their national consciousness and identity. The Huguenots were proud and obedient servants of the French crown, passionately enduring the many injustices and crimes committed against their faith by the king's evil counsellors. But the situation regarding the king's tutelage by the Guise had become so grave that

the Huguenots were forced to intervene, safeguarding the interests of king and country against the treacherous usurpers. The Amboise coup did not amount to sedition, but it was a counter-attack against the House of Guise, who were openly conspiring to undermine the royal authority with a view to usurping the crown of France. The anonymous author of the *Brieve Remonstrance des estats de France au Roy leur souverain seigneur sur l'ambition, tyrannie & oppression de tout intolerable des de Guise* warned the king that the Guise aimed at acquiring large parts of national territory—the duchies of Anjou and Provence—and that their ultimate task was to “restore” themselves to the crown of France as descendants from Charlemagne. The author of the pamphlet also made quite it clear that not all “*malcontents*” Frenchmen were Huguenots and that the Amboise coup was “*une cause civile et politique*” and had nothing to do with religion.¹⁰

The attack against the enemies of the crown and the insistence on the fervent patriotism of the Huguenots were actually defensive arguments, answering back to Catholic accusations of treason. Contrary to the Huguenot propaganda, which for obvious reasons was gradually “secularizing” the state, by removing religion from its foundations, the great majority of Catholic Frenchmen considered the state to be a civic, political expression of religion. Any attempt to question the Roman Catholic faith would inevitably result in the undermining of the state itself. Religious reformation amounted to radicalization of the state. In a highly political tract, the Catholic pamphleteer Jean Bégat pointed to the Calvinist takeover of Geneva as proof of the radical intentions of the Huguenots, who were promoting social rebellion together with heresy.¹¹

Moreover, the Huguenot attack on religion and royal ambivalence towards the heretics risked severing the historical bonds of this “*royaume très chrestien*” with the Church and the Roman Catholic religion. In later years, Catholic polemicists would point to the misery of the country as proof of the monarchy’s withdrawal from its historical mission as defender of the faith. In 1562, the *Cordelier* François Melchior Flavin warned the king that “sans la religion ne peut estre vostre Royaume: mais la religion peut estre sans iceluy. Donc vostre royaume dépend de la religion, non la religion de vostre royaume” Calvinism was not only a heresy; it was presented as the doom of the French nation.¹²

The ideological warfare between the two rival camps at this stage came to touch upon the foundations and the nature of “true Frenchness”; this again was the outcome of a Catholic initiative. Myriam Yardeni is right in pointing out that the question of “Frenchness” became the focal point of the Catholic-Huguenot propaganda war only after St. Bartholomew’s massacre.¹³ However, the distinction between “*vrai*” and “*faux François*” was part of the ideological arsenal on both sides in the 1560s. In the previously mentioned tract of Jean Bégat, the loyalty of Burgundy to the French crown depended upon the continuation of the traditional royal policy of total eradication of heresy throughout the kingdom. Any other approach to the problem would negate the “Frenchness” of the kingdom, thus relieving its subjects of obedience to the king. In Bégat’s mind, to be French was to be Catholic.¹⁴ Answering back to a violent Calvinist response to his views, Bégat went even further, by totally denying the “Frenchness” of the Huguenots and

equating them to the alien Jews.¹⁵

Huguenot propaganda retorted upon these grave accusations by "revealing" to its intended audiences the treasonous activity and, equally important, the *alienness* of the Lorrain House of Guise. They were aliens to the French nation, foreign usurpers of royal power; their followers, pejoratively called *Guisards*, were not "*vray François*", as were the Huguenot defenders of king and country. The tumult of Amboise was in reality a reaction on the part of the French people against the tyranny of aliens who had taken the young king as their hostage.

From the bulk of Huguenot propaganda, the *Epistre envoyée au Tigre de la France*, François Hotman's libel, stood alone in the violence of its phraseology and especially of its suggestions.¹⁶ In an interesting blend of patriotism with "constitutional" matters, Hotman protested against the political marginalization of the '*princes de sang*' and called upon Salic law to justify the intervention of the prince of Condé, first prince of the blood and patron of the Huguenots. The appeal to the fundamental laws of French monarchy served as legitimisation of the Huguenot initiative and as proof of the genuine "Frenchness" of the Amboise conspirators. It was also a dramatic appeal to the powerful nobles of France who had not yet fully exposed themselves as leaders and protectors of the Calvinist movement.¹⁷

In the years 1561 and 1562, prelude to the first of the Wars of Religion, Huguenot propaganda persisted in its patriotic line and the denunciation of the House of Guise. Remarkably, the year 1561 also saw the publication of an anonymous *Exhortation aux princes et seigneurs du Conseil privé du Roy*. The anonymous author, to many historians Estienne Pasquier, made a passionate appeal to the king's council for the adoption of a policy of religious toleration as the only means of safeguarding the unity and welfare of the French "*respublique*". Despite regarding the co-existence of two religions as an "inevitable evil", the author urged the king to grant both Churches freedom of creed, provided that they refrained from any form of seditious activities.

The tract's dispassionate, neutral style made it a powerful weapon in Huguenot propaganda. It is not clear whether the Calvinists were not simply paying lip service to the idea of religious toleration; their overall policy of the period points to a hostility to the prospect. What is important is the emergence of a new powerful conception of a "desacralized" national unity as part of the Huguenot discourse; this echoed the views of what was soon to be called by religious zealots on both sides the *politiques* faction.¹⁸ This national unity, not founded on religion, was incarnated in the person of the King. The foundation of the French kingdom was loyalty to the crown.

When civil war erupted, Huguenot propaganda was careful to differentiate Charles IX from his "evil councillors". While finding its primal targets in the "evil foreigners"—who by this time had been enlarged to include the Italian entourage of Marie de Medici as well as the French Catholic clergy who "had sworn allegiance to a foreign power, the Pope"—the Huguenot ideological campaign sought to "educate" the young king by referring to the "golden age" of his ancestor, Louis XII, an era characterized by the close bonds between monarchy and "the people".¹⁹ Royal

policy needed to be “corrected”, brought back to the service of the nation. The person of the king and his power were still beyond doubt and criticism; on June 12, 1563, by order of the Genevan Consistory, a “seditious book” attributed to the Huguenot Hugues Sureau or du Rosier was publicly burnt. Its “libelous content”, attacking the king and his government, was incompatible with royalism and patriotism, promoted systematically by Calvinist propaganda.²⁰

The events of August 24, 1572 proved to be a watershed in the evolution of Huguenot political thought and had a far-reaching impact on the evolution of European political thought in general. They led to a de-mystification of monarchy and the separation of the king from the ideal of the kingdom in Huguenot national consciousness. Although ephemeral, this swing in Huguenot views of king and country contributed greatly to the secularization of French national identity, a drive which had already been identified by contemporary commentators with the faction of the “*politiques*” or “*moyenneurs*”. In the “war of words” that ensued from Saint-Bartholomew’s massacre, the question of “Frenchness” became the epicentre of the political and religious controversy.²¹

The Saint Bartholomew’s massacres were immediately followed by a barrage of Huguenot publications, vehemently attacking the crown²² and its evil foreign entourage. Propaganda mechanisms on both sides actually built on themes developed throughout the preceding period of armed confrontation: treason, sedition and collaboration with foreign enemies of France, Italian, German, English, Spanish or Swiss, depending on the attacking side. Huguenot theories legitimizing the right to resist a tyrant were the novel element in this phase of the “war of words”.

To Catholic polemicists, the Huguenots were traitors to their king and nation, who deserved the punishment they had received. Catholic tracts addressed abroad underlined the treasonous ideology and actions of the Huguenots; they were carriers of a “germanic” creed,²³ they had joined forces with foreign Lutheran enemies of France, and most of all, they were enemies of the “most Christian King”. Others carried the argument further, questioning the “true Frenchness” of the heretics. To authors like Pierre Charpentier, the crimes of the Huguenots against the kingdom meant that they had forfeited the right to be called and considered Frenchmen, having “denaturalized” themselves of their own volition.²⁴

Besides drawing on the arguments elaborated by their monarchomach authors and especially by François Hotman in *Francogallia*, Huguenot responses to Catholic accusations stressed the “genuine Frenchness” of the Calvinists, who had been forced to take to arms against the tyrannical king, to defend their rights as Frenchmen. The perpetrators of the massacres—including the king—had violated the fundamental laws of the kingdom. Catholics were attached to the unstable and whimsical personality of the holder of the throne, whereas the Huguenots were attached to the ideal of a “truly regal” monarchical power—a monarchy in the service of the welfare of the kingdom, the state and of the salvation of the *patrie*.²⁵

The troubled years of the reign of Henri III witnessed the climax in the “war of words” between

the two camps. The large concessions offered to the Protestant minority by the Edict of Beaulieu in 1576 proved to the ultra-Catholic camp under the Guise that heresy was still quite strong in France, despite the severe blows it had received. French men and women were subjected daily to a constant flow of "news", "events", "disclaimers" and "accusations", coming from printing presses in France and abroad. Large clandestine propaganda networks were disseminating false rumours as well as falsified tracts, pamphlets and posters attributed to the opposing side. The walls of French homes and public buildings were also turned into "ideological battlefields" with the appearance of roughly drawn sketches and the impressive multiplication of graffiti,²⁶ while sermons, satirical songs and processions seconded the channels of oral transmission. During the late 1570s and especially the 1580s, the French people were living in a fabricated reality,²⁷ moulded by skillful propagandists and reproduced by the readers themselves in their private talks, journals or memories. The "war of words" proved to be a massive cultural phenomenon, engulfing the majority of the French people. To some historians, this produced a socialization of knowledge and of political consciousness. To passionate French patriots like Estoile, the pamphleteering wars were the seeds of anarchy and rebellion that threatened the very existence of the nation.²⁸

The rift between Henri III and the Guise faction and especially the death of the direct heir to the French throne, François, Duke of Anjou in June 1584, led to the formation of the ultra-Catholic League and to direct intervention from the Pope and Spain in French political affairs.²⁹ The first public appearance of the League was well orchestrated; days before the circulation of its manifesto, the streets in the French cities had been filled with pamphlets, posters and broadsheets, distributed by an extensive underground network.³⁰ The manifesto of the League appeared together with a forged document, titled *Concordat de Magdebourg*, which served to "reveal" to the French people the treasonous alliances of the heretical heir to the French throne, Henri de Navarre. The supposed "leak" of the papal bull excommunicating Henri de Navarre that followed, was judged by acute contemporary observers as a masterpiece in propaganda tactics. In May 1586, the League circulated a "warning to the French people by English Catholics", which again served to portray in the darkest colours the fate awaiting French Catholics under the rule of a heretic.³¹

The excommunication of Henri de Navarre ultimately proved to be beneficial to the Huguenot leader, as it pushed the fervently Gallican nobility of the robe to Henri's camp. Its publication provoked immediate reaction from jurists and political thinkers who saw the act not only as flagrant foreign (Italian and Spanish) intervention in French political affairs, but also underlined that it was legally unfounded, therefore automatically annulled.³² But it was also a powerful weapon in the hands of the ultra-Catholic's, fighting a "religious war" against the heretics. To them, the foundations of the French state, of monarchy itself lay in religion. The Catholicity of the crown was not only a fundamental law of the kingdom, higher to Salic law; it was proof of "Frenchness" for the king and for his subjects.³³

Having established full control of Paris following the Day of the Barricades on May 12, 1588, the

League proceeded to monopolize the Parisian printing industry³⁴ and to replace the vacant royal authority in the mechanisms of censorship. Following the rapid succession of events—the assassination of the Guise and the subsequent regicide—the printing mechanism of the Holy League pursued two distinct goals: the legitimization of “tyrannicide” and the removal of the heretic contender to the French throne by means of assassination or legal disqualification. In its pursuit of a theocratic conception of monarchy, the radical wing of the League, spearheaded by the Paris Sixteen, was gradually alienating the Catholic nobles who saw their “natural position in the kingdom” downgraded and marginalized.³⁵

The League’s religious foundation of the monarchy proved especially helpful when it launched an unprecedented attack on Henri III, following the assassination of the Guise. Catholic demystification of the person of the monarch did not lead to a desacralization of monarchy and of French national identity, as in the case of Huguenot monarchomachs. On the contrary, it actually negated French national identity, by subjecting it to the total supremacy of the religious question. Leaguer theocracy legitimized foreign intervention and also carried a radical tint, something that came as an insult to French national pride and a threat to Catholic nobility, causing a severe division in the ranks of the Holy Union.³⁶

In the violent exchange of declarations, denunciations and insults with the League, Huguenot propaganda remained steadfast in its patriotic line.³⁷ Under Henri III, the Huguenots were reluctant royalists, supporting Henri and promoting their leader Henri de Navarre against the scheming Guisards. The integrity of France was threatened by an international plot headed by the Pope and the king of Spain, and Huguenots emerged as true defenders of the *patrie*, “*bons François*”. To the leaguer slogan “better Spanish than Huguenot”, they answered that “it was better to be a Huguenot and a true Frenchman than a traitor French Spaniard”.³⁸

The collapse of royal power would be a devastating blow to the fate of the minority, struggling against superior Catholic forces. Myriam Yardeni has noticed a subtle transformation in the Huguenot political ideals: The democratic, monarchomach patriotism of the era of Saint Bartholomew was gradually being eroded by a new kind of “absolutist”, aristocratic patriotism, promoted by the camp of Henri of Navarre.³⁹ Huguenot argumentation was stressing the “Frenchness” of the monarchy, in place of its “Catholicity”, promoted by League propagandists. The secularization of monarchy as a French institution and of French national identity (systematically presented as a political and not a religious entity) tied the Huguenots to the royalist cause.

The ascension of Henri of Navarre to the throne of France enhanced their hopes of survival. The original Calvinist dream of the complete transformation of the Gallican Church and the eradication of “papal abominations” had given way to more realistic views, calling for the permanent granting of rights of worship in the assigned Huguenot *places de sûreté*. The problem was that the Huguenot espousal of the principle of freedom of conscience did not reflect a broader shift in

French attitudes regarding the religious question; the confessional divide amongst the population was so deep that Huguenot survival was ultimately dependent on the will of the crown.⁴⁰ Henri’s ascension emerged as a victory of the Gallican *politiques*, who provided the dominant discourse of the “new French patriotism”, incorporating all elements of Huguenot propaganda that had served their purpose during the period of armed confrontation.⁴¹

A certain secularization of the state and monarchy was apparent in Gallican humanism, nourished during the reign of François I. Claude de Seyssel’s influential *La Monarchie de France*, published in 1518, was promoting a new concept of the monarchy, founded on “tradition, reason and necessity” and not on dogmatic grounds. This view did not amount to an actual de-mystification of monarchy and did not legitimize religious co-existence within the kingdom. Guillaume Postel’s axiom “*une foi, une loi et un roi*” reflected the views of the great majority of Gallican humanists surrounding the king.⁴²

The outbreak of troubles leading to the Wars of Religion led many humanist thinkers to the conclusion that religious uniformity, although desirable, was not at the moment attainable; moreover, its pursuit against the will of a sizeable minority of Frenchmen would certainly bring about the ruin of the kingdom. In the thought of people like Michel de l’Hospital, Jean Bodin, Estienne Pasquier, Pierre de l’Estoile and Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, it was clear that the idea of a “*conservation commune*” of both religions, however ideologically undesirable, was the only means of survival for the French kingdom; the “crusading spirit” of religious zealots had always been proved to be detrimental to the interests of European nations.⁴³

The failure of the Colloquy of Poissy in September 1561 manifested the irreversibility of the religious divide. It pushed the chancellor Michel de l’Hospital to adopt a secularised theory of the French monarchical state, by separating it from its traditional religious foundations and by giving top priority to the needs of the “*patrie*”. Interests of the state dictated a cessation of all confrontation and the co-existence of the opposing religious creeds. Catholics or Huguenots, even those who had been excommunicated, the king’s subjects were above all Frenchmen.⁴⁴ During the armed confrontation, this patriotic line was promoted by all pamphlets and tracts associated with the *politiques*,⁴⁵ the “irreligious” Frenchmen. Their Gallican inclination pushed the nobility of the robe into the camp of Henri IV, once the heir to the French throne had been excommunicated by the Pope. Their “alliance” with the Huguenots, evident from the 1570s onwards, stemmed from the fervent royalism and patriotism promoted by both sides.

The incorporation of Huguenot themes and slogans, indeed of a large part of the Huguenot narrative in the *politique* discourse, is strikingly evident in the journal composed by the Parisian *grand audencier* of the Chancellery Pierre de l’Estoile, during the reign of the last two Valois and of the first Bourbon kings. Estoile’s prose and passion as a “collector of curiosities”, as well as his political inclinations have been extensively examined by historians.⁴⁶ His relationship with his material remains a point of debate; it has been argued that Estoile remained critical towards his

material or, on the contrary, that he ultimately “fell victim” to it, succumbing to the charms of an ever expanding collection.⁴⁷

History of reading, a fairly recent field of research, has established that texts receive multiple readings and “cultural appropriations”, dependent on time, place and the particularities of the “readers’ interpretive communities”.⁴⁸ Lisa Jardine and Anthony Crafton have equally argued, with reference to the reading practices in Elizabethan England, that the cultural appropriation of texts on the part of certain educated readers actually served a purpose. It was a case of “goal-oriented reading” by specialists, usually in the service of some wealthy and politically important Elizabethan. These readers, digesting texts from classical antiquity and collecting valuable pieces of information, served as “facilitators” in the linking of classical literature with the needs of the Elizabethan political reality.⁴⁹

Pierre de l’Estoile can be viewed as a similar case of a goal-oriented reader and “facilitator” of Huguenot propaganda. His loyalty was with the French monarchy and the *politique* cause and his primal target were the Catholic zealots. The purpose of his systematic collection of libelous and defamatory anti-royalist tracts on the part of the ultra-Catholic camp was only to reveal the “insults, the deceit, the vanity and the passions of that great monster that was the Lèague”.⁵⁰ He was also a passionate collector, reader, copier and disseminator of Huguenot propaganda, activities that made him one of the principal targets of the Paris Sixteen.⁵¹

A fervent *politique* and French patriot, he viewed civil war as the worst affliction to a state, “similar to fire for a building and to fever for the human body”.⁵² Deeply averted by sectarian violence, he sympathised with the Huguenot victims of persecution, depicting them as desperate men “throwing writing pens to the eyes of those who use the sword.” He also greatly respected the erudition of some Huguenot tracts, such as those composed by François Hotman.⁵³ He believed that texts and collections of documents like those produced by Hotman or Simon Goulart could easily serve as primary material for the composition of a national history of France, despite their polemical tone and over-exaggerations—signs of the “sickness of the times”.⁵⁴

Estoile’s staunch royalism was loyalty to the crown irrespective of its holder. He shared the secularized conception of monarchy promoted by the *politiques* and he refused to see any metaphysical relationship between the personality of the king and the fate of the kingdom, in the fashion of the ultra-Catholic Parisian preachers. His depiction of the personality of Henri III bordered on friendly criticism and certainly did not project any mystical conception of the person of the monarch as embodiment of the unity and welfare of the nation. His monarchism went beyond the person of the king. Thus, he immediately sided with Henri of Navarre when he emerged as Henri IV, castigating the Pope for his illegal excommunication of the French monarch.⁵⁵

His royalism was not shaken even during the tragic days of the siege of Paris in May 1590, when the blockade of the city by royal troops caused the deaths of 45,000 Parisians and forced the

rest to resort to cannibalism.⁵⁶ Estoile’s narrative offers the best and most vivid description of life in Paris under the radical Sixteen. The presence of death weighed heavily on this part of the *Journal*; Estoile recorded the names of those Parisian notables, members of the *politiques* who were assassinated or executed by the Catholic zealots. To him, “each man of honour had his personal enemy in the Sixteen.”⁵⁷

Estoile’s portrayal of life in Paris under the League could also be viewed as a study in psychological manipulation of the masses; his account of the daily activities of the zealots, aimed at revealing the grotesque theatre staged by the leadership of the League in order to assert its total control over the minds and actions of the Parisians. The theatricality of the League’s actions, the messianic atmosphere imposed on the ignorant Parisian masses, vividly depicted and condemned page after page, made a sharp contrast to the composed and magnanimous attitude of the besieger king. To Estoile, the League represented the forces of passion, unreason and misrule that threatened the very existence of the kingdom. Occasionally the “critical Catholic” that was Estoile gave way to the passionate *politique*: “In this kingdom [so they say] it is an axiom that, wherever there is Catholicism, there is also Spain.”⁵⁸

Estoile’s attack on the League not only relied heavily on Huguenot slogans and arguments but, on several occasions, it actually incorporated large parts of Protestant propaganda.⁵⁹ His narrative, openly promoting *politique* views, was largely made with Huguenot material, something that has puzzled his historians. Estoile was an educated and politically-minded member of the middle-ranking nobility of the robe, Henri IV’s closest allies on the Catholic side. His impressive collection of books, pamphlets and treatises on religion, and especially of highly dangerous heterodox publications⁶⁰ proves him to be part of the Gallican, evangelical tradition. To the end of his life, he remained a “critical Catholic”.

The adoption and full incorporation of Huguenot ideas into his narrative reflected the broader ideological proximity of Huguenots and *politiques* on what they considered to be matters of utmost importance, such as the desacralization of “Frenchness” and the promotion of a new theory of monarchy that separated the king from the religious choices—and controversies—of his subjects and transformed him into a distant fatherly figure, protector of the kingdom and of his nation. The question remains whether this invented new national consciousness moved to some degree any other French hearts and minds, outside the limited socio-cultural milieu of the *politique* discourse.

¹ Elizabeth Eisenstein has remarked that the close relationship of Protestantism with the printing industry may point to a certain “deficiency” on the Catholic side. This “deficiency” was largely due to the fact that Papal authority, even in its post-tridentine guise, did not encourage the socialization of the Scriptures through the printing press and sought to limit lay reading of the gospels by establishing the Index. In addition, the insistence of the Catholic Church on the preservation of the latin edition of the Bible – as opposed to emerging editions in various national languages– alienated a considerable part of the educated elites in the West. Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: CUP, 1983, pp. 159-161.

² For the waves of French refugees to the city in the 1550s and 1570s, see P.F. Geisendorf’s edited version of *Le Livre des Habitants de Genève*, 2 vols., Geneva 1957-1963. For detailed studies of the Huguenot printing network in France and of the subsequent migration of French printers to Geneva see Annie Tricard, “La propagande évangélique en France. L’imprimeur Simon du Bois (1525-1534”, Heidi Schlaepfer, “Laurent de Normandie”, Robert Kingdon, “The business activities of printers Henri and François Estienne”, all in *Aspects de la propagande religieuse*. Geneva: Droz 1957, pp. 1-2, 176-183, 258-275. Also, Robert Kingdon, *Myths about the St.Bartholomew’s Day massacres, 1572-1576*. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 11-27 which provides information on the European Calvinist printing network. Equally interesting on that topic is Lisa Ferraro Parmelee, “Printers, patrons, readers and spies: Importation of French propaganda in late Elizabethan England”, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXV (winter 1994), pp. 852-872. Also, Denis Pallier, *Recherches sur l’imprimerie à Paris pendant la Ligue (1585-1594)*. Geneva: Droz, 1975, pp. 4-9.

³ Jean Crespin’s martyrology is an obvious example. *Histoire des martyrs persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l’Evangile, depuis le temps des apostres jusques à présent*, 3 vols. Toulouse, 1885-1889. On the construction of the Calvinist biblical identity, see Charles H. Parker, “French Calvinists as the children of Israel: An Old Testament self-consciousness in Jean Crespin’s *Histoire des martyrs* before the Wars of Religion”, *The Sixteenth-Century Journal*, XXIV:2 (Summer 1993), p. 228. On Calvin’s insistence on the use of the traditional icon of the Christian martyr in Huguenot martyrology, see Jean-François Gilmont, *Jean Crespin. Un éditeur réformé du XVIe siècle*. Geneva: Droz, 1981, pp. 166-170. Barbara Diefendorf’s recent work has shown that, besides the martyrological tracts, the “biblical consciousness” of the French Calvinists was equally reinforced by the Huguenot Book of Psalms, translated into French by Clément Marot and Théodore Beza. B. Diefendorf, “The Huguenot psalter and the faith of French Protestants in the Sixteenth Century”, B.Diefendorf & C.Hesse (eds.), *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe*. Ann Arbor: The Michigan University Press, 1993, pp. 43-47.

⁴ Ernst Kantorowicz’s seminal book *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957, was followed by a quite extensive literature on medieval and early modern theories of kingship. For an overview of recent works see Michael Wolfe’s “Introduction: Becoming French in Early Modern Europe”, M.Wolfe (ed.), *Changing Identities in Early Modern France*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997, esp. note 9, pp. 17-18. See also, Myriam Yardeni, *La conscience nationale en France pendant les guerres de religion (1559-1598)*. Louvain & Paris: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1971, pp. 15-17.

⁵ Kathleen Parrow, “Neither treason nor heresy: Use of defense arguments to avoid forfeiture during the French Wars of Religion”, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXII:4 (Winter 1991), pp. 706-709.

⁶ Philip Benedict, “Un roi, une loi, deux fois: parameters for the history of Catholic-Reformed co-existence in France, 1555-1685”, Ole P. Grell & Bob Scribner (eds.), *Tolerance and intolerance in the European*

Reformation. Cambridge: CUP, 1996, p. 68.

⁷ In 1561 alone the French Calvinist printing presses produced eighty-seven propaganda titles; to these one must add the Genevan production. Despite royal attempts to curb Protestant propaganda – as with the Edict of Châteaubriand of June 1551, Protestant tracts circulated freely throughout the kingdom, creating an atmosphere of a "siege" for the Catholics. For the content and the style of the confessional confrontation until 1561, see Geneviève Guilleminot, "La polémique en 1561. Les règles du jeu", *Le pamphlet en France au XVIe siècle*. Paris: Cahiers V.L.Saulnier, 1983, pp. 47-58. It is worth noticing – as does Guilleminot, that the Calvinist propaganda mechanism was focusing on distinct groups of readers (or audiences), reserving the learned theological tracts for the educated few and feeding the many with simplified versions of the "Protestant message". The same attitude regarding the "education of the people" was manifested in Protestant controlled territories in the Holy Roman Empire, as was shown by Miriam Usher Chrisman in her *Lay culture, learned culture. Books and social change in Strasbourg, 1480-1599*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1982, pp. 151-166. See also Philip Benedict, "Un roi, une loi, deux foix...", pp. 77-78, who shows clearly that, despite their later espousal of a policy of religious toleration, the Huguenots tried to totally suppress Catholic worship in their territories during the initial years of the Wars of Religion.

⁸ An anonymous painting titled "Guillot le songeur" ridiculed Antoine de Bourbon's hesitant stand by depicting him as leaning on a tree and deeply asleep, despite the efforts of his Protestant wife and of other anti-Guisard nobles to "awaken" him; the same painting presented the Cardinal of Lorraine, arch-enemy to the Huguenot cause, as having the king in his purse and wearing himself the crown of France. The painting was described in the *Mémoires de Condé*: Philip Benedict, "Of marmites and martyrs. Images and polemics in the Wars of Religion", *The French Renaissance in prints from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. L.A., Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts: University of California, 1994, p. 120.

⁹ In the wake of the Amboise conspiracy, the Parlement of Paris was alarmed at the circulation of numerous *placards séditieux* in the capital. On Monday, April 15, 1560, a placard was posted opposite the church of Saint-Hilaire, with the title "Les estats opprimez par la tyrannie de ceux de Guise au Roy". The poster, printed before the Huguenot coup, was also disseminated throughout the kingdom by the clandestine Calvinist networks. It was immediately followed by a barrage of "explanatory" tracts: "L'histoire du tumulte d'Amboise, Juste complainte des fidèles de France contre leurs adversaires", discovered in the belongings of a young locksmith arrested in Lyon in August 1560, "Remonstrance à tous Estats, Légitime Conseil des rois de France contre ceux qui veulent maintenir l' illégitime gouvernement de ceux de Guise", "Supplication au Roy de Navarre pour la délivrance du roy et du royaume" and finally, the famous "Epistre envoyée au Tigre de la France. Monique Droin-Bridel", "Vingt-sept pamphlets Huguenots (1560-1562) provenant de la Bibliothèque Tronchin. Recherches bibliographiques et comparaison des textes", *Mémoires et documents publiés par la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Genève*, vol. XLVIII. Geneva-Paris, 1979, pp. 205-208.

¹⁰ *Brieve remonstrance des estats de France...Lyon (?) 1560*, Bii - Biii. Myriam Yardeni, *La conscience nationale en France pendant les guerres de religion...*, pp. 121-124. However, Yardeni's distinction between a "spiritual Calvinism" that knew no motherland and a "political Calvinism" that set the defence of the country above religion, as an evolution in Huguenot thought, does not appear too convincing.

¹¹ J.Bégar, *Remonstrances faites au Roy de France, par les Deputez des Trois Estats de Pais & Duché de Bourgogne su l'Edict de la pacification*, Antwerp, 1564, cited by Mack Holt in "Burgundians into Frenchmen: Catholic identity in Sixteenth-Century Burgundy", in M. Wolfe (ed.), *Changing Identities in Early*

Modern France, pp. 352-355, 358-363. This pamphlet appeared at a later date but it still reflects Catholic argumentation as it originated in the period prior to the religious wars.

¹² F. Melchior de Flavin, *Remonstrance de la vraye religion*. Paris, 1562, p.28 ro, cited by Yardeni, *La conscience nationale...*, p. 101.

¹³ Yardeni, *La conscience nationale...*, p. 122.

¹⁴ Bégat, *Remonstrances...*, p. 12, Mack Holt, "Burgundians into Frenchmen...", pp. 354-355.

¹⁵ J. Bégat, *Response pour les deputez des trois Estats du pays de Bourgogne contre la calomnieuse accusation publiée sous le titre d'Apologie de l'edict du Roy, pour la pacification de son royaume*, 1564, p. k4, vo: "Et pour ce ne se contentant de tenir le lieu des chiens comme les juifs, et demourer soubz la table pour recevoir les miettes, mais veulent non seulement estre assis à la table et chasser les maistres ains manger les maistres mesmes". Yardeni, *La conscience nationale...*, pp. 107-108.

¹⁶ F. Hotman, *Epistre envoyée au Tigre de la France*. Strasbourg, 1560. Slatkine Reprints, Geneva 1970. See Daniel Ménager, "Le Tigre et la mission du pamphlétaire", *Le Pamphlet en France*, Cahiers V.I. Saulnier, Paris 1983, pp. 23-34 for a presentation and an overview of recent bibliography.

¹⁷ For the Huguenot blend of patriotism and "constitutional matters", see among others, Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu. La violence au temps des troubles de religion, vers 1525-vers 1610*. Paris: Champ Vallon, 1990, vol. I, pp. 723-726. For a direct Huguenot appeal to the princes of the blood, see *Supplication et remonstrance adressée au Roy de Navarre et autres princes du sang de France, pour la delivrance du Roy et du Royaume*, 1560, reprinted in T. de Bèze, *Histoire ecclesiastique des églises réformées au Royaume de France*, ed. Baum & Caunitz, 3 vols, Paris 1883-1889.

¹⁸ Estienne Pasquier (?), *Exhortation aux princes et seigneurs du Conseil privé du Roy pour obvier aux seditions qui semblent nous menacer pour le fait de la Religion*, 1561 Monique droin-Bridel, *Ving-sept pamphlets Huguenots (1560-1562) provenant de la Bibliothèque Tronchin...*, pp. 288-291. The author of the exhortation also used the presence of external threat as an argument for the reunification of Frenchmen: "Pensez que l'Etranger est tous les jours aux écoutes, et n'épie que l'heure et le point qu'il voye les Français bandés, les uns contre les autres, en armes". Yardeni, *La conscience nationale...* pp. 84-87. For Huguenot views of religious tolerance, see P. Benedict, "Un roi, une loi, deux fois: parameters for the history of Catholic-Reformed co-existence...", pp. 70-71.

¹⁹ Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu...* I, p. 731, Frederic Baumgartner, "Le Roi de Bonté: The image of Louis XII during the French Wars of Religion", M.R. Thorp & A.J. Slavin (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe. Essays in Honor of De Lamar Jensen, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies*, vol. XXVII. Kirksville: Missouri State University, 1994, pp. 121-123.

²⁰ The episode mentioned in Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *Histoire Universelle, depuis 1543 jusqu'en 1607. Traduite sur l'Édition Latine*, vol. IV., London 1734, p. 501. In 1565, Huguenot propagandists published a compilation of tracts titled *Recueil des choses mémorables faites et passées pour le fait de la Religion et Estat de ce royaume depuis la mort du Roy Henri II jusques au commencement des troubles*. This was presented by its editors as an impartial historical narrative of the events that led to the outbreak of the first religious war, "enriched with authentic documents and events" of that period. The apology of the Huguenot call to arms was promoted as national history. Monique Droin-Bridel, *Vingt-sept pamphlets Huguenots...*, pp. 192-193.

²¹ An analysis of the political theory of Huguenot monarchomachs is beyond the scope of this article. For a compact presentation of the *Reveille-Matin* and of *Francogallia*, see R. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew's Day massacres, 1572-1576*. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 70-87, 136-149. Equally useful is the discussion in Mark Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV*, 2nd edition. London: Longman, 1995, pp. 17-22. Of course, in the thought of the *politiques*, secularization of the French national identity did not ultimately lead to a de-mystification of monarchy. The unprecedented intensification of the "war of words" marked according to Denis Crouzet an "internalization of violence", carrying the war into the homes of thousands of French men and women. D. Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu...*, vol. II, pp. 185-186.

²² For the impact of the Saint Bartholomew's massacres on the image of the king, see James Smither, "The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre and images of kingship in France, 1572-1574, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXII:1 (Spring 1991), pp.27-46.

²³ The argument had appeared already in the *Discours catholique sur les causes et remedes des malheurs intentés au Roy et escheus, à son peuple, par les rebelles calvinistes*. Lyon, 1568. Yardeni, *La conscience nationale...*, p. 38.

²⁴ Pierre Charpentier, *Advertissement saint et chrestien touchant le port d'armes*, Paris 1575, cited by Yardeni, *La conscience nationale...*, p. 116.

²⁵ Pierre Fabre, *Response au cruel et pernicieux conseil de Pierre Charpentier, chiquanneur tendant à fin d'empescher la paix et nous laisser la guerre*, 1575, Yardeni, *La conscience nationale...*, pp. 150-153.

²⁶ In November 1590, the monumental tomb erected at the cemetery of Saint-Innocent by the family of Hugues Lemasson, so-called "father of the paris Sixteen", had its inscription altered repeatedly by strangers; to the usual "here lies...", the anonymous vandals added with crayon, "if he is not hanging elsewhere..." Pierre de l'Estoile, *Journal pour le règne de Henri IV*, I, 1589-1600, L.R. Lefèvre (ed.). Paris: Gallimard, 1948, p. 82. Three years later, the inflammatory sermon of the ultra-Catholic Parisian preacher Guarinus against Henri IV got an immediate answer that very night. The graffiti on the wall of Guarinus' church denounced the clergy, the Guise and Spain as enemies of peace: "L'ambition, les doublons et la corde empeschent aujourd'hui la paix et la concorde", D. Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu...*, II, pp. 189-190.

²⁷ The sense of the fabrication of "reality" – and equally of the impossibility from escaping from it appears particularly strong in the letters of Pierre Pasquier, such as the one addressed to the count of Sanzay in May 1589. Estienne Pasquier, *Lettres Historiques pour les années 1556-1594*, D.Thickett (ed.). Geneva: Droz, 1966, p. 427.

²⁸ For a view of the 'war of words' as a cultural phenomenon, see D. Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu...*, II, p. 193; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1995 (2nd ed.), pp. 218-219. Pierre de l'Estoile, *Journal pour le Règne de Henri III*. Paris: Gallimard, 1943, p. 490.

²⁹ For a brief but particularly elucidating discussion of events surrounding the emergence and the history of the second Catholic League, see M. Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV...*, pp. 37-72.

³⁰ Pierre Mathieu, *Histoire des derniers troubles de France, sous les regnes des Rois Tres-Chrestiens Henry III, Roy de France & de Pologne, Henry IIII, Roy de France & de Navarre*, 1604, pp. 45-48.

³¹ Pierre Victor Palma-Cayet, *Chronologie Novenaire Contenant l'Histoire de la Guerre sous le Règne du Tres-Chrestien Roi de France et de Navarre Henry IV*, (1608) Michaud & Poujoulat (eds.). Paris, 1838, pp. 22-24.

³² The historical precedent of the failed excommunication of Louis XII by Pope Julius II was used by polemicists like Duplessis Mornay and the Huguenot Innocent Gentillet to prove that the excommunication of Henri was a transgression of papal power. F. Baumgartner, "le Roi de Bonté: The image of Louis XII during the French Wars of Religion" ..., pp. 121-123. Estoile, *Journal pour le règne de Henri III (1574-1589)*, p. 389.

³³ Thus, the Burgundian member of the Parlement Etienne Bernard admonished his fellow countrymen, "if they were Catholic and French", not to accept as king "the one preferred by Geneva, desired by England, wished for by all the Protestants, honoured by the Rochelais and defended by the heretics". Mack P. Holt, "Burgundian into Frenchmen", p. 362.

³⁴ Estoile offers a vivid account of the absolute supremacy of the League in the capital's printing industry. He reports that literally every Parisian printer was forced to contribute to the leaguer cause. The author himself had collected more than 300 leaguer tracts till April 1589. Estoile, *Journal pour le règne de Henri III*, pp. 625-626.

³⁵ Pallier, *Recherches sur l'imprimerie*, pp. 69-83.

³⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 174-178. The hanging of the President of the Parisian Parlement Barnabé in 1591 and the publication of the *Dialogue entre le Maheustre et le Manant* in 1593 were two dramatic manifestations of the radicalization of the Paris Sixteen.

³⁷ An excellent source of information on the ideological war between the League and the Huguenots, its content, phases and strategies, is the anonymous *Histoire de la Ligue*, Charles Valois (ed.). Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1914. See the note on "sources", pp. xxxix - xlv of the introduction.

³⁸ Anonymous, *Response à un ligueur masqué du nom de Catholique Anglois*, 1587.

³⁹ Yardeni, *La conscience nationale...*, pp. 183-184.

⁴⁰ P. Benedict, "Un roi, une loi, deux fois: parameters for the history of Catholic-Reformed co-existence in France...", pp. 92-93, M. Greengrass, *France in the age of Henri IV...*, pp. 100-116.

⁴¹ Such as the ideas of Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, whose writings of the period 1576 - 1597 promoted views identified with the politique cause, the concept of religious toleration being the predominant. Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, *Mémoires et Correspondances*, 12 vols., Anguis & de Vaudoré (eds.), Paris 1824-1825. See also Simon Goulart, *Mémoires de la Ligue, contenant les événements les plus remarquables depuis 1576 jusqu'à la paix accordée entre le Roi de France et le Roi d'Espagne en 1568*, 6 vols. Amsterdam, 1758, vol. II, p. 118.

⁴² A.G. Dickens & J.M. Tonkin, *The Reformation in Historical Thought*. London: Blackwell, 1985, p. 75.

⁴³ P. Benedict, "Un Roi, une loi, deux fois", pp. 68-72. Arthur Herman, "Protestant churches in a Catholic kingdom: Political assemblies in the thought of Philippe Duplessis-Mornay", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXI:4 (Winter 1990), pp. 547-551. On the "disastrous crusading spirit", Estienne Pasquier, writing to his friend Nicolas Brûlart, Sieur de Chillery in 1585, Pasquier, *Lettres Historiques*, pp. 223-237.

⁴⁴ Yardeni, *La conscience nationale*, pp. 81-83, Michel de l'Hospital, *Discours pour la majorité de Charles IX*, R. Descimon (ed.). Paris: Imprimerie Nationale Editions, 1993, see pp. 24-25 of the introduction.

⁴⁵ As in the anonymous *Exhortation à la Paix* of 1568: " Voue estes deux grandes et puissantes armées, levées dans un mesme royaume, composées d'hommes de mesme nation... tous sujets d'un mesme prince, portans un mesme nom de François... vous ayez dans vos enseignes une mesme Fleur de lis: et croy que dans vos coeurs la plus part de vous portez une mesme affection de la conserver", cited by Yardeni, *La*

conscience nationale, pp. 92-93 and pp. 165-169, for the views of Jean Bodin.

⁴⁶ Henri Hauser, *Les sources de l'histoire de France, XVI^e siècle (1494-1610) III, Les Guerres de Religion*. Paris: Librairie A. Picard & Fils, 1912; Claude-Gilber Dubois, *La conception de l'histoire en France au XVI^e siècle*. Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1977, pp. 195-209; Gilbert Schrenck, "Jeu et théorie du pamphlet dans le journal du règne de Henri III (1574-1589) de Pierre de l'Estoile, *Traditions Polémiques, Cahiers V.L. Saulnier* 2. Paris: Collection de l'École Normale Supérieure de Jeunes Filles, 1984, pp. 69-79; Christiane Lauvergnat-Gagnière, "Livres et lectures d'un mémorialiste: Pierre de l'Estoile", *De l'Estoile à Saint-Simon. Recherche sur la culture des mémorialistes au temps des trois premiers rois Bourbons*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1993, pp. 15-32.

⁴⁷ M. Greengrass, *France in the age of Henri IV*, p. 34 & note 146 for the first view, G. Schrenck, "Jeu et théorie du pamphlet dans le journal du règne de Henri III (1574-1589) du Pierre de l'Estoile", pp. 75-77 for the second.

⁴⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*, III, *Le Temps raconté*. Paris: Seuil, 1985, pp. 228-263; Roger Chartier, "Le monde comme représentation", *Annales ESC* 6 (Novembre-Décembre 1989), pp. 1505-1520, also, "Texts, printings, readings", in L. Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 154-175.

⁴⁹ Lisa Jardine & Anthony Crafton, " 'Studied for action': How Harvey read his Livy", *Past & Present*, 129 (November 1990), pp. 30-78.

⁵⁰ Estoile, *Journal pour le règne de Henri III (1574-1589)*, pp. 625-626.

⁵¹ Estoile, *Registre- journal du règne de Henri III*, I, 1574-1575. Geneva: Droz, 1992, pp. 66, 73-75, 84-90, 110-112, for Estoile's view of the propaganda war after Saint-Bartholomew's massacre.

⁵² Estoile, *Registre-journal*, I, p. 56.

⁵³ *ibid.*, I, pp. 109-112. Estoile follows the exchange of responses and contre-responses which followed the publication of Francogallia, p. 226.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, I, pp. 88-90.

⁵⁵ Estoile, *Journal pour le règne de Henri III (1574-1589)*, p. 389.

⁵⁶ Estoile, *Journal pour le règne de Henri IV (1589-1600)*, pp. 44-94. Estoile's narrative remains the most vivid account of the siege.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 30-32.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, See, for instance, his depiction of the mardi-gras procession of young boys and girls, organized by the League on February 14, 1589. The quotation from p. 77.

⁵⁹ For instance, his account of the leaguer procession of May 14, 1590, is closely modelled on the polemical tract *Satyre Ménippée*; equally, his depiction of another procession and public gathering of the League on the last day of May 1590, as well as of the notorious incident concerning the discovery of large quantities of hidden supplies in the houses of Paris' religious orders during the royal siege, is an exact copy of the Huguenot compilation *Mémoires de la Ligue*, published in Geneva by Simon Goulart. Estoile, *Journal pour le règne de Henri IV*, pp. 46-47, 48, 51-52.

⁶⁰ For the contents of Estoile's library see C. Lauvergnat-Gagnière, "Livres et lectures d'un mémorialiste", pp. 23-32.