Recording the Wars of Religion:  
The ‘Drolleries of the League’ from Ephemeral Print to Scrapbook History  

Tom Hamilton

When the Edict of Nantes ended the French Wars of Religion on 13 April 1598, it ordered in its first article that ‘the memory of everything which occurred ... during all the previous troubles, and the occasion of the same, shall remain extinguished and suppressed, as things that had never been’.\(^1\) It declared forgetting the order of the day and echoed edicts of pacification issued at the end of the preceding civil wars, reprising the terms used in peace treaties signed throughout early modern Europe. More than a rhetorical commonplace, this article posed the problem of how to find historical distance from controversial events, and how to negotiate traces of the recent past which had an enduring presence in collective memory.\(^2\)

Despite the edicts of pacification and their repeated compulsions to forget, historians have demonstrated how the memory of the civil wars was integral to the peace settlement. Protestants’ rights to assembly, burial sites, property, and security – among other contested issues – depended on established conditions before the edict was signed.\(^3\) Moreover, throughout post-civil war France the troubles were commemorated especially in historical writing, images, and civic rituals.\(^4\) These practices formed part of a broader culture of early

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\(^1\) Edict de Nantes, Edit général, XII.01 in ‘L’Edit de Nantes et ses antécédents (1562-1598)’.
modern memory concerning religious conflicts. Elsewhere in Europe, historians have interpreted diaries, chronicles, court records, calendars, and folklore to demonstrate how people throughout the social hierarchy competed to mark moments of rupture, especially the upheavals of the Reformation. Yet by focusing on the memory of the conflict in the years following the religious wars, historians have given less attention to how contemporaries who lived through the troubles created records and passed on their memories to the next generation.

The Parisian diarist and collector Pierre de L’Estoile (1546-1611) tackled this problem of remembering the Wars of Religion when he compiled an extraordinary and contemporary material text, the scrapbook history of the ‘Drolleries of the League’. A Gallican Catholic, L’Estoile resolved that ‘I will cling to the old trunk of the papacy, however rotten’ and claimed to offer an informed perspective on the troubles at a distance from its confessional tensions. This scrapbook contains the only surviving copies of much of the ephemeral print published by the presses associated with the Catholic League in the final phase of the civil wars, lasting from the proclamation of the League with the treaty of Péronne on 31 March 1585 until the signing of the Edict of Nantes. According to royal edicts, the pieces in this collection too should have been consigned to oblivion. Instead L'Estoile’s practice of collecting preserved them as an essential source for historians and literary scholars of this period, who rely on the ‘Drolleries’ for illustrations and quote his diaries as an essential narrative source for the civil wars. These scholars regularly cite L'Estoile’s


7 For the quotation see Nancy Roelker (ed.), The Paris of Henry IV as seen by Pierre de L’Estoile: Selections from his Mémoires-Journaux (Cambridge, MA, 1958) (hereafter Roelker), 27.
manuscripts in several of the countless re-editions since the seventeenth century, but always as a passive repository of information. Taking him out of the footnotes and treating him instead as an active collector, this article examines how L’Estoile’s collecting activities offer a distinctive perspective on the circulation of ephemeral print and cultures of record keeping in the early modern period.

**Drolleries of the League**

In the royal campaign to compel French subjects to forget the Wars of Religion, printed books were targeted as spaces of confessional tensions and scandalous words, where writers and their patrons disputed claims to honour, status, and political advantage. Commentators agreed that satirical writing carried a duty to ‘impose a modest tax on vice’, but in the fury of the civil wars it always threatened to mutate into slander. To control what L’Estoile denounced as ‘French liberty in speech’, article 21 of the Edict of Nantes prohibited ‘the printing, publication, and sale of all books, libels, and defamatory writings’ without prior approval of the state. It repeated in general terms a proclamation issued by Henri IV on 1 April 1594, soon after he entered Paris March in triumph on 24, following his victory over the Catholic League. This proclamation ordered that

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scandalous and defamatory books should be seized by the commissaries Le
Norman, Pepin, and Desmaretz and burned at the Place Maubert and the Croix
de Tiroueaur by the executer of high justice, with a warning to all printers and
booksellers in this city of Paris and others not to sell any scandalous books
against the honour of his majesty the king on pain of confiscation of the said
books and corporal punishment of whoever bought them.12

This ordinance, and the similar article in the Edict of Nantes, aimed to compound the effect
of forgetting the troubles by suppressing some of their most eloquent, persuasive, and
pernicious witnesses.

As he moved swiftly to tackle the printed publications of the Catholic League with
this ordinance, Henri IV acted against one of its signal weapons in the preceding civil war
(Table 1). Libels defending the cause of the League appeared in unprecedented quantities in
Paris during 1588-89, as this phase of the troubles reached a crucial turning point, especially
following the Day of the Barricades, 12 May 1588, when the League took power in Paris.

Above all, these publications lamented the assassination of the duc and cardinal de Guise on
23 December 1588, ordered by Henri III, and celebrated the king’s assassination by the
Dominican friar Jacques Clement on 1 August 1589. During the 1590 siege of Paris by Henri
IV and his royalist armies, Leaguer publishing houses struggled to make ends meet, and their
printed output rapidly declined thereafter.

Table 1 Editions published by printers associated with the Catholic League, 1585-94.13

12 Archives nationales de France, Y 19, 1 April 1594.
13 Sources: Denis Pallier, Recherches sur l’imprimerie à Paris pendant la Ligue, 1585-1594 (Geneva, 1976), 55,
215-7; Alexander Wilkinson, Mary Queen of Scots and French Public Opinion (Basingstoke, 2004), 110. Pallier
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<th>Year</th>
<th>League Publications</th>
<th>Catholic Polemical Output</th>
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The ordinance of 1 April 1594 and its echo in the Edict of Nantes have not attracted serious attention from historians who have considered early modern state censorship with scepticism, as it tended to operate not in such general terms but rather *ad hoc* and *ad hominem*. Printed publications and handwritten libels circulated too widely, and too rapidly, for censors to control. Yet in accord with this ordinance, much of the printed output of the troubles of the League seems to have been either deliberately destroyed, lost because cheap publications were used until they fell to pieces, or else never entered into the libraries and collections which might preserve them.

Royal censorship of printed libels posed a problem for L’Estoile who by April 1589 had collected ‘more than three hundred different publications, all issued in Paris and peddled in the streets’. In order to preserve these prints, he assembled them in ‘four large volumes, which I had bound in parchment and classified by hand’ as well as ‘a great folio filled with all sorts of pictures and defamatory placards’. He claimed that ‘I should have thrown them in the fire, as they deserved, except that they may serve in some way to show and expose the counted publications favourable to the League, predominantly found in Parisian libraries. Wilkinson counted ‘Catholic polemical output’ and used the data of the French Vernacular book project, now subsumed under the USTC, covering libraries across France and elsewhere in Europe.

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abuses, impostures, vanities, and furies of this great monster of the League’. Perhaps he was permitted to keep these pieces by his cousin Jean Séguiere, sieur d’Autruy, the lieutenant civil in charge of enforcing the king’s ordinance. By going to extreme lengths in order to preserve for posterity prints that should have been destroyed, L'Estoile engaged in a comparable practice to the conseillers in the Parlement, Pierre Pithou and Guillaume du Vair, who, when charged by Henri IV with purging the archives of the Parlement of Paris under the League, copied and assembled in a miscellany many of the most significant pieces they encountered. Despite official compulsions to forget, these servants of the king performed a greater service to the royalist cause by preserving exemplary copies of these documents that ensured future generations would accept an official, anti-League interpretation of events, shaped by their collections alone.

L'Estoile had both the opportunity and motivation to collect the ephemeral print produced during the troubles of the League. Throughout his career (1566-1601), he held the title of Royal Secretary (secrétaire du roi) and Officer (audiencier) in the Chancery attached to the high court of the Parlement of Paris. Unlike many of his colleagues who fled Paris in 1588-89 to join the royalist Parlement established by Henri III at Tours, L'Estoile remained in the capital with his family and continued to hold his office in the Chancery while the Palais de Justice was under the control of the League. He supported Henri IV against the League and so was denounced as a politique, who valued political advantage over the Catholic faith. Leaguers raided L'Estoile’s house in January 1589, claiming to look for concealed money. After that raid, he burned a great number of censured books and papers, confessing

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16 Roelker, 177; JH3, vi, 174-5.
that ‘without some of my friends, who held me back and saved much against my will, I would have lost everything’. Then at four o’clock on the morning of the 31st of July 1589, Leaguers arrested L’Estoile and took him to the prison of the Conciergerie, detained along with several of his colleagues in the Palais de Justice, as supporters of Henri III. This arrest occurred the day before Jacques Clement assassinated the king, an event which freed the prisoners from their oath of loyalty to the king and permitted their release on 7 August.²⁰

L’Estoile’s decision to remain in the capital thereafter, despite this brief imprisonment and later threats to his life, put him in a perilously complicated position. Leaguers put his name on a document known as the ‘red paper’, listing politiques to be assassinated in November 1591, while royalists equally suspected him of collaborating with the League by continuing to work in the Palais under its control.²¹ By collecting and denouncing the printed publications of his enemies, and by recording their misdeeds in his eyewitness diaries of these years, L’Estoile proclaimed his royalism and concealed the compromises he had to make to provide for his family during this difficult period. Yet L’Estoile’s agenda has not been sufficiently recognised by historians who have often used pieces in the ‘Drolleries’ and passages in his diaries for these years to illustrate their studies of the League, which otherwise explore the political, social, and ideological struggles of these years.²² Instead it is crucial to recognise that as L’Estoile manipulated these pages, he engaged in the final conflict of the Wars of Religion and shaped its memory for future generations.

²¹ Roelker, 210-1, 220.
‘The storehouse of my curiosities’ is how L’Estoile described his collection and the ‘Drolleries’ stand out as the rarest piece among them.23 Classified as a ‘print’ and kept as one of the treasures of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in the rare books room at the Tolbiac site, librarians have separated the ‘Drolleries’ from L’Estoile’s ‘manuscripts’ across Paris at the Richelieu site. In this way they have prioritised the printed content of the scrapbook over its compiled form. This article instead explores how L’Estoile transformed these pieces of ephemeral print into a scrapbook history, an assemblage of forty-six folio pages measuring 54cm in height x 36cm in width, and draws attention to its visual and material aspects. Read as a coherent collection, the ‘Drolleries’ present a visual narrative of the troubles of the League.24 L’Estoile selected pieces that supported his chronological approach to document the movement’s rise and fall.25 This approach carried a distinct political agenda, as a miscellaneous anti-League libel.26 L’Estoile denounced the League through the evidence of its own publications, appropriating pieces that supported his argument. He diffused this agenda somewhat by naming his scrapbook ‘Drolleries’, a word he typically used to refer dismissively to the cheap print or jocular genre pictures that he acquired, as merry distractions for the people.27 Yet this word also carried graver connotations, recalling Jean Calvin’s mockery of Catholic relics as ‘baggage and trifles’, the objects of popular

23 MJ, viii, 226.
25 On some pieces L’Estoile listed the date of acquisition or a number that hints at an earlier classificatory scheme: Drolleries, xxiv.
27 For example MJ, ix, 103. See also Drolleries, (ed.) Schrenck, xiv-xvi.
superstition, and the ‘Drollesses’ – or prostitutes – of bawdy literature. In these terms, L'Estoile’s miscellaneous assembly and defacement of prints in the ‘Drolleries’ is an act of iconoclasm, identifying these objects of false piety with scornful laughter, and then defacing them in his miscellany, preserving the remnants of material that deserved destruction. By assembling and defacing the ‘Drolleries’ of the League, L'Estoile cut through the movement’s printed polemic, exposing its false devotion, populism, and rebellion against the king.

As a scrapbook history, pieces assembled in the ‘Drolleries’ work through the troubles of the League in sequence. A major group of publications at the outset of the manuscript denounces Henri III and his role in the assassination of the duc and cardinal de Guise at Blois on 23 December 1588. Their arrangement by L'Estoile on fo. 9 (Figure 1) amasses and denounces the efforts made by League publishers to demonise their royal opponent, as they hailed the Guise as martyrs for their cause. Le Faux muffle decouvert depicts Henri III in the habit of a penitent and holding a rosary, separated from a white penitential procession in the background. His diabolic head reveals his true nature as he stands watching the assassination of the cardinal de Guise that he ordered, carried out by five courtiers who have discarded the corpse of the duc de Guise, punctured with six daggers. The accompanying verses denounce the king as a ‘false dévot’ and make this case by listing allegations of his hypocrisy, addressing an audience of the ‘inhabitants of Paris’.

Emphasising how these images demonise the king and associate him with illegitimate violence, L'Estoile clipped a column of the verses of Le Faux muffle decouvert in order to

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30 Drolleries, (ed.) Schrenck, 45-8; Cameron, Henri III, 147-9.
Figure 1. ‘Drolleries’, fo. 9v, *Le Faux mufle decouvert du grand hypocrite de la France* (Paris: Antoine du Breuil, 1589); *Comme Henry fait mettre en pieces les corps des deux Princes martyrs; Portrait du duc d’Épernon*. Bibliothèque nationale de France.
juxtapose it with a broadsheet of *Comme Henry faict mettre en pieces les corps des deux Princes martyrs, puis les faict jecter au feu pour les consommer en cendre*. It demonstrates how the Guise died as martyrs to the cause of the League by associating their treatment with the typical procedure for the victims of religious persecution. The accompanying verses proclaimed that the king’s executioner burned the body part so that ‘there would be no relics nor memory of the event’. The ritualised ‘rites of violence’ which Natalie Zemon Davis interpreted in popular uprisings in the early civil wars reappear on this page as devastating visual tropes, displayed by L’Estoile as evidence of the rhetorical heat of the polemic of the League.

A coloured broadsheet depicting the effigies of the Guise brothers stands out among this early sequence of images in the ‘Drolleries’ as L’Estoile used it to demonstrate how the people of Paris responded to their death by rallying to the cause of the League (Figure 2). At the centre of the image is Christ on the cross, rising above the effigies of the Guise brothers lying in state, surrounded by candles and set against a curtain of silver tears that suspends their coat of arms and instruments of the passion. Verses relate how the brothers were massacred in the name of Christ and demand vengeance. L’Estoile’s marginal annotation explains that the effigy was ‘Carried in processions at Paris and elsewhere, in January and February 1589, where boys and girls, men and women all mixed together, most of them barefoot and wearing nothing but a shirt, although it was bitterly cold … which I would not have believed, if I had not heard it myself’.

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33 *Drolleries*, (ed.) Schrenck, 52.
Figure 2. ‘Drolleries’, fo. 10r, Les Effigies de feux Monsieur de Guise et Monsieur le cardinal son frere massacrez à Bloys (Paris: Jacques Lalouette, no date); Caricature of the duc d'Epernon in the form of a devil. Bibliothèque nationale de France.
diaries for these months that he scorned as evidence of the ‘foolish devotion of the people’.  

This print that was incorporated into the Parisians’ procession stands in the ‘Drolleries’ as a surrogate and direct material evidence of their false piety. L'Estoile’s collecting is an act of iconoclastic de-sacralisation, stripping the image of the power attributed to it by the League, and deriding the wider process by which the broadsheet became a relic of the martyrdom of the Guise brothers.

L'Estoile’s marginal annotations to pieces in the ‘Drolleries’ also parodied the libels contained in the collection, appropriating their tactics to mock the prints that he displayed and to constitute his own libel against the League. He compiled on fo. 16r three depictions of the regicide Jacques Clement, who was killed on the spot by Henri III’s guards after committing the act, straightaway heralded by the Leaguers as a saint and another martyr for their cause. L'Estoile annotated one piece to claim that the League’s tactics of persuasion brainwashed its audiences: ‘Honoured publicly in Paris with the name of martyr, even by preachers, so much has the devil cast a spell over the spirits of men’. Exempting himself from this category of reader, L'Estoile appropriated on this page the hagiographical portraits of Clement produced by the League, pasting them together to form a new page in the scrapbook. Demanding attention near the centre of the page, L'Estoile defaced an engraved portrait by adding an anagram of ‘F. Jacques Clement’ as ‘C’est l’enfer qui m’a crée’, or ‘I was born in hell’, revealing the truth hidden behind the name.  

This page demonstrates L'Estoile’s work of defacement and desacralisation in the ‘Drolleries’, carried out against the diabolic print and false piety proffered by the League.  

Visually, the pages of the miscellany compiled from pasted-together publications of the League foreground their ephemerality and illegitimacy. These pieces only survive

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34 JH3, vi, 141-2, 145. 
Figure 3. ‘Drolleries’, fo. 16r, André de Rossant, Histoire abrégée de la vie de Henry de Valois (Paris: Pierre Mercier, no date); two portraits of Jacques Clément. Bibliothèque nationale de France.
Figure 4. ‘Drolleries’, fo. 25r. *Chanson pleine de réjouissance, avec action de graces sur la mort advengue à Henry de Valloys* (top left); *Chanson nouvelle ou est descrite la vertu et valeur des Lyonnois en la deffence de Pontoise* (top right); *Chanson nouvelle du Biernois* (bottom right); *Chanson nouvelles des farrignez* (bottom left). Bibliothèque nationale de France.
because they have been collected and preserved, and they have only been preserved because they carry the trace of their seditious design. The sheer weight of the evidence of this ephemeral print is damning, suggesting a density both of printed output and public exposure. An arrangement of loose-leaf song-sheets pasted together to form a new page is exemplary in this sense. Fo. 25r (Figure 4) presents a cacophony of the League, a complete assault on the senses. L’Estoile described these songs in his annotation as ‘found in the great bird cage, in Paris’, the deafening cries of the ‘little birdies of the League’, replete with ‘mad buffooneries, dirty and odorous slander’ against Henri de Navarre. The page displays four song-sheets and another on its reverse, concerning the assassination of Henri III, the defence of Pontoise, and attacks on Henri de Navarre. L’Estoile chose popular songs celebrating political and military victories for the League. Two of the songs on this page, as well as another song-sheet pasted earlier in the ‘Drolleries’ praising Jacques Clement, appeared in a songbook edited in 1590 by the League printer Nicolas Bonfons, which bears no dedication and is addressed ‘to the French people’. Because of their oral transmission and mnemonic verse, songs were the most accessible form of poetic libels and attracted a popular audience, but they also contained sophisticated political and theological arguments. The noise of these popular and impious publications served L’Estoile as evidence for his claims about the corrupting power of Leaguer print, although he did not report specific occasions of these songs being sung in Paris. The ‘Drolleries’ instead enclose and attempt to silence the Leaguers’ cries.

Ephemeral prints pasted into the ‘Drolleries’ also recorded a more limited circulation. L’Estoile found slipped under his door on 30 April 1590 the copy of a pseudo-truce signed between the League and Henri de Navarre during the siege of Paris, with the annotation

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36 Other songs-sheets in the Drolleries are fos. 12r, 18r, 27v. On song-sheets printed by the League see Pallier, L’Imprimerie à Paris, 164-5.
39 Baranova, A Coup de l’ibelles, 229-41.
scrawled alongside its heading ‘This is all false’. The printed broadsheet warned of the terrible consequences of a victory for Henri de Navarre, including the banishment of all those who held offices in the institutions governed by the League, a pressing threat for someone in L'Estoile’s position. He later added to his annotation that he never knew who slipped him this threatening sheet with its reassuring note. Another annotation to an ephemeral print in the ‘Drolleries’ reveals L'Estoile’s source. A loose-leaf quarto edict demanding a payment to support the League, dated 22 June 1589, is signed Senault – the agent of the Sixteen who raided L'Estoile’s study in January 1589 – and addressed in the same hand to L'Estoile’s colleague in the Chancery, ‘Chesneau the wax-warmer’. With this edict, Senault ordered Chesneau to pay a staggering four hundred écus to the cause of the League. It is one of six that L'Estoile pasted together to form a new page in the ‘Drolleries’, a plastered site displaying the League’s exactions, demonstrating how these edicts affected the lives of his closest friends and colleagues. This page of edicts appears like the song sheets, arranged and pasted together to form a new page in the miscellany that captures the cacophony of official League pronouncements intended to manipulate the people of Paris.

A break in the visual narrative of the ‘Drolleries’ arrives with the victory of Henri IV over the League. Celebratory portraits and documents demonstrate his legitimate rule and triumph over the disorder of the civil wars. The portrait pasted onto the reverse of a broadsheet on fo. 33r (Figure 5) characterises this change, a fine courtly sketch in the manner of Daniel du Monstier which moves beyond the printed libels of the League years, positioned above the triptych of a thickly coloured medallion flanked by Swiss guards. Outside of the

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40 Drolleries, (ed.) Schrenck, 139, 143-5.
42 Drolleries, (ed.) Schrenck, 177-83.
Figure 5. ‘Drolleries’, fo. 33r, Portraits of Henri IV: pencil drawing (top), coloured engraving (bottom), two guards (coloured pencil drawings). Bibliothèque nationale de France.
‘Drolleries’, L’Estoile collected portraits of Henri IV in his study, owning one portrait on canvas worth three livres and another done in copper and marble, with a wooden frame, worth six livres. He observed popular responses to the royal portrait in the Palais de Justice, as crowds considered that God’s providence not only guided the king to military victories but also and protected his image. On 23 June 1593, L’Estoile noted the League’s attempt in the courtyard outside the Palais to burn portraits of Henri IV and Elizabeth I, labelled ‘LE BEARNOIS’ and ‘JEZABEL’. Gusts of wind blew the incombustible pictures from the pyre, which were collected by some of the spectators present. For L’Estoile this event was a ‘beautiful mystery’, one that impressed the ‘foolish people’ and gave lustre to the serene portraits of Henri IV that he assembled in the ‘Drolleries’ to follow the cacophony of the ephemeral print that preceded them.

**Between Official and Personal Archives**

L’Estoile’s collecting practices formed part of wider sixteenth-century developments in the growth of archives both throughout the expanding institutions of the early modern state and in the homes of curious collectors. In Paris during the Wars of Religion, L’Estoile moved between these official and personal archives as he made the short walk across the Pont Saint Michel from his home in the Left Bank parish of Saint André des Arts to the Palais de Justice, which dominated the western end of the Ile de la Cité, the seat of the Parlement in the heart of the capital. The Chancery attached to the Parlement, where he spent his entire career, stood in a wooden building in the precinct of the Palais, beside the Sainte Chapelle and the

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44 Greffe-Lothe, 36-7.
45 JH4, ii, 140.
Trésor des chartes. However he lacked the authority to access documents from other institutions in the Palais. In all his manuscripts he did not mention the Trésor and its chests of medieval state documents, the site of erudite research and categorisation notably by Jean du Tillet in the mid sixteenth century and by Pierre Dupuy and Théodore Godefroy in the early seventeenth century. Unlike these antiquarian scholars, fascinated by the French medieval monarchy and its relevance for present political problems, L'Estoile’s curious research focused on the material produced in his own times.

All manner of documents passed through L'Estoile’s hands in the Chancery, including politically sensitive pieces during the troubles of the League. Elsewhere in the Palais, he accessed official papers in the Parlement on an informal basis, such as the judgement in a criminal case of bestiality, which he acquired ‘with difficulty’ from a scribe in the criminal chamber of the Parlement. Many of these informal contacts were forged in the society of royal office-holders who dominated Saint André des Arts, one of the wealthiest parishes in the capital. There L'Estoile was well-known for what his correspondents called his ‘most numerous’ and ‘most instructive’ library, housed in his third-floor study, alongside his cabinet of pictures, art objects, and manuscripts. He thus exemplifies the findings of recent historians of record keeping elsewhere in early modern Europe, who have demonstrated how access to archives depended on formal institutional practices as well as informal

50 JH4, i, 138 , 177-9.
51 MJ, vii, 316-7.
53 ‘Bibliotheca numerosissima’ and ‘instructissimam bibliothecam’ in BnF ms. fr. 10303, fos. 414, 416. A list of diary passages concerning visits to the library is provided in Greffe-Lothe, 151-4.
relationships, and crucially he allows historians to connect these practices and relationships together on a personal level.  

Throughout his career in the Palais, L’Estoile’s official position informed his record keeping. He signed and processed administrative papers requiring the small seal (petit sceau) in his capacity as a secrétaire du roi and oversaw in his capacity as audiencier the ceremony of the audience, the presentation of documents from his Chancery to the royal seal held by a maître des requites. Among his varied duties he signed at least thirty-eight printers’ privileges for forty-two published books between 1571 and 1599, administering book licensing in the name of the king. This duty cultivated in him a tendency to read as a royal counsellor who judged publications with the scrutiny of a censor, and he reserved his praise for only the most superior publications. Through his professional contacts he had access to leading figures in the Parisian print trade. In his longer, late diaries years he often mentioned acquiring books from several printers linked to those for whom he signed privileges. L’Estoile signed five privileges (1580-86) for the Protestant printer Thomas Périer and he later maintained close contact with Thomas’ sons Adrien and Jeremie Périer, often reporting visits to their shop on the rue Saint Jacques. These contacts not only offered him friendship and reading material but also significant information. Most suggestive of the informal gains to be made from these contacts, on the tragic death of his client the learned printed and editor Mamert Patisson, who drowned when walking home from a trip outside of Paris, L’Estoile described him as ‘my good friend … who printed nothing, however secret, about which he

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56 Full details of privileges listed in Hamilton, ‘L’Estoile and his World’, Appendix III, with thanks to Graeme Kemp, Andrew Pettigree, Sandy Wilkinson for allowing me access to information gathered by the Universal Short Title Catalogue project.

did not inform me'. 58 Both L'Estoile’s official and informal activities enabled him to make profitable connections with crucial figures in the Parisian world of print.

Beyond his official capacity in issuing privileges, L'Estoile pursued his curiosity for print throughout the Palais de Justice and into the centre of the Parisian marketplace for cheap print and learned books. He encountered this marketplace as soon as he arrived at the Palais, passing into its courtyard through the large gates covered with posters on the road that led across the Ile de la Cité between the Pont au Change and the Pont aux Marchans. 59 The Palais courtyard filled with the cries of ten licensed pedlars and many more temporary stalls selling prints that L'Estoile often purchased on a whim. 60 Beyond the courtyard, the Great Hall of the Palais hosted the stalls of twenty-four of the most significant booksellers in the capital. 61 Most renowned among the Palais booksellers at this time was Abel L’Angelier, who sold his wares at the first pillar in the Grande Salle from 1572 until 1610. L'Estoile signed two privileges for books both published by him in 1594. 62 Other booksellers had stalls in the galleries leading to the Chancery (Galerie des Merciers) and to the prison of the Conciergerie (Galerie des Prisonniers). On 15 January 1599, L’Estoile signed a privilege for Jean Houzé, who advertised his boutiques ‘At the Palais in the gallery near the Conciergerie’ and ‘in the galerie des Prisonniers and near the Chancery’. 63 At the end of the period of the League, L'Estoile reported disputes in this gallery involving a female seller named ‘la Gourdeille’ (or ‘Goreil’) with those who objected to her selling prints depicting Henri IV. 64 In the complex of the Palais and throughout the pages of his diaries, L'Estoile observed, regulated, and indulged his curiosity for the print market of early modern Paris.

58 MJ, viii, 9-10. L’Estoile signed a privilege for Patterson on 24 January 1597.
59 MJ, ix, 208.
60 MJ, ix, 193-195; Greffe-Lothe, 132. On pedlars see BnF ms. fr. 22115, fos. 1r-6r; Pallier, L’Imprimerie à Paris, 38; Martin, Livre, i, 357.
62 MJ, x, 119; Martin, Livre, i, 347-8; Balsamo and Simonin, Abel L’Angelier, especially 32-8.
64 JH4, ii, 205, 350.
These pieces ended up back in L'Estoile’s home on the Left Bank among the collection which occupied his second-floor study and cabinet. By the time assessors compiled his after-death inventory, L'Estoile’s library was bulging with printed ephemera, holding at least 834 pamphlets that he had bound into 103 packets typically covered with parchment, vellum, or leather, a common means for contemporary readers to organise their collections. He employed a Monsieur Abraham as his regular binder from at least February 1607, ordering and categorising his pamphlets by topic or date of acquisition. Alongside this printed ephemera, L'Estoile’s library was also well-stocked in every field of humanist learning. The inventory assessors found his 822 books arranged across eight bookshelves and several large shelves in his study. However this number must be considered as a low estimate for the size of his library, which evolved as he used the study as a place to impress and welcome learned friends who shared his enthusiasms, regularly buying, selling, exchanging, and lending books with them, recording these transactions in his diaries from late 1606 onwards.

The contents of L'Estoile’s cabinet displayed a coherent history of their times, a museum of the Wars of Religion. Among the pictures in his study and cabinet, L'Estoile owned an unusually large number of portraits, including leading figures who governed the world of his manuscripts such as Henri III, Henri IV, the duc and cardinal de Guise, Michel de L’Hospital, Guy de Pibrac, and several contemporary European rulers. Like a Huguenot medal he acquired on 19 July 1608, commemorating the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre and deriding Charles IX, these pieces served ‘as a memorial and mark of our civil wars’. They reinforced the significance of L'Estoile’s own manuscripts, which do not appear in his

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65 MJ, viii, 156, 347-8, ix, 75, 162, 193, 283, 140-1, 162.
66 Greffe-Lothe, 44-77.
67 Greffe-Lothe, 144-68.
69 Several Parisian bourgeois owned a royal portrait, but none of them matched the scale of L'Estoile’s collection: Hamilton, ‘L'Estoile and his World’, 35-41.
70 MJ, ix, 106.
after-death inventory. His manuscripts spread across the genres of contemporary historical writing, including a family book, a ‘registre journal’ for the reign of Henri III, ‘memoires’ of the troubles of the League, and ‘registres’, ‘memoires-journaux’, or ‘tablettes’ concerning the reign of Henri IV, supplemented by at least five surviving miscellaneous compilations that he termed ‘ramas’ or ‘receuils’.71

More than a private hoard of books, L'Estoile’s collection also attracted visitors, above all friends and neighbours from the Parisian society of royal office-holders, but he also hosted more distinguished guests such as the English ambassador George Carew and his entourage, based nearby in the suburb of Saint Germain des Prés.72 Collectors had to build up L’Estoile’s trust, and offer him significant material in return, before he opened to them the treasures of his cabinet. The young Gallican scholar Pierre Dupuy (1582-1651) did just that. After an initial meeting in the Dupuy cabinet on 22 June 1607, the two collectors often travelled between one another’s homes in Saint André des Arts in an intense series of exchanges over the next few weeks which then continued at a more leisurely rate for the rest of L'Estoile’s life.73 Crucially, L'Estoile lent Dupuy the manuscript for his diary of the reign of Henri III, which Dupuy copied and later published anonymously in a severely abridged form. This edition made L'Estoile’s reputation as an incisive historian of his times and served as the basis for frequent re-editions in the following centuries.74 While L'Estoile did not report that he circulated the folio volume of the ‘Drolleries’ themselves, which his great-great-grandson inherited and later donated to a monastery in Amiens,75 on 10 November 1607 he lent Pierre Dupuy the manuscript of his diary for the League years, since he could not

71 Greffe-Lothe, 1043-7 provides a list of his manuscripts.
75 Drolleries, (ed.) Schrenck, xxi.
refuse it to a friend who had given him so much ‘curious and secret’ information for his collection.⁷⁶ In the following months he continued to lend Dupuy a whole sequence of now lost miscellanies concerning the League that he had copied and compiled, marked in his own hand.⁷⁷ These included one manuscript ‘bound in parchment, in the form of music’, which recalls the volume also ‘bound in parchment, in-8°, in the form of music, inscribed: “Drolleries de la Ligue”’, lent on 8 July 1607.⁷⁸ This sequence of exchanges demonstrates how L'Estoile gave Dupuy a curiosity for the history of the League, events which he returned to in these years as he jotted down historical reflections in the notes he kept as a trainee avocat, and which later his intellectual agenda as he became an ardent defender of the liberties of the Gallican Church.⁷⁹

What does the case of L'Estoile and the ‘Drolleries of the League’ reveal about the circulation of ephemeral print and cultures of record keeping in early modern Europe? Following L'Estoile’s own abusive language, historians have treated the Drolleries as cheap print for popular consumption. Yet L'Estoile’s collecting practices demonstrate that so-called cheap print also had a significant elite audience adept in learned manuscript culture. Coloured broadsheets in particular were expensive to produce. Subtle variations between imprints compelled collectors to acquire and complete the set.⁸⁰ Sellers distributed their wares primarily in the controlled, hierarchical environment of the Palais de Justice. L'Estoile’s scrapbook is just one of many collections in the early modern period – other examples include the Zwinglian pastor Johann Jakob Wick in Reformation Zurich and the bookseller

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⁷⁶ MJ, ix, 22.
⁷⁷ MJ, ix, 196, 202, 203-4, 206, 212.
⁷⁸ JH4, i, 48; MJ, viii, 319.
⁸⁰ For example the white and blue penitential processions in ‘Drolleries’, fos. 4r-6v.
George Thomason in Civil War London – that reveal how it is often thanks to elite consumers that historians can study so-called ‘popular’ print at all.81

Moreover, L'Estoile’s iconoclastic zeal for denouncing the ‘Drolleries’ reveals the religious dimension of early modern collecting. Cultural historians argue that French collectors followed behind their European colleagues because the Wars of Religion broke apart their networks and so collecting could only begin with the rise of state patronage and the republic of letters in the seventeenth century.82 Instead, L'Estoile’s example suggests how the religious wars might be a stimulus as much as a disruption to collecting in this period. Through his connection to Pierre Dupuy, who went on to bring together a major European network of scholars in the mid seventeenth century through informal meetings hosted in his cabinet, L'Estoile emerges not only as a crucial broker of relics of the troubles but also in the techniques of collecting, passing on the practices of acquiring, assembling, and circulating material that underlay the Dupuy collection, which now occupies central position in the erudite collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Finally, L'Estoile’s ‘storehouse of curiosities’ reveals the overlap between collecting and record keeping, and between official and personal archives in this period. Although ‘collecting’ is often understood as an artistic or antiquarian activity, L'Estoile used his collection as a politically-engaged means of recording the Wars of Religion and making the relics of the troubles available to younger colleagues and friends. And while artistic and antiquarian collections typically fostered learned exchanges, L'Estoile’s collecting practices depended on the resources available to him through his official activities in the Chancery of the Palais de Justice. Understanding these dynamics is crucial to making critical use of the ‘Drolleries’ not as a neutral repository of information but a fraught collection of false idols.

for the people printed on loose scraps of paper. Throughout the pages of this scrapbook history, L'Estoile denounced the League and shaped the sources for historians’ understanding of the movement ever since.