



Nicole Gilles and literate society

Title	Nicole Gilles and literate society
Author(s)	Emerson, Catherine
Publication Date	2019-02-05
Publisher	Peter Lang
Repository DOI	10.3726/b11478

3 Nicole Gilles and Literate Society

ABSTRACT

Nicole Gilles was active in the literate society of Paris in the last quarter of the fifteenth century in a number of ways: as a reader and patron of books, as a publisher and as a writer whose work may have circulated amongst his literate friends. Traces of each of these sorts of engagements with literate culture can be seen in documentary evidence which survives and gives a picture of Gilles as a participant in contemporary book culture who adapted his own work to fit its norms. In particular, the way that he uses references in his work demonstrates an awareness of the documentary practices of literate culture.

Nicole Gilles is one of those intriguing characters of literary history whose work enjoyed a period of intense success followed by almost complete oblivion. The Universal Short Title Catalogue lists 111 editions of his *Chroniques et annales de France* (albeit many of them variant imprints of the same edition) between the first in 1525 and the end of the period covered by that catalogue in 1600.¹ Following this, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France lists further editions published in 1617 and 1621 and after that there is no trace of any subsequent editions.² The case of Nicole Gilles is all the more interesting because one of the editions of his work was produced by a leading figure in the sixteenth-century French book trade, the translator and editor, Denis Sauvage.³ Sauvage, who worked in Paris and then in Lyon,

1 USTC, <<http://www.ustc.ac.uk>> [consulted 12 December 2016].

2 'Catalogue général', <<http://catalogue.bnf.fr/index/do>> [consulted 12 December 2016].

3 Nicole Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France, depuis la destruction de Troye iusques au temps du Roy Loys XI jadis composée par feu maistre Nicole Gilles, en son viuant Secretaire, Indiciaire du Roy, et Contrerolleur de son Thresor. Depuis additionnées selon les modernes Hystoriens, iusques en l'an Mil cinq cens quarante & neuf. Le tout nouvellement reueu & corrigé oultre les precedentes impressions, sur les vieulx Exemplaires, &*

produced elegant annotated folio editions of prominent historians of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: Olivier de La Marche, Jean Froissart, Philippe de Commines and a French translation of the Latin history of Paolo Giovio, amongst other works. Sauvage was named historiographer to several French kings and seems to have viewed this commission as an editorial one.⁴ His activity was limited almost exclusively to editions of earlier historians whom he claims have been ill-served by previous print and manuscript editions. Invariably, his editor's prologues draw attention to the lamentable state of the original text before presenting himself as the authority that is going to rescue the text. We find Sauvage resorting to the same arguments when he introduces his edition of Nicole Gilles's attempt at a comprehensive history of France. His treatment of Gilles is so similar to that which he accords to the prestigious historians whose work he was to go on to edit, that it is tempting to conclude that Sauvage saw Gilles in a similar light. For example, Sauvage complains that the manuscripts he has seen of Gilles's work, including a manuscript which he believes to be the author's own autograph copy, are covered in marginal notes, which subsequent printers have had trouble interpreting: '*ceulx qui premiere-ment l'imprimerent, sans discerner ce qui pouoit estre d'ailleurs, meirent tout en vn, et tellement que pour la diuersité de ceulx, qui y auoyent mis la main, vous n'eussiez sceu trouuer feuillet, ou il n'y eust quelque contrariété, ou, pour le moins redicté*' [those who first printed it, without discerning what could have come from elsewhere, put it all down together, and in such a way that, on account of the diversity of those who had contributed to it, you could not have found a page which did not have some contradiction or at the very least, repetition].⁵ Only Sauvage himself has the discern-

Originiaux, suyuant les bons Autheurs, par Denis Sauvage de Fontenailles en Brie, à l'honneur & reuerence de monseigneur le Duc de Vendomois, 2 vols (Paris: Galiot du Pré, 1549).

- 4 Paul-Martin Bondonio, 'Henri II et ses historiographes', *Bulletin Philologique et historique (jusqu'à 1715) du comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques* (1925), 135–49.
- 5 Denis Sauvage, 'A tous Lecteurs, dignes de ce nom', Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I.

ment to mediate between this chaotic textual tradition, and the author's words. It is an argument that we will find again in others of Sauvage's editions but, unlike these, the editor does not make a claim that Gilles's history is particularly remarkable or has anything in particular to justify its publication on grounds of originality or interest. Sauvage claims that it is mainly based on Guillaume de Nangis's Latin history.⁶ This analysis has been repeated by Jacques Riche, the author of the only full-length study of Gilles's work.⁷ Its author, a *chartiste* whose doctoral thesis was a study of the only surviving manuscript of Gilles's history, comments that Gilles is 'un historien bien oublié aujourd'hui' [a much neglected historian today], but this modern obscurity only makes the extreme popularity of the work in the sixteenth century all the more tantalizing. And there are indications that the Universal Short Title catalogue does not capture the entirety of interest in Gilles's text. There are references which suggest that there was also an Italian translation of it by Giovanni Battista Gelli, an author whose own Italian work was translated into French by Denis Sauvage.⁸ This then suggests that Gilles belonged to literary constellation of men who read, edited and translated each other's work and that this was why he attracted Sauvage's attention. Perhaps the early success of Gilles's work can be explained too in terms of the networks that the author developed during his lifetime, which ensured that his work was published and read after his death. Nicole Gilles was active in the literate society of Paris in the last quarter of the fifteenth century in a number of ways: as a reader and patron of books, as a publisher and as a writer whose work may have circulated amongst his literate friends. Traces of each of these sorts of engagements with literate culture can be seen in documentary evidence which survives and gives a picture of Gilles

6 Denis Sauvage, 'A tous Lecteurs, dignes de ce nom', Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I.

7 Jacques Riche, 'L'Historien Nicole Gilles (14..–1503). Sa vie, son manuscrit original, les premières éditions de ses Annales et sa place dans l'historiographie française' (2 vols, thèse de l'École des Chartes, 1930), Archives nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, AB/XXVIII/83.

8 T. C. Price Zimmerman, *Paolo Giovio. The Historian and the Crisis of Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. ix, n. 2.

as a participant in this culture who adapted his own work to contemporary book culture.

The primary evidence for Gilles's activity as a reader is the inventory of his personal library, which was compiled on the death of his wife in 1499, while Gilles himself was still living.⁹ This document is a stark reminder of why we should still talk of a 'book culture' rather than a 'print culture' at the end of the fifteenth century. It contains sixty-four itemized entries, which is a considerable number for the period, and several of these are catch-all terms: 'Neuf aultres livres de petite valeur' [Nine other books of little value] (item 40); 'Huict aultres livres faisant mention de plusieurs choses avecques Bocace' [Eight other books which mention many things, including Boccaccio] (item 26) and 'Ung aultre livre où sont plusieurs histoires anciennes' [Another book in which there are several ancient histories] (item 33). Only nine of the items are explicitly described as manuscripts and only eleven are described as printed books. For the remaining books, no indication is given as to whether they were manuscripts or printed books. Although it might be tempting to conclude that all these books were in fact printed, there is nothing to justify this conclusion: a manuscript signed by Gilles when he acquired it in 1474, and now in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale is presumably the copy of the *Doctrinal des simples gens* listed at number 55 in the inventory.¹⁰ At the same time, we cannot presume that all of the volumes for which we do not have information were manuscripts. There are strong indications that Gilles did not really distinguish between printed books and manuscripts in terms of the sorts of books that he read. His inventory contains two copies of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, one printed and one in manuscript (items 27 and 34) and three missals, two printed (12 and 52) and one handwritten (item 51). There was clearly no guiding principle here that demanded that some sorts of books needed to be collected in manuscript form while others were preserved in print. There are some distinctions in the description of the books: sometimes printed books and manuscripts are signalled as such and the phrase 'escript en parchemin' tends to correlate with manuscripts,

9 R. Doucet, *Les Bibliothèques parisiennes au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Picard, 1956), pp. 83–9.

10 Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fonds français, 17088.

though we find both books printed on parchment and printed books described as being 'escript'. All this points to a situation where Gilles did not see the distinction between print and manuscript as being particularly significant, an attitude which he shares with many other readers and writers of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹¹ This means that even unpublished books could gain a readership, a point which may be significant when we come to examine how Gilles's work may have reached an audience during his lifetime.

Despite the information that Gilles's inventory gives us, there are indications that even the list of sixty-four items may not be complete. The *Bibliothèque nationale* holds two manuscripts that were signed by Gilles to indicate his ownership. The *doctrinal des simples gens* was one, and that is probably the copy that is listed at number 55. The second is a collection of histories from antiquity (Alexander and Judas Maccabeus) which does not obviously appear in Gilles's inventory.¹² There is no doubt that this manuscript did once belong to Nicole Gilles. He signed it and added a note in Latin indicating where he had bought the manuscript, when and from whom (in Tours, in January 1483 – that is 1484 – from Jean Dusseau). The manuscript does not, however, appear in the 1499 inventory. There are a number of possible explanations for this fact. It may have been temporarily absent from Gilles's home, either because it was being used by someone else (being read, copied or edited), or because it was being bound or maintained. It could already have been sold on or given away and no longer in Gilles's possession. It might have been simply overlooked when the inventory was compiled, or it might be the volume indicated at number 33, with the vague description of 'Ung aultre livre où sont plusieurs histoires anciennes' [Another book in which there are several ancient histories]. The fact that we cannot be certain means that we should be wary of regarding Gilles's inventory as being a definitive list of everything that he owned.

11 For an example of an author who uses both printed and manuscript sources, see Catherine Emerson, 'Reading and Writing History in Sixteenth-Century France: The Case of *La Legende des Flamens* (1522)', *Irish Journal of French Studies, Special Issue: Print Culture in Early Modern France* (2016) 59–85.

12 Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fonds français, 789.

In addition there are a number of volumes which are listed in Gilles's inventory which certainly should not be. A distinctive feature of the inventory is the number of boxes of unbound printed books that Gilles appears to have owned in 1499. The inventory mentions two such boxes of books: one of the *Fontaine de toutes sciences du philosophe Sydrach* (number 3) and one of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* (number 6). Both these had been printed by Antoine Vérard in 1486 and both are mentioned in a legal agreement dated 9 May 1491 in which Vérard dissolves his partnership with Gilles.¹³ The books produced under this agreement are detailed twice, once as 'le livre des Cent nouvelles titulemus Cydrac et autres livres, qu'ilz avoient fait imprimer en société' [the book of the Cent Nouvelles, titulemus Cydrac and other books that they had had printed in association] and then as 'le livre des Cent nouvelles nouvelles, titulemus Cydrac et autres livres' [the book of the Cent Nouvelles nouvelles, titulemus Cydrac and other books]. It is not clear from these references whether this refers to three titles, *Sydrach*, the *Cent Nouvelles* and the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* or just two. Clearly the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, a collection of ribald tales composed in the court of Burgundy, was one of the books in question because Gilles had a box of them in his house in 1499, but did the men also work together on the *Cent nouvelles*, a translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, published by Vérard in 1485? The similarity between the two titles makes it hard to know whether two separate books are meant in the 1491 document or whether only the book in Gilles's possession in 1499 is meant. Additionally, the 1491 document's reference in each case to 'other books' raises the possibility that the partnership may have produced other fruits, but there is no trace of this in Gilles's ownership. Indeed, he should not have had any boxes of books in his home at all. The terms of the dissolution of the society stipulated that he was supposed to return any books in his possession to Vérard: 'Led. Gilles promet bailer et delivrer aud. Verard les livres estans en sa possession appartenant a lad. societé' [The afores. Gilles promises to hand over and deliver to the said Verard the books in his possession belonging to the said

13 Monday 9 May 1491, Archives Nationales, Min. centr. XIX, 6. in Rémy Scheurer, 'Nicole Gilles et Antoine Vérard', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, 128.2 (1970) 415–19.

society]. Nevertheless, the fact that these books remained unbound and in boxes in Gilles's house suggests that these are indeed the result of his publishing partnership with V  rard. Gilles's inventory contains two further unbound printed books, a copy of the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, printed in folio format on parchment (item 1) and a two-volume edition of Josephus's *Jewish Wars* on paper (item 2). Both of these works were also published by V  rard in 1492 and 1493, in collaboration with the printer Jean Maurand. Admittedly, V  rard's Josephus is a single volume, but it did have elaborate frontispieces marking the start of new books, and in an unbound state these might have been mistaken for different volumes.¹⁴ The fact that they are listed as unbound suggest that they came straight from the publisher. It is unlikely that they represent other traces of Gilles's collaboration with V  rard, because they were both printed after the partnership ended, but they may be evidence of a continued relationship between the printer and the historian. In this regard, it is perhaps significant that they are both works of history, reflecting Gilles's interests in a way that the volumes he published in collaboration with V  rard do not. We might speculate that he acquired them directly from the publisher (whether from V  rard or another publisher, since both works had been published prior to V  rard's edition) because he was interested in writing his own history. This would suggest that Gilles's literary activity was informed by his links to the literate society of his day.

The existence of these two unbound books at the beginning of Gilles's inventory are a trace of his personal interest informing his book acquisition. In contrast, there seems to be little that unites the works that Gilles and V  rard published together. The *Cent nouvelles* and the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* are linked generically – they are both collections of a hundred humorous tales – but we are not sure that Gilles collaborated with both and there is little to link them to the *Fontaine de toutes sciences*. All three works were very popular and went through numerous editions. Perhaps Gilles and V  rard's collaboration was aimed at commercial success, but this would have been a very uncertain undertaking, given that all three named

14 Flavius Josephus, *De la bataille judaïque* (Paris: [Jean Morand] pour Antoine V  rard, 1492). A copy of this is available for consultation on Gallica, <<http://gallica.bnf.fr>>.

editions were the first edition of the work (or, in the case of the Boccaccio, the first edition of the translation). Success, therefore, was far from being guaranteed in advance. On the other hand, it is distinctly possible that the documents dissolving the partnership focused on the most successful products of that partnership because these were the most valuable. If this is the case, there may have been other, less successful volumes, whose names do not appear in the dissolution document and, as Gilles's name does not feature in any of V  rard's editions any link to Gilles has been lost.

It is clear, then, that Nicole Gilles had an association with a particular printer, Antoine V  rard, and perhaps more generally with the world of Parisian print, which provided him with his unbound volumes. However, the extent and exact nature of this relationship is hard to discern. R  my Scheurer suggests that Gilles's contribution may have gone beyond the purely financial and that he may have been the author responsible for the 'habile rajeunissement du texte des *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* de l'  dition de 1486' [skilful updating of the text of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*]. This was a challenging task. The original text of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* had been written for a restricted public comprising noble men associated with the court of Philippe le Bon of Burgundy. The text contained many allusions accessible only to that group: references to familiar people and places and particularly an elliptic verbal style where ambiguity flourishes and brevity is often allowed to take precedence over clarity.¹⁵ This may well be a consequence of the text having been written by and for a small group of men with a shared frame of reference which could supply context. The same could not be true when the text was published in Paris, some thirty years after the stories were originally told.¹⁶ For a start, the very act

15 The distinctive style of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* is described in Emma Stojkovic Mazzariol, 'L'Auteur des *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* et le Pogge: une rencontre manqu  e?', *Etudes litt  raires sur le XV   si  cle. Actes du 5e colloque international sur le Moyen Fran  ais* (Milan, 1986), 3 vols, III, 103–23.

16 The *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* appear to refer to a storytelling event amongst men who were present in the ducal court in winter 1458–spring 1459. This event may itself have been a fictional construct, but the tales themselves refer to contemporary events. Edgar de Blicq, 'The Cent nouvelles nouvelles, Text, and Context: Literature and

of publication presumes a wider audience than the Duke of Burgundy's fireside. Also, the move to Paris means that French locations which were remote in the original storytelling context become familiar to the new audience. Moreover, the language of the tales had already been somewhat archaic for the 1450s, perhaps reflecting the older age of the tellers.¹⁷ All this meant that, by the time V  rard published the text in 1486, it was in need of an update. Was Gilles, his associate, the person he turned to do perform this task? Whoever did it approached it in a subtle and intelligent manner. V  rard's edition leaves much of the text unchanged, but there is substantial intervention to resolve ambiguities: pronouns are often replaced with nouns and syntax is updated and simplified for clarity. The result is a slightly expanded text which leaves less to the audience's powers of interpretation. Additionally, interventions by V  rard's editor have not simply taken place on the level of the language. In some cases details of the plot have been altered so that, for example, adultery which is suspected in the manuscript version of tale 7 is confirmed in the printed edition and in this tale a minor textual variant – 'en Paris' instead of '   Paris' – may suggest a conscious change for an audience living close to Paris. Scheurer's hypothesis that Gilles may have been the author responsible for these changes is attractive. It is based on the premise that Gilles was an author and that he may have brought more to the partnership with V  rard than simply his financial contribution. It should be stressed, however, that there is no documentary evidence for this, beyond the document that Scheurer publishes dissolving Gilles's and V  rard's partnership, which does not specify that Gilles had had an authorial or editorial role.

Aside from Gilles's *Annales*, there is no other work that might have suggested to V  rard that Gilles was a talented writer who could be entrusted with the sensitive task of reworking the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*. This is significant, because the *Annales* do not appear to have been published during their author's lifetime. It is a lengthy work detailing the history of France

History at the court of Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2004), pp. 75–94.

17 Geoffrey Roger, *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles: A Linguistic Study of MS Glasgow Hunter 252* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2011), pp. 135–6.

from the creation of the world to the present day. Some bibliophiles cite editions of the *Annales* from 1492 and 1498, while Gilles was still alive, but there are no surviving copies of these editions, and Jacques Riche suggests that these are mistaken references to editions of a *Chronique abrégée*, which served as a source for Gilles in his account of the reign of Louis XI and supplied much of the text used at the end of Gilles's work. It seems likely that the first printed edition of the *Annales* was published in 1525, after the author's death.¹⁸ This posthumous publication might seem surprising for a writer who had a personal financial involvement in printing but Riche speculates that Gilles may have had professional reasons to abstain from publishing his work: 'peut-être à cause de sa situation officielle, peut-être parce qu'il n'écrivait que par passe-temps, comme il le dit dans sa préface, n'avait-il nul désir de gloire littéraire et se borna-t-il à laisser un public restreint, – ses amis, – prendre copie de son manuscrit, ce qui suffit cependant à sa notoriété' [perhaps because of his official position, perhaps because he only wrote as a hobby, as he says in his preface, he had no desire whatsoever for literary glory and he restricted himself to allowing a limited public – his friends – make copies of his manuscript, which, was nevertheless sufficient for his fame].¹⁹ At first sight, then, there was nothing in print to suggest that Gilles was an author of sufficient skill for Vérard to entrust him with the subtle reworking of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*.

But, of course, as we have seen, print was not the only medium in which text circulated, and Gilles's inventory suggests that the distinction between manuscript and print was not a significant one for him. Contrary to what Riche suggests, Gilles does not appear to have regarded his authorship as being a private undertaking. Far from claiming that he was writing purely to distract himself, Gilles envisages an audience from the outset: he says that he writes 'tant pour mouvoir les courages à bien faire à l'exemple des bons, que pour eschever et soy garder des inconvéniens où plusieurs par

18 *Les tres elegantes tres verdiques et copieuses annales des trespreux, tres chrestiens et tres excellens moderateurs des belliqueuses gaules* (Paris: Antoine Cousteau and Galliot du Pré, 1525); *Le Second Volume des annales et croniques de France* (Paris: Antoine Cousteau and Galliot du Pré, 1525).

19 Riche, 'L'historien Nicole Gilles', p. 317.

cy devant sont trebuchez, par leurs deffaultes et inadvertances' [as much to inspire consciences to do good after the example of good people, as to avoid, and keep oneself from falling into the drawbacks, into which many before us have stumbled through their faults and omissions].²⁰ This didactic purpose is aimed at multiple readers, although Gilles does not specify who, and they may be the same friends that Riche speculates were his audience. But just because the audience was limited, it does not mean that it was particularly small. It should not be forgotten that Denis Sauvage, when he edits Gilles, says that he has based his edition on 'plusieurs vieux Exemplaires, et entre autres un, qui fait quelque foy d'estre de la main de l'Autheur' [many old examples and among others one, which has some claim to be by the hand of the author].²¹ This implies that there were several manuscript copies circulating when Sauvage was working on his edition, which was published in 1549. The audience implied in Gilles's prologue may have been a relatively extensive network of his acquaintances, to whom he made his work available. That would explain the multiple copies, and the work's survival. This sort of circulation is not unprecedented for a historical text of the period. Olivier de La Marche's *Mémoires*, for instance, appear to have been widely read in manuscript prior to their publication in 1561, sixty years after their author's death. In January 1505, after the author had died, La Marche's widow was prosecuted for defamatory material which the work allegedly contained and sections of manuscripts were destroyed.²² The incident tells us two things about the circulation of historical writing in the opening years of the sixteenth century. Firstly, manuscripts were read and were considered as potentially important sources: members of the influential Lalaing family were concerned about the reputational damage that La Marche's unpublished text could do to one of their number. Secondly, it was possible to exercise a certain amount of legal control over what was said in texts that circulated this way: there are no surviving manuscripts

20 Nicole Gilles, Prologue, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, fol. 1 verso.

21 Denis Sauvage, 'A tous Lecteurs, dignes de ce nom', Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I.

22 Jean Molinet, *Chroniques*, ed. Georges Doutrepoint and Omer Jodogne, 4 vols (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1935–7), II, 546–8.

of La Marche's *Mémoires* that contain the passage that was marked for excision. In this context, Denis Sauvage's comments about the state of the manuscript tradition he encountered when editing Gilles's text are interesting, because they hint at a similar manuscript readership for Gilles's work. Sauvage's comments also provide evidence as to how the first readers may have engaged with the text, adding supplementary material in the margins:

certainement ceulx, à qui estoient ces Exemplaires, ou Copies à la main, curieux d'avoir en un seul livre tout ce qui pouvoit avoir esté fait en tous pays (au moins en beaucoup) par chacune année, avoyent entremeslé, chacun à par soy, sur la marge de leurs livres, plusieurs choses, non accordantes à nostre principal: qui estoit aussi pour la plupart accoustré de mesme les autres.²³

[certainly those people, the owners of these examples, or handwritten copies, anxious to have in one book everything that could have occurred in all countries (at least in many) year by year, had each individually added in, in the margin of their books, many things which did not fit in with our main topic: which was also, for the most part laid out like the others.]

This suggests that early readers of Gilles's *Annales* saw it as a living document, to which they could add the product of their own research. If this were true, we could conclude that the first readers of the *Annales* formed a closely linked and critical readership, even a community who regarded themselves as writers as well as readers, engaged in the collaborative project of compiling a history. It is a seductive vision, but we should approach Sauvage's testimony with caution. Elsewhere it is clear that Sauvage uses the word 'Exemplaire' indiscriminately to refer to a manuscript or to a printed edition, and his use of a plural 'Copies à la main' may be a rhetorical device to indicate that he has used multiple sources.²⁴ The effect may be to suggest

23 Denis Sauvage, 'A tous Lecteurs, dignes de ce nom', Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, I, 1549.

24 For Sauvage's use of 'exemplaire' to refer to printed and manuscript sources, see his 'Advertissement aux lecteurs in his edition of Philippe de Commines, *Mémoires, Les Memoires de MESSIRE PHILIPPE DE Cōmines, Cheualier, Seigneur d'Argenton: sur les principaux faits & gestes de Louis onzième & de Charles huictième, son fils, Roys de France. Reueus & corrigez par Denis Sauvage de Fontenailles en Brie, svr vn Exemplaire*

he has used many printed copies and manuscripts where in fact he has used many printed editions and only one manuscript. It is certainly the case that there is currently only one known surviving manuscript of Gilles's *Annales*.²⁵ It is almost certainly one that Sauvage saw because it corresponds in all particulars to the information he gives about manuscripts of the work, including the fact that it is probably an autograph copy. This thesis has been advanced by Jacques Riche, who notes the similarity between some of the handwriting and known examples of Gilles's hand. Riche also notes that the manuscript, like those described by Sauvage, contains multiple emendations, additions and deletions in the margins. If we took Sauvage's plurals as indicating that other manuscripts were similar, we would conclude that readers engaged with the work in the same way that the author did. Perhaps this is the case, but the surviving manuscript only tells us about Gilles's reading and writing practice.

What this evidence makes clear is that Gilles made multiple revisions to his own work, incorporating material that he encountered in his reading long after sections of the *Annales* were finished. He did so in a way that shows the influence of the literate culture in which he moved. Physically, his manuscript resembles printed editions and presentation-quality manuscripts. It is ordered with chapter headings and contains paraph marks indicating where the reader should read a paragraph, even when the text has been added at a later date and squeezed into the margin. It is clear, therefore, that Gilles is thinking in terms of existing book conventions when he writes his manuscript: he wants it to look like a book. He also approaches referencing in accordance with contemporary bibliographical conventions. So, for example, we see chapters opening with sentences such as 'Maistre Hugues de saint Victor en sa Cronique, et celuy qui fait les Croniques de

pris à l'original de l'Auteur, & suyuant les bons Historiographes & Croniqueurs. Avec distinction de liures, selon les matieres, estans aussi les chapitres autrement distinguez que par cy deuant, & brief, le tout mieux ordonné: ainsi que les Lecteurs pourront voir par l'auertissement à eux addrecé, apres l'Epistre au Roy (Paris: Jean de Roigny, 1552). See also Catherine Emerson, 'Using an Example: Denis Sauvage, Philippe de Commynes and the "Vieil Exemplaire"', *The Medieval Chronicle*, 11 (2018), pp. 154–70.

25 Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms, Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises, 1417.

France, et la division du monde, en son livre qui se commence *in exordiis etc.* racomptent de la naissance des François' [Master Hugh of Saint Victor in his Chronicle, and the man who wrote the Chronicles of France, and the division of the world, in his book which begins, *in exordiis etc.* tell of the birth of the French].²⁶ Like many of Gilles's chapter openings, it starts with a reference establishing the sources of Gilles's information. Like many, but by no means all, of these references, there is a degree of precision in it. He frequently gives the book and the chapter of a work that he is citing. Here, he gives the opening words of an untitled text, as a librarian would. The habits of a bibliophile are also apparent in the way that Gilles carefully records where and when he acquired the manuscript BNF f. fr. 789 and in his note on BNF f. fr. 17088, recalling that he had the manuscript made to order. These habits show a concern for documentary precision. This might be why some have read Sauvage's reference to Gilles as 'indiciaire du roy' as meaning that he was the royal librarian.²⁷ In fact, Gilles had a different sort of professional engagement with documents: he was a notary and secretary, then clerk within the royal administration before becoming *comptroleur des finances* in 1484. Gilles's careful documentary habits might come from his professional background. So too might some of the documents he uses to compile his history. Throughout the text, and especially in the passages dealing with events from the reign of Philippe Auguste and later, Gilles refers to, and quotes the texts of, official documents: an ordonnance of St Louis;²⁸ the confession of a group of heretics burned in Paris in 1210;²⁹ a robust exchange of correspondence between the French court and popes Boniface VIII and Benedict XI.³⁰ Such documents appear to have provided source material for Gilles's history and might have been available to him through his official position in the royal administration. So too would the Dionysian histories, the *Grandes Chroniques de France* and the Latin chronicle of Guillaume de Nangis, whose influence is apparent

26 Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, fol. vij recto.

27 Riche, 'L'historien Nicole Gilles', pp. 37–8.

28 Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, fol. xc recto.

29 Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, fol. xcviij recto.

30 Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, fols cxxi recto–cxxij recto.

not only in individual passages where Gilles copies directly from them, but also more generally in repeated incidental references to events taking place in Saint Denis and its abbey. Similar incidental references suggest that other regional histories and chronicles of religious houses may also have provided material. Clusters of references to Flanders, Normandy and Lyon suggest that Gilles relied on histories from these places when approaching specific parts of his own history. Interlaced in these accounts are set-piece texts, such as a one condemning the perfidy of the English, which Sauvage believes is the author's own commentary, but which could equally have circulated independently of Gilles's history.³¹ Gilles's resultant text is a patchwork of the sources he could access and therefore a map of the literature that he had access to.

The map is not always easy to follow, though. The local histories are rarely cited and Guillaume de Nangis's work is not mentioned by name. Conversely, what appear to be precise references to sources often turn out to be difficult – if not impossible – to follow up. An early reference to a precise chapter in St Augustine's *City of God*, deals with the predictions of the Tiburtine Sybil which supposedly foretell the birth of Christ.³² This is, indeed, the subject matter of the chapter in question, though Augustine names the prophetic sybil as the Erythrean Sybil, which suggests that Gilles was not quoting Augustine directly, or not with the source before his eyes. Other references are not so easily verified. Another reference to St Augustine's views on the supposed injustice the Salic Law cannot be traced to the chapter of the *City of God* which Gilles cites.³³ Here, Gilles's reference is complicated by the fact that, although he cites the relevant chapters of Augustine's work, he does not directly claim that Augustine discussed the legal principle, but says rather that his translator, Raoul de Presles discusses it in his commentary on the *City of God*. Such elaborate references are difficult to verify. This may be because Gilles was using sources

31 Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, fol. cxvii verso.

32 Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, fol. v recto. St Augustine, *City of God*, Book 18, Chapter 23.

33 Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, fol. x verso. St Augustine, *City of God*, Book 3, Chapter 21; Book 5, Chapter 25.

which are no longer extant or difficult to locate or it may be because he was in fact not using sources at all but was working from memory and considered a reference to authority as an essential component in history writing. Precise references may be intended to give the impression of documentary precision. They may even be deliberately intricate in order to obscure the fact that Gilles could not locate his source or maybe even had not had one in the first place. And, of course, Gilles seems to have adopted different strategies at different points in his work, providing a document where he had one, a reference where he knew one and possibly creating one where he did not. Where his references to authority are accompanied by quotations, they are almost invariably in Latin, but the status of texts in Latin is not always clear. In a passage such as ‘Le Roy de prime face ne congnut point iceluy Gaultier, *propter moram quam fecerat*, si print, et leut les lettres: et apres ce qu’il les eut leues, *absque deliberatione, quasi furibundus accepit gladium cuiusdam militis assistentis*, et frappa ledict Gaultier à mort’ [The King, in the first instance, did not recognize Gautier, *on account of the time which had elapsed*, and he took and read the letters: and after he had read them, *without deliberating, as if furious, he took the sword of a certain knight present*, and struck the aforesaid Gautier down dead], the Latin language is woven into the text where it does much of the narrative work.³⁴ This is especially the case as here when Gilles is talking about violent acts and strong emotions. The text may be taken from a specific Latin source, although it is not easy to identify it, but there is clearly an æsthetic effect of code-switching within a sentence in this way. Gilles seems to choose Latin when he has difficult subject matter. This has the effect of distancing this content from the francophone author and making it look like it comes from another, authoritative author, on a par with the other Latin texts that Gilles cites such as the Bible and Seneca.

Guillaume de Nangis, though, is not this sort of authority: Gilles uses his text but does not name it. The same is true of the *Legenda Aurea*, which is demonstrably a source for some of what he writes, but is never named. It is the direct verbatim source for a purported quotation from

34 Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, fol. 18 verso.

Saint Jerome on the death of sodomites at the birth of Jesus as can be seen in this comparison:

Gilles	<i>Legenda Aurea</i> (Chap. 6)
<p>Ainsi que récite saint Hierosme, le jour de ladite Nativité, il advint que miraculeusement tous ceulx qui estoient au monde, entachez du péché de Sodomie, furent tous mors et estainctz subitement: et ce fait nostre Seigneur <i>ne natura humana, quam assumpserat, tanta de caetero immunditia foedaretur</i>.³⁵</p>	<p>sicut dicit Hieronymus super illud: lux orta est iis tant scilicet, quod omnes laborantes in illo vitio exstinxit, et hoc fecit Christus, ut omnes eradicaret, ne in natura, quam assumpserat, tanta de caetero immunditia inveniretur.</p>

Here Gilles has used not only the supposed quotation from Jerome, but also the phrases used by Jacobus de Voragine to introduce the quotation. The *Legenda Aurea* is probably also the source for a number of anecdotes regarding Charlemagne and may also be the text indicated when Gilles says he has consulted a *Vita* of Saint Arnulf and the *Légende de la Feste des Toussaints*.³⁶ In his failure to name and cite the text, it is almost as if Gilles is treating the *Legenda Aurea* the way a modern academic writer or student would use *Wikipedia*. He uses it but he knows he should not do so, so he refers to the sources quoted in it rather than referring to the text on which he himself has drawn.

This in itself is an example of how a man like Nicole Gilles understood his place in literate society. References to sources, and particularly references in Latin strengthened the rhetorical force of his text, but not all sources were equally good for this job. Gilles, a man with multiple connections to the world of books, understood this and adopted this code in writing his

35 Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, fol. v, verso: 'According to St Jerome's account, the day of the aforesaid nativity, it happened that, by a miracle, all those who were in the world who were stained with the sin of sodomy, all died and expired suddenly: and our Lord did this *so that human nature, which he had assumed, should not be disgraced by such great impurity*'.

36 Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, fols xl recto, lvij recto.

own history. In so doing, he also adapted the medieval formula for introducing oneself as an author. Where historians since Joinville had been opening their texts with the enunciation of their name and recitation of their title and functions, Gilles uses the same formulae but, at the point where he should name himself, he simply writes 'je nagueres en lisant lesdictes Croniques et autres traictez de ce faisant mention, pour eviter oysiveté, me suis délibéré d'extraire et rediger en bref d'ou sont venues et procédées les lignées desdictz tresnobles Roys de France' [I, then, upon reading the aforementioned chronicles and other accounts which mentioned this, in order to avoid idleness, determined to abstract and compose in brief the origins and provenance of the houses of the aforesaid most noble kings of France].³⁷ At the point where most historians of his age name themselves and emphasize their position in society, Gilles choses to remain anonymous and stress his role as a *reader*. It is his interaction with literature and literate culture which he claims as significant here. As we have seen, this interaction was considerable. It meant that he collated the texts that he read and collected and presented them as a historical whole. It meant too that he adopted the conventions of printed and presentation books even in his manuscript. It may have ensured that this book, already divided into chapters and paragraphs, circulated amongst his acquaintances before his death, and found its place in the world of print, a world where he had already made a financial – if not a literary – contribution.

37 Gilles, *Annales et Chroniques de France*, 1549, I, *Prologue*. For other uses of the same formula for naming the author in history writing, see Christine Marchello-Nizia, 'L'Historien et son prologue: Forme littéraire et stratégies discursives' in *La Chronique et l'histoire au Moyen-âge*, ed. Daniel Poirion, Cultures et Civilisations Médiévales, 2 (Paris: Sorbonne, 1984), pp. 13–25.