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James H. Dahlinger, *Saving France in the 1580s: Writings of Etienne Pasquier*. New York, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang, 2014. vii + 132 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$74.95 (hb) ISBN 978-1-4331-2063-3

Review by Nicholas Shangler, Xavier University, Cincinnati.

Addressing his fellow parliamentarians at the Estates of Blois in 1588, Etienne Pasquier (c. 1529-1615) clearly understood the seriousness of the troubled state of France. Ravaged by fierce religious wars, threatened from within by Italian influence at court, and trying to repel papal intrusions into the affairs of the Gallican Church, the nation desperately needed a sense of security and continuity in the face of change and conflict. A renowned lawyer, historian, and author, Pasquier urged respect for the traditional French legal and cultural institutions in order to maintain the self-concept of the French citizens and the perpetuation of the monarchy. In *Saving France in the 1580s: Writings of Etienne Pasquier*, James Dahlinger argues that Pasquier attempts, through his *Recherches de la France* and other works, to posit himself as the ideal public servant. Pasquier thus intends to model the virtues and conduct necessary to wrest France from the present state of chaos and to ensure her place in posterity.

Dahlinger embarks upon a path to show how Pasquier first concerned himself with a careful project of self-fashioning, pursuing his legal education as a means to achieve political prominence. As a barrister, Pasquier chose his cases strategically so as to ally himself with powerful institutions. Dahlinger elaborates upon the most significant of these, in which Pasquier defended the University of Paris in its legal battle with the Jesuits. The university lost the case, but Pasquier reaped the desired benefit for his career and rose in stature. He also began to write, integrating his construction of a persona with a desire to persuade the public that a return to the principles of customary law and traditional culture are critical for the preservation of the State (p. 7). By 1560, the initial volumes of his *Recherches de la France* were published.

Pasquier redoubles his efforts to shore up the established order through a trilogy of dialogues, or *pourparlers*, insisting that no one citizen has the right to do as he wishes, flouting the public good. Chapter three of *Saving France in the 1580s* examines these three works and the historical and literary interlocutors who take turns voicing Pasquier's commentary. Dahlinger provides extensive summaries of the three *pourparlers* that are thorough to a fault. The useful insights into Pasquier's views about the best forms of government often disappear amid the detailed synopses. Dahlinger makes brief references to several of Pasquier's literary contemporaries, and it would have been preferable to see these relationships articulated more fully. For instance, Dahlinger makes a loose allusion to Joachim Du Bellay's *Défense et illustration de la langue francoyse* (p. 37) that needs to be examined at greater length if it is to be beneficial to the overall argument.

Many of France's conflicts during this period were religiously motivated, and Dahlinger devotes chapter four to the law and its relationship to the Christian tradition. Pasquier's attitudes toward the Church and the competing types of religious practice were critical concerns. We are reminded here again of Pasquier's affected prejudice against the Jesuits in the name of advancing his own career. Dahlinger notes Pasquier's discussion of the term *Huguenot* and the sections of Book VIII of the *Recherches* where

he remarks upon the cultural and political importance of language (pp. 81-4). This issue was a key *topos* of the French Renaissance and a more protracted and in-depth treatment of Pasquier's place in the discourse would be warranted.

Dahlinger rounds out his study in chapter five by tracing the waxing and waning of Pasquier's reputation and popularity from his death through the present day. He relates, in particular, Sainte Beuve's inclusion of Pasquier in his *Causeries de lundi* as a prominent literary and historical figure (pp. 99-101). Despite that weighty testimonial, however, Dahlinger observes that Pasquier has generally remained of secondary importance in the canon. He finds that notable exceptions in the twentieth century include scholarship by Dorothy Thickett, Clark Keating, Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, François Roudaut, and Catherine Magnien (p. 10).

Dahlinger notes in chapter one, which serves as an introduction to this compendious volume (containing 107 pages exclusive of notes and bibliography), that *Saving France in the 1580s* is a companion to his 2007 work, *Etienne Pasquier on Ethics and History*.<sup>[1]</sup> Indeed, there appears in the present study to be an effort to address several of the intriguing questions that the earlier book raised and left unanswered, primarily Pasquier's conscious manipulation of his public image and how that related to his vision for France.<sup>[2]</sup> Dahlinger successfully demonstrates Pasquier's deliberate self-fashioning as *un bon français* and his impassioned appeals for the country as a whole to follow his example. It is worth noting, however, that Dahlinger's work deserved greater attention to detail in the sentence-level editing by Peter Lang. A number of typos and syntactic errors distract the reader.

On the whole, Dahlinger's study is an important continuation of his ongoing efforts to redirect the scholarship on Pasquier and to attract more critical attention to a figure worthy of the scrutiny.

## NOTES

[1] James H. Dahlinger, *Etienne Pasquier on Ethics and History* (New York, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007).

[2] See Katherine MacDonald's review of that book in *H-France Review* Vol. 8 (February 2008), No. 24.

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