James H. Dahlinger

Saving France in the 1580s: Writings of Etienne Pasquier. New York: Peter Lang, 2014.
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In his 2007 study *Etienne Pasquier on Ethics and History*, James H. Dahlinger offered an extended analysis of Pasquier's ethical program and its intersection with his historical writings. Framed as a companion to this earlier text, *Saving France in the 1580s* returns to Pasquier's life and works to explore his efforts at self-fashioning, to examine in greater depth some of his neglected writings, and to consider his long-term legacy. Pasquier certainly merits further study. A prominent lawyer and magistrate at the Paris Parlement during the French Wars of Religion, a committed Gallican, and a leading opponent of the Jesuits in France, Pasquier was an influential figure in his day. Moreover, the variety of his literary output—including histories, legal writings, poetry, dialogues, and published correspondence—provides fertile material for the exploration of both Pasquier's thought and wider developments in sixteenth-century political and literary discourse.

The main body of the study is split into four chapters. The first, "Pasquier's Self-Fashioning as the Ideal Public Servant," examines the strategies Pasquier used to create his public persona, through the prism of Stephen Greenblatt's concept of 'self-fashioning' and Lisa Jardine's analysis of Erasmus's efforts to shape his public image. Dahlinger convincingly establishes that Pasquier's efforts at self-fashioning were interwoven with his writings, which in turn advocated that law and traditional culture were key to stabilizing a state in times of crisis—like his own.

The second chapter, "Law, Custom and the Individual, Revisited in the *Pourparlers*," examines three of Pasquier's understudied dialogues. In the *Pourparler du prince* (1560), Pasquier considered how much a prince should read and reflect, as well as the types of advisers that he should recruit into his service. The dialogue's central preoccupation fits with Pasquier's conclusions in other works: namely, that a good prince should adhere to the established laws of the realm, for, if he does, he will emerge stronger and better esteemed by his subjects. In *Le Pourparler de la Loy* (1581), Pasquier created a dialogue between an imagined overseer and two galley slaves about the nature of servitude, the role of the law, and law's importance in shaping the character of different countries. Finally, in *Le Pourparler d'Alexandre* (also 1581), Pasquier reanimates Alexander the Great in order to analyze the internal and external threats to France caused by the death of Henry II. Dahlinger organizes this chapter around a close reading of each *Pourparler* in turn, with special emphasis on how these works played off of, and frequently borrowed from, Pasquier's more substantial writings.

The third chapter, “Law and the Christian Tradition in France,” offers a similar close reading of the largely neglected third book of Pasquier’s *Recherches historiques*, which makes a strong case for royal and parliamentary control over the church in France. Dahlinger does an excellent job exposing how Pasquier, long credited as an early proponent of modern historical approaches to sources, used his legal training to selectively interpret historical reality to advance his arguments. He also questions earlier interpretations of Pasquier as a tolerant figure. As with the previous chapter, this exploration of the *Recherches* is strongest in its close, nuanced analysis of specific passages.

Finally, in “Pasquier’s Reception in Posterity,” Dahlinger assesses Pasquier’s legacy, particularly his own efforts to create a public persona and disseminate his advice to future generations of *bon français*. Pasquier remained influential through the first half of the seventeenth century, before dropping into relative obscurity in the eighteenth. His reputation was revived in the nineteenth century, when he was cast, in part by his descendent Duke Etienne-Denis Pasquier, as a model *parlementaire*, good Frenchman, and literary figure. The chapter sheds light on how the values and outlooks of the French Religious Wars influenced later periods.

While the strength of this study lies in close analysis of specific texts, it would have benefitted from strong conclusions at the end of each chapter, to help the reader draw together and assess the broader, unifying themes. Chief among these are Pasquier’s consistent advocacy of established law and traditional culture as the state’s bulwarks in times of crisis, and the influence on Pasquier’s writings of his own self-construction. Of interest to readers of this journal is a third theme: how Pasquier’s anti-Jesuit writings were strongly influenced by those efforts to construct his self-image. Dahlinger argues that Pasquier largely invented the Jesuit threat to France in the mid-1560s (an early and critical point in his career), in order to advance his persona as a leading defender of Gallican *parlementaire* values. Decades later, publication of his *Catechisme des Jesuites* similarly elevated Pasquier’s stature on the international stage. This study is a welcome addition to recent works on Pasquier, exploring his motivations as a scholar and writer, and providing sustained analysis of several of his long-neglected writings. While best read in conjunction with Dahlinger’s earlier work on Pasquier’s ethics, the book also stands on its own as an exploration of Pasquier’s efforts at self-fashioning.

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