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Tom Hamilton, *Pierre de L'Estoile and His World in the Wars of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xviii + 237 pp. Illustrations, tables, figures, abbreviations, notes, bibliography, index. \$97.50 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-1880009-5.

Review by Hilary J. Bernstein, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Pierre de L'Estoile is a well-known figure to anyone familiar with the French Wars of Religion. An edition of his memoirs focused on the reign of Henri III was first published anonymously in 1621.^[1] Since that time, his works spanning the reigns of Henri III and Henri IV have been accessible via numerous scholarly editions in multiple volumes,^[2] there has been an English translation of selections made by Nancy Roelker,^[3] and recently, digitized versions have appeared of his original diaries and miscellanies held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.^[4] Given this ubiquity, one might wonder if there is anything new to be said about this generally known figure, but Tom Hamilton's work, *Pierre de L'Estoile and his World in the Wars of Religion*, proves that there is. Hamilton's approach is precisely to recognize L'Estoile's importance in helping to shape subsequent views of the reign of Henri III and the League period in Paris and to examine how his actions as a collector, compiler, and commentator helped to construct the dominant memory of this time. Hamilton's approach is also self-consciously micro-historical (p. 14), allowing him to present a compelling image of L'Estoile as an individual and to offer a fine-grained analysis of the ways that L'Estoile's many texts, both collected and composed, interrelated in his process of recording and commenting on the signal events of his time.

In the last decade or so, there has been an outpouring of historical works focused on the early modern construction of memory, including of the French Wars of Religion;^[5] the processes of collection and management of documents;^[6] and the composition and meaning of such "ego-documents" as *livres de raison* and memoirs.^[7] Hamilton's work engages with all of these lines of inquiry and has something important to contribute to each. The brevity of the text, the focus on a particularly interesting individual, and the attempt to place that individual solidly within his lived environment all help to make this book one that could successfully be assigned to advanced undergraduates (assuming that it were issued in paperback at significantly lower cost). Yet the strength of the book also leads to some of its limitations: It may be a little too short and focused. Where in some places it delves into great detail and significant comparisons, in others more explanation and greater contextualization would have proved revealing.

One of Hamilton's main points is that although Pierre de L'Estoile's many diaries, memoirs, and miscellanies indeed provide fundamental insight into the political and religious culture of the Wars of Religion, they should not be taken as straight-forward records of events. To understand

the process through which he collected, wrote, and edited them, it is therefore essential to situate L'Estoile within his social, professional, and family environments, and this is what the first three chapters seek to do. Literally placing L'Estoile within his house in the Parisian parish of Saint-André-des-Arts, in his positions as *secrétaire du roi* and *audiencier* in the chancellery of Paris in the Palais de Justice, and within a familial tradition of bi-confessional religious contacts, these chapters portray an individual who belonged solidly to the social and cultural world of royal officials and the Parlement of Paris, while seemingly choosing to maintain a relatively modest lifestyle. Despite his father's final position as president in the Chambre des Enquêtes of the Parlement of Paris and his mother's origins in the prestigious Monthelon family, Pierre de L'Estoile retained his relatively humble offices from the age of nineteen in 1566 up to his retirement in 1601. His house was comfortable but modest compared to those of other royal office holders, and his wardrobe, together with that of his second wife, was notably less plentiful and less rich than those of their peers. L'Estoile, however, stood out as a collector. He owned more than double the number of pictures of thirty-nine other men of the law who died in Paris between 1574 and 1609, and he assembled an extensive library and large collection of antique objects and medals. His taste in pictures was also particular, in that he owned almost no devotional images of saints and chose to display scenes from the Old Testament and landscapes in his reception rooms. Further, he owned a full thirty portraits, most of them of figures who had played an important role during the Wars of Religion, leading Hamilton to comment that the objects he displayed in his study and cabinet comprised "a museum of the Wars of Religion," meant to complement his diaries and written collections (pp. 37, 40-42).^[8] Much of this evidence helps to portray a man more focused on his collecting pursuits than on advancing a brilliant career and to reveal a religious sensibility more grounded in simple living than in devotion to the saints. Indeed, Hamilton lays out the Protestant connections of L'Estoile and his immediate family, including his own tutor, Mathieu Béroalde, whom Pierre's father, Louis de L'Estoile, instructed to educate the son to be pious and God-fearing while remaining within the Catholic fold. In summarizing L'Estoile's religious views, Hamilton argues that he remained a Catholic with a strong sense of God's providence and a desire for religious concord, while deploring the "superstitions" of the Roman Catholic Church and rejecting papal claims to infallibility and temporal sovereignty. This view accords well with Thierry Wanegffelen's earlier representation of L'Estoile, with the one difference that Wanegffelen emphasized the idea that for the memorialist, "la notion même de préférence confessionnelle lui est inconnue."^[9] By this, he meant that L'Estoile maintained a distinction between confessional membership and religious belief. While it was without purpose (and therefore suspect) to change confessional allegiance, the choice to recognize the free offer of justification through Christ was the key to salvation and available to all Christians.

With L'Estoile firmly situated in his milieu, chapters four and five turn to L'Estoile's processes of collecting published texts and manuscripts, organizing them in miscellanies, and using parts of them to help inform his writing on the reigns of Henri III and Henri IV. Here, Hamilton seeks to revise previous assumptions about what L'Estoile's writings and collections can tell us about the period they treat. Looking at L'Estoile's "Registre-journal" covering the period from 1574-1589, he argues that the royal secretary was not as virulent and uniform a critic of the last Valois king as has generally been represented, and his "Mémoires" on the League in Paris showed him to be far less objective and omnivorous a witness than is often assumed. In both cases, these conclusions are based on a fine-grained analysis of L'Estoile's written histories and collections of texts, on which the Parisian worked extensively over a significant period of time and which were closely interrelated in their composition and conception.

In Hamilton's view, L'Estoile's "Registre-journal" focused on the reign of Henri III was far from a simple chronicle of events of the reign, but rather a carefully composed history in which the author sought to display a dispassionate voice. From two surviving manuscripts, it is apparent that L'Estoile composed the work in numerous drafts, adding and subtracting passages over time. Hamilton notes that one can find intense criticism of Henri III and his *mignons* in the text, but on the whole, he argues, the royal secretary had respect for the king and an understanding of the difficulties he faced. In fact, some of L'Estoile's most intense language derives not from his original composition but from the numerous libels from the period he collected. Thus, he imported some of the words of others into his own writings, while at the same time, he framed the collected pieces in his miscellanies so as to demonstrate either approval or reprobation. Hamilton's demonstration of how L'Estoile incorporated some of the language and outlook of the short, intensely critical texts he collected into his own writings accords well with Tatiana Debbagi Baranova's more general study of the short polemical texts she identifies as libels or defamatory writings in her recent work, *À coups de libelles*.^[10] Here, Debbagi Baranova argued that the many short publications of the period of the Wars of Religion were not meant to provide reasoned arguments supporting a sustained position, but were rather topical interventions calculated to sway supporters through defamation of current political targets. As such, they generally provided compilations and re-workings of short textual passages or sound-bites, which derived their meaning from the particular ways in which they were assembled and pitched rather than from the coherence of their argumentation. Yet, at the same time that L'Estoile's *modus operandi* of borrowing textual passages to inform his own writing generally agrees with Debbagi Baranova's presentation of polemical writing during the Wars of Religion, his example also tends to contradict other elements of her argument. Although L'Estoile borrowed passages and made compilations of disparate texts, he also possessed a remarkably consistent point of view that guided his writing and collecting. Further, where Debbagi Baranova claims that manuscript texts were generally a better guide to the actual views of their authors than published ones (because they were not subject to the pressures of patronage and publication), Hamilton demonstrates the complex social mechanisms that guided the circulation and collection of manuscripts during the later civil wars in France.^[11] For Hamilton, manuscript culture was continually evolving, so that "an engaged reading of a libel requires extensive retracing following manuscript exchanges. It is a social activity" (p. 110). Because L'Estoile was both an avid collector of texts and images and a commentator on his times, his corpus provides a premier example of this manuscript culture at work.

Where L'Estoile strove for a detached, objective voice in relating the events of the reign of Henri III, and indeed, began his "Registre-journal" in 1574, notably after the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, his "Mémoires" on the League period make a strong argument about his own activities and loyalties. Hamilton is certainly not the first to notice that L'Estoile remained in Paris during the League and continued to exercise his office in the palais de justice, now occupied by the Leaguer Parlement, but he argues that this choice has not been sufficiently recognized as shaping his written agenda. L'Estoile worked in League-dominated Paris and attended League sermons, all while strongly vilifying League supporters, criticizing the sermons he heard, and attempting to record and debunk the many rumors swirling about the city. Similar to Robert Ruffi of Marseille, L'Estoile sought to manage his reputation and justify his actions during the League through his "Mémoires."^[12] Thus, Hamilton points out "just how partial and self-justifying [L'Estoile's] reports were" (p. 139) and how much his "Drolleries" of the League were designed

to reveal the hypocrisy, rebellion, and sanctimoniousness of its supporters, while establishing himself as one of the *gens de bien* through his editorial practices and criticism.

Hamilton's point regarding L'Estoile's authorial agenda is well-taken, but it is still not entirely clear why the royal secretary remained in Paris during the League in the first place. Of course, as Michel de Waele has pointed out, the choice to remain in Paris or join the Parlement at Tours was not an easy one. Upwards of sixty out of the 190 *conseillers* of the Parlement of Paris chose to remain in the capital during its occupation, even though only a fraction of these sixty *parlementaires* were League supporters.[13] Still, if we knew more about L'Estoile's daily contacts and role within his neighborhood, we might have a better understanding of why he remained in Paris. Hamilton has mined the Parisian notarial registers to excellent effect in providing a room-by-room description of L'Estoile's house and an assessment of his pictures and clothes, but could not these same notarial registers tell us about L'Estoile's patronage and position within his neighborhood, whether he or any members of his family held civic office, whether he had any debts he simply could not abandon, and what choices his network of relations made? In short, while Hamilton discusses L'Estoile's social connections sufficiently to represent him as an established, if relatively poor member of a group of important legal families, he does not embed him in the same kind of social, economic, and genealogical context as the individuals and families of the period examined with such profit by Robert Descimon.[14] Granted, one cannot do everything, but I suspect that some of the ambiguities of L'Estoile's decisions would be cleared up through such an analysis.

After the League period was over, L'Estoile continued to collect books, pamphlets, and manuscripts, and chapter six addresses how the elder man fit into the world of erudite scholars and Gallican opinion in the Paris of Henri IV. In particular, it was at this time that L'Estoile became acquainted with Pierre Dupuy, *avocat* in the Parlement of Paris, and central figure, along with his brother, Jacques, of the famous Dupuy Circle that would become an essential hub of French erudite culture during the following decade. Through exchanges of collected documents, Dupuy introduced L'Estoile to a range of important figures through their correspondence, and L'Estoile incorporated epistolary passages from the likes of Scaliger, Lipsius, and Casaubon into his registers. In exchange, L'Estoile shared first his writings on the reign of Henri III and then his collections on the League with Dupuy. This choice turned out to be highly consequential, since it was Pierre Dupuy who first published a selection of L'Estoile's writings on the reign of Henri III in an anonymous *Journal des choses mémorables advenues durant le regne de Henry III* in 1621. As Hamilton explains, L'Estoile and his writings were instrumental in helping to fix Dupuy's interpretation of the Wars of Religion, just as Dupuy's editorial choices were critical in emphasizing L'Estoile's view of the civil wars as being politically rather than religiously motivated. We thus see L'Estoile as one of a series of important individuals whose experiences of the Wars of Religion helped to shape the culture of the seventeenth century. (According to Barbara Diefendorf, Barbe Acarie was another.[15]) At the same time, we must include him within the group of important historians, generally headed by Jacques-Auguste de Thou, who helped to fix the view that the troubles were the result of noble ambition and political conflicts under the "guise" of religion that endured for centuries.[16] Hamilton shows how much of a role Pierre Dupuy played in promoting this interpretation, since he not only oversaw the 1620 publication of de Thou's *History of His Own Time*, but also offered the first selection of L'Estoile's commentaries. As the statistics assembled by Marie-Madeleine Fragonard reveal, the 1620s were a privileged moment for the publication of many of the histories and memoirs drafted during the

Wars of Religion, so it is clear that Dupuy played a significant role in this general movement to memorialize the experiences of the previous century.[17]

Hamilton's study of Pierre de L'Estoile as a writer and collector of ephemeral texts focused on the conflicts of the Wars of Religion and reign of Henri IV has a great deal to offer. It is a lively portrait of an individual who can be known in much more detail than is usual for the time. It provides a careful analysis and interpretation of L'Estoile's working methods and how these shaped the many varieties of texts he left behind. Further, it cautions us that mining L'Estoile's works for choice anecdotes can lead to a misrepresentation of the author's overall vision and investigates the guiding concerns that dictated his editorial choices. In places, it is true, readers may find themselves wishing for further contextualization in a work that already does quite a bit to examine L'Estoile's "World in the Wars of Religion." In addition to the suggestions above, I would have found more comparison of L'Estoile with other historians and collectors of the period highly useful, particularly de Thou and Simon Goulart. Nevertheless, as it stands, Hamilton's work demonstrates the process through which L'Estoile's memory helped to determine our own interpretation of the period, an important observation for anyone interested in the Wars of Religion in particular or the construction of historical memory in general.

NOTES

[1] [Pierre de L'Estoile,] *Journal des choses mémorables advenues durant tout le regne de Henry III* (Paris, 1621).

[2] The most recent versions are: Pierre de L'Estoile, *Registre-journal du règne de Henri III*, 6 v., ed. Madeleine Lazard and Gilbert Schrenk (Geneva: Droz, 1992-2003); idem, *Registre-journal du règne de Henri IV, 1589-1598*, 3 v., ed. Marie Houllémare, et al. (Geneva: Droz, 2010-2016); idem, *Les belles figures et drolleries de la Ligue*, ed. Gilbert Schrenk (Geneva: Droz, 2016).

[3] Nancy Lyman Roelker, ed. and trans., *The Paris of Henry of Navarre as Seen by Pierre de l'Estoile. Selections from his Mémoires-Journaux* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958).

[4] For example, BNF Ms. fr. 6678, *Registre-journal durant le règne de Henri III*, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000775t>; BNF Ms. fr. 10299, *Mémoires, 1589-1594*, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000783c>; BNF Ms. fr. 10300, *Registre-journal, 1606-1609*, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9072427w>; BNF Ms. fr. 10303, *Recueil de mémoires*, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9007245r>.

[5] In addition to the works mentioned below, see for example, Jacques Berchtold and Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, *La mémoire des guerres de Religion. La concurrence des genres historiques (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Geneva: Droz, 2007); Philip Benedict, "Divided Memories? Historical Calendars, Commemorative Processions and the Recollection of the Wars of Religion during the Ancien Régime," *French History* (2008): 381-405; idem, "Shaping the Memory of the French Wars of Religion. The First Centuries," in *Memory before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Erika Kuijpers, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 111-25; idem, *Graphic History: The Wars, Massacres and Troubles of Tortorel and Perrissin* (Geneva: Droz, 2007); Amy Graves-Monroe, *Post Tenebras Lex: Preuves et propagande dans l'historiographie engagée de Simon Goulart (1543-1628)*

(Geneva: Droz, 2012); Tom Hamilton, "The Procession of the War of the League: Remembering the Wars of the Religion in Visual and Literary Satire," *French History* 30, no. 1 (2016): 1-30.

[6] Philippe Contamine and Laurent Vissière, eds., *Défendre ses droits, construire sa mémoire. Les chartiers seigneuriaux, XIIIe-XXIe siècle* (Paris: Société de l'Histoire de France, 2010); Eric Ketelaar, "Records Out and Archives In: Early Modern Cities as Creators of Records and as Communities of Archives," *Archival Science* 10 (2010): 201-210; Randolph C. Head, "Configuring European Archives: Spaces, Materials and Practices in the Differentiation of Repositories from the Late Middle Ages to 1700," *European History Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (2016): 498-518; Filippo de Vivo, "Ordering the Archive in Early Modern Venice (1400-1650)," *Archival Science* 10 (2010): 231-48.

[7] Sylvie Mouysset, *Papiers de famille. Introduction à l'étude des livres de raison (France, XVe-XIXe siècle)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007); Jean-Pierre Bardet, et al., ed., *Les écrits du for privé en Europe (du Moyen Âge à l'époque contemporaine). Enquêtes, analyses, publications* (Pessac: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2010); Susan Broomhall, "Disturbing Memories. Narrating Experiences and Emotions of Distressing Events in the French Wars of Religion," in *Memory before Modernity*, ed. Kuijpers, et al., 253-67; André Burguière, "La Mémoire du Bourgeois Gentilhomme: Généalogies Domestiques en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles," *Annales E.S.C.* (July-August 1991): 771-88.

[8] David van der Linden also discusses L'Estoile's picture collection as a significant example of the ways that individuals memorialized the period of the Wars of Religion in his "Memorializing the Wars of Religion in Early Seventeenth-Century French Picture Galleries: Protestants and Catholics Painting the Contested Past," *Renaissance Quarterly* 70 (2017): 132-78, especially, 139-40.

[9] Thierry Wanegffelen, *Ni Rome ni Genève. Des fidèles entre deux chaires en France au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), 465-77, quotation, 471.

[10] Tatiana Debbagi Baranova, *À coups de libelles. Une culture politique au temps des guerres de religion (1562-1598)* (Geneva: Droz, 2012), 172-207.

[11] Debbagi Baranova, *À coups de libelles*, 316.

[12] Wolfgang Kaiser, "Le passé refaçonné. Mémoire et oubli dans les Histoires de Marseille, de Robert Ruffi à Louis-Antoine de Ruffi," *Provence historique* 193 (1998): 279-292.

[13] Michel de Waele, "De Paris à Tours: la crise d'identité des magistrats parisiens de 1589 à 1594," *Revue historique* 607 (1998), 557.

[14] Robert Descimon explores these families in a variety of works: *Qui étaient les Seize? Étude sociale de deux cent vingt-cinq cadres laïcs de la Ligue radicale parisienne (1585-1594)*. Mémoires de la Fédération des sociétés historiques et archéologiques de Paris et de l'Île-de-France (Paris: Kincksieck, 1983); "La Ligue à Paris (1585-1594): Une Révision," *Annales, E.S.C.* 37 (1982): 72-111; "Prise de Parti, Appartenance Sociale et Relations Familiales dans la Ligue Parisienne (1585-1594)," in *Les réformes, enracinement socio-culturel*, ed. Bernard Chevalier and Robert Sauzet (Paris: Éditions de la Maisnie, 1985), 123-36; "Élites parisiennes entre XVe et XVIIe siècles. Du bon

usage du Cabinet des titres,” *Bibliothèque de l’École des chartes* 155 (1997): 607-44; “‘The Bourgeoisie Seconde’: Social Differentiation in the Parisian Municipal Oligarchy in the Sixteenth Century, 1500-1610,” *French History* 17 (2003): 388-424; “Les de Thou au miroir des archives notariales du XVI^e siècle. Les chemins de la haute robe,” in *Jacques Auguste de Thou. Écritures et condition robine, Cahiers V. L. Saulnier* 24 (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2007), 13-35.

[15] Barbara B. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[16] Philip Benedict, “Were the French Wars of Religion Really Wars of Religion?,” in *The European Wars of Religion: An Interdisciplinary Reassessment of Sources, Interpretations, and Myths*, ed. Wolfgang Palaver, et al. (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2016), 61-86.

[17] Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, “Une mémoire individualisée. Editions et rééditions des acteurs et témoins des guerres,” in *La mémoire des guerres de Religion*, ed. Berchtold and Fragonard, 29-85, especially 35-38, 68-70.

Hilary J. Bernstein
University of California, Santa Barbara
bernstein@history.ucsb.edu

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