

web whose persuasive intertextuality offers new and exciting scholarly pursuits and lines of inquiry.

Gabriella Scarlatta, *University of Michigan-Dearborn*
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Les Configurations de l'imaginaire pascalien. Elena Ciocoiu.
Univers Port-Royal 35. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019. 328 pp. €39.

The starting point and organizing principle of this stimulating study on Blaise Pascal are to use reading strategies that have tended to be applied to literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but not to writing of the seventeenth century. The “imaginary” of Elena Ciocoiu’s title does not include any consideration of Lacan’s Imaginary Order but rather is drawn from the musings of a number of French philosophers and literary critics, notably Gaston Bachelard, Jean Burgos, Gilbert Durand, Jean-Pierre Richard, Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, and the Pascal scholar Philippe Sellier. Eschewing discussion of Pascal’s famous discourse on imagination, Ciocoiu focuses instead on what she terms “the product of the imagination” (21), viewing “l’imaginaire pascalien” (a term that, alongside “rêverie,” is used throughout the book) as a dynamic system of images that not only have a descriptive role but also a heuristic one in both the *Pensées* and other texts by Pascal.

Given Ciocoiu’s stated intention in the introduction to offer a new reading of Pascal, certain elements are not immediately promising. For a start, the structure of the book may strike some readers as surprisingly traditional, reflecting the “Wretchedness of man without God / Happiness of man with God” diptych that the nineteenth-century editor Léon Brunschvicg imposed upon his edition of the *Pensées*. She divides her work into three main sections: part 1 devoted to “L’Homme devant le monde” (Man facing the world), part 2 to “L’Homme devant soi-même” (“Man facing himself”), and part 3 to “L’Homme devant Dieu” (“Man facing God”). Also, the conclusion revisits questions of categorization that have haunted analysis of seventeenth-century French literature and art for perhaps too long, leading to the assertion that “l’imaginaire pascalien porte la marque d’une tension dialectique entre le classique et le baroque” (“Pascal’s imaginary bears the mark of a dialectical tension between classical and Baroque,” 269). Moreover, although she makes wide use of secondary literature, no book or article on Pascal that she cites is more modern than 2008, which can be explained by the fact that the book seems to have started life as a thesis submitted in 2008, but with over a decade elapsing between the appearances of thesis and book, an updated bibliography at least would have been desirable.

However, where Ciocoiu truly excels is in the perceptive and illuminating close readings that she gives of passages, both familiar and more obscure, from Pascal’s oeuvre.

Some fragments from the *Pensées* that I thought I knew well take on new life in her hands. In her discussion of the dialectic between the exterior and interior that opens part 1, for example, her interpretation of Pascal's use of all the senses in his writing is both revealing and unexpected. Where sight is concerned, her assertion that "l'univers pascalien est complètement incolore" ("the Pascalian universe is completely colorless," 54) comes as a shock, but, as she goes on to show in her brilliant concluding comparison between the Jesuit Pierre Le Moyne (the object of a number of verbal attacks by Pascal in the *Provincial Letters*) and Pascal himself, Le Moyne uses imagery that seems designed to excite the senses while Pascal chooses to concentrate on the essence rather than the outward appearance of things. Ciocoiu's examination of another of the senses, sound, is similarly insightful, moving from the sound made by a fly to the noise of cannons to the auditory evocation of those who search for God "en gémissant" ("groaning"). Even though Ciocoiu writes persuasively about the different interlocutors and characters that populate Pascal's text in part 2, it would have been particularly interesting if she had extended her sonic analysis to include Pascal's own comparison of his writing to "les entretiens ordinaires de la vie" ("everyday conversations").

Ciocoiu is especially effective in her investigation into binary and ternary divisions within Pascal's writing, bringing out oppositions within his depiction of a world and self in flux. She shows herself above all to be a careful and sensitive reader, keenly aware of the different levels at which Pascal's discourse operates.

Nicholas Hammond, *University of Cambridge*
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The Logic of Idolatry in Seventeenth-Century French Literature. Ellen McClure. Gallica 44. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020. vi + 248 pp. \$95.

Ellen McClure offers an analysis of the justifications of idolatry through some examples of seventeenth-century French literature. She succeeds in presenting a new way of thinking of idolatry. She shows how religious idolatry evolved into political and social idolatry during the reign of Louis XIV. Her thesis is articulated in chapters that study writings from the middle of the French cultural canon. These chapters concern Urfé, Descartes, La Fontaine, and Sévigné, with a fifth chapter comparing Molière and Racine. Interestingly, the author chooses to study various literary styles from the second half of the classical century. McClure's demonstration is based on the analysis of poetry, novels, philosophy, fables, letters, and theater (tragedy and comedy). It would seem that the author chooses all the main literary genres, which evoke different types of idolatry but don't focus exclusively on the subject.

McClure's demonstration is both relevant and bold. She sets the analysis of these texts in the critical context of society in the time of Louis XIV to show the link between