

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.

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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

heaven and earth. The study is seen through the prism of the political practices of a king of divine right, who very often proves egocentric. The logic of idolatry changed since the Bible and the spiritual fathers. The protective and comforting images (in literature, paintings, or statues) of God are ambiguous. They seek to denounce materialism, not solely through the Protestant criticism of Catholics but also through a criticism of the power of the king, also known as *Le Roi Soleil* (the Sun King).

In Urfé, the subject is hidden behind a Neoplatonic celebration of love and its power. However, the text defends a point of view about society and the drift of illusion, idealization, and idolatry. McClure highlights the demonstration of authority and its representation between love and God. She contends that Descartes shows that creation is not the sole image of God. In his work, certain peripheral representations contribute to the quest for truth based on observation and philosophical reflections on how the world functions. In this Descartes is at odds with his contemporaries. Sévigné, known as the *jolie païenne*, harmonized the concept of providence. She writes about a new vision of the world in which the representation of reality is far from religious representations. Finally, the two plays by Molière and Racine use comedy or tragedy as a reminder of the relationship between God and humanity, employing common representations with a critical angle.

Religion and literature enrich and nourish one another to show how human nature always endeavors to accommodate God. This clearly changes in the seventeenth century. Images and representations are no longer exclusively religious. The logic of idolatry is still alive but it changes and becomes associated with a live idol through the adoration of the king. Donneau de Visé describes “the most obsessive interest” in the *Mercurie Galant*. He analyzes the episode of the reception of the ambassador of Siam at Versailles. France is a good example of the evolution of the logic of idolatry, illustrated by the king’s letter in this episode, which is a very ornate document. The revocation of the edict of Nantes in 1685, much criticized, is the proof of Louis XIV’s autocratic and self-centered rule. Also referred to as *dieudonné* (God’s given), Louis XIV encouraged idolatry for his person and actions.

Donneau de Visé’s essay also stresses how idolatry served to frame the king’s political authority, as well as diplomatic relations with non-Christian states such as Siam. More than God’s glory, the king’s glory is emphasized here. All the art of the period was devoted to celebrating the king, such as certain statues akin to temples with their devotions. These ornamentations are controversial because they emphasize the exceptional nature of Louis XIV blessed by God. McClure concludes her book as she begins it, by mentioning Voltaire’s critics of this evolution and of the evolution of religion.

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