and substituted a strictly secular perspective for the Christian-centered view of his predecessors.

The appendix, which gives a chronology of the major actions and publications comprising the quarrel throughout the course of the seventeenth century, is very helpful, as is the extensive bibliography.

This is a superb piece of scholarship that deserves a place in every university library.

Perry Gethner


It is remarkable that the year 2008 should see all six of Françoise Pascal’s plays finally back in print, with four of the newly reedited works, including this one, appearing for the first time since the seventeenth century. Theresa Kennedy provides some useful insights into Pascal’s first theatrical composition. Most notably, she shows how the young author tried to combine the two strands that would dominate her entire literary production, namely, a deep religiosity and a commitment to the précieux movement, with its promotion of a pro-female agenda. Pascal’s attempt to combine those two ideologies is not successful, despite the use of vocabulary that could equally pertain to both registers (terms like martyr, constance, divin, flamme); this leads to what Kennedy correctly calls “galimatias”. She notes how Pascal carefully emphasized or even invented episodes geared to glorify heroic women. Most notably, the heroine Triphine violates standard decorum by making advances to the man she loves, planning her own elopement, bravely defying her father and choosing martyrdom. Indeed, Triphine is more outspoken than most of her counterparts in drama of the period in that, once she is recaptured by her father, she publicly declares her rejection of parental authority and of forced marriage. Pascal’s determination to revitalize two dramatic subgenres that were gradually fading away in France, the martyr play and the romanesque tragicomedy, by fusing them, testifies to a clear familiarity with both traditions and a willingness to experiment.

Unfortunately, the introduction is marred by a variety of problems. There are features that would be acceptable in a dissertation, but not in a printed volume, such as an overly detailed review of existing research, a plot synopsis of the play, and providing both English and French versions of
some quotations, or in some cases just the English translation (especially surprising for familiar works such as *Le Cid* or *Introduction à la vie dévote*). Anyone picking up a critical edition of a French play can be presumed to have a reading knowledge of French. The discussions of the conventions of French classical dramaturgy, of the salon movement and of the vocabulary of gallantry belabor at excessive length what would be obvious to any reader sufficiently conversant with seventeenth-century French drama to have heard of Françoise Pascal. It would have been sufficient to focus on the degree to which she either innovates in her use of conventions or chooses to disregard them. Even the discussion of martyr plays featuring female protagonists, though interesting in its own right, includes far too much analysis of other works from the period, most of which Pascal is unlikely to have read, and not enough (barely over a page) on how Pascal’s play parts company with the tradition.

The major weakness in the analysis is the inadequate treatment of what I consider the play’s most serious flaw: the Christian martyr element and the romanesque tragicomic structure do not mesh, and Christianity plays virtually no part in the action until the final scene; prior to that point Agathon’s religious affiliation is mentioned just a few times in passing. Unlike other hagiographic plays, where conversions are motivated (by sudden and miraculous divine intervention, watching the firmness of a martyr suffering torture and execution, or motivational speeches from an inspirational Christian sage), Pascal’s characters embrace their new faith for no perceivable reason, know absolutely nothing about the religion they are dying for and never interact with any Christian leader or priest. Nor does Christianity have any impact on their behavior: the virtuous characters were already good prior to their conversion and the villainess who reforms apparently does so independently of her decision to embrace the new religion. Triphine, as Kennedy admits, chooses death at least as much to defy her father’s authority to force her into an unwanted marriage as to show her commitment to Christianity. And her father, in his role as magistrate, would have sentenced Agathon to death for the crime of abducting his daughter, even had the young man not been a Christian. In other words, since adherence to Christianity is not the main reason for their deaths, the two protagonists’ status as religious martyrs becomes questionable. Since Pascal was a sincere believer who would spend the final part of her life composing religious poetry, the problem must be literary inexperience.

The presentation of the text is seriously lacking. Instead of numbering the verses, as is standard practice, Kennedy unaccountably numbers the lines on the page, including speech headings, act and scene headings, even spaces between speeches. (The real total is 1634.) The use of brackets
around the names in all the speech headings is puzzling. There are cases where a speech starting in the middle of a line of verse is printed flush left, or where a speech that starts a line of verse is wrongly indented. The echo scene in V.1 leaves out the responses of the echo, which presumably repeats the last word (or the last part of the last word) from the preceding speeches as a prophecy of doom: *malheur, mort, meurs, désespérer*. If the original edition omitted these, they should have been supplied in footnotes; otherwise the entire episode becomes incomprehensible. The final scene is mis-numbered; there are two scenes labeled V.2.

The majority of Pascal’s liberties in prosody and grammar are left without comment. She often elides a syllable consisting of a silent E when the next word starts with a consonant; she does this not just at the *césure* (a frequent practice in the previous century) but anywhere within a line of verse. Although non-agreement of the past participle in compound tenses was tolerated in that period, Pascal sometimes makes agreement where it should not exist. There are rhymes that would be incorrect today and in some cases were probably incorrect then, as well as deliberate grammatical errors to create *rime pour les yeux*. In a few cases Kennedy notes Pascal’s use of constructions already condemned by Vaugelas, but hardly all of them. Particularly striking are the omission of the particle *ne* in declarative sentences (6 times), and the confusion of the relative pronouns *qui/ ce qui* and *que/ ce que* (6 times); the confusion of *que/ qui*, which Kennedy does mention, occurs only once and was probably just a typo. Pascal was probably admonished about these errors, since they occur rarely or not at all in her subsequent plays.

In a number of passages the text contains superfluous words or phrases; at one point in the opening scene there is an entire unnecessary hemistich that does not fit into the scansion. These should have been noted and/or corrected in footnotes; instead, they are simply ignored. The only explanation I can find for these textual anomalies is that Pascal must have delivered to the printers a working manuscript with a lot of crossed-out passages, and that where the crossing out was not done carefully enough the typesetters assumed that the passages ought to be left in. There are also cases where a stage direction is printed as if it constituted part of the speech or else put in the wrong place. I found 8 cases of missing words and over 30 additional obvious errors in the text; these should have been corrected in footnotes or at least designated with the word *sic*. Cases where, for metrical reasons, one needs *avec* instead of *avecque* or vice versa, and similarly with *encor/ encore* and *jusques/ jusque*, should have been noted.

The volume contains typographical errors numbering in the hundreds, plus a variety of other glitches, including incorrect use of italics, improper
formatting for indented quotations, errors of grammar and usage in both French and English, confusion of words when switching between the two languages, and errors in quotations (including some serious inaccuracies in quotations from Agathonphile itself). Occasionally the notes contain incorrect and/or misleading information (note 7 for the introduction, notes 25, 44, 45, 98, 120, 122 and 124 for the text). Infelicities at times border on the humorous, as in the expression “female heroines”, “Pascal’s dates [sic] of death”, or Pascal’s writing as “a product of her own whimsicality”.

If this edition were drastically revised, cleaning up the numerous errors, reworking the introduction and cutting it by over 50%, and translating it into French to make it accessible to a broader audience, it could constitute a real contribution to scholarship. A lot of serious research and thought went into it. In its current form, however, it is a disappointment.

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