

## ABSTRACTS

PAPERS FROM THE CONFERENCE “PORT-ROYAL, LITERATURE AND CINEMA (20TH-21ST CENTURIES)”

### *1. Port-Royal in the 20th and 21st centuries: an abundance*

Gilles DECLERCQ

*Solitaires in fabula. Pascal Quignard's Port-Royal*

The *topos* of solitude brings out the paradigmatic status of Port-Royal des Champs and the Solitaires in Quignard's works, as much in the essays (*Petits traités*) as in the novels (*Tous les matins du monde*). We thus examine the addition of writing to history and the master-copy value of reading Sainte-Beuve; then – through the double notion of *chreia* and *plasma fable*, the way in which Quignard's fiction, successor of the Second Sophistic, makes romanced references to the “lives” of the Solitaires, breeding ground for great themes and creative obsessions of his works. Finally, we examine around the figure of Sainte-Colombe, the joint contribution of literature and cinema to this *poiesis* of the fable, characterized by a sublime which is alternately dysphoric and euphoric.

Keywords: Pascal Quignard; Solitude

Stella SPRIET

*Living in a corner of the world: reference to the Solitaires in Georges de La Tour (1991) and L'Amour conjugal (1992) by Pascal Quignard*

Pascal Quignard's works are heavily marked by Port-Royal, which for him evokes silence, austerity and retreat from the world, themes which are found in the heart of his work. Several Solitaires are summoned in these works and he regrets the missed meeting between the painter Georges de La Tour et the Port-Royal Jansenists. Indeed he admires these canvases where the figures are immersed in solitude and silence.

This same ideal of retreat from the world characterizes the many Solitaires who occupy Quignard's works, such as Nathan Le Cerf, protagonist of *L'Amour conjugal*. In this tale adapted for the screen, Nathan

chooses to live in poverty and silence, alone, on the edge of society, like Monsieur de Sainte Colombe in his hut. There are, here too, several reflections on still lifes (*peintures coites*), and the film, presenting characters lit by candlelight, brings to mind La Tour's canvases.

Keywords: Pascal Quignard; Georges de La Tour

Emmanuelle TABET

*Fragmentation and dispossession: Paul Auster in the light of Pascal*

Paul Auster is an avid reader of Pascal, and is deeply preoccupied by the great themes which are those of the *Pensées*: disillusioned fascination faced with the meanderings of the imagination, the representation of a social universe in the grip of contingency, the opacity of the being lost in impenetrable obscurity, the dispossessing experience of time, or the fall. His works can be read in particular like a variation around the Pascalian image of man whose unhappiness is to be found in "being unable to remain in repose in a room", and like a fictional representation of what the individual excluded from all social relations and all external amusement becomes, in the metaphysical solitude of man without God. But it is also a meditation on grace, and on the miraculous healing which occurs in the heart of darkness.

Keywords: Paul Auster; Blaise Pascal

Boris DONNÉ

*Guy Debord by the rivers of Babylon*

In his writings and films, Guy Debord abundantly quoted and distorted the *Pensées* and the *Maximes*. Although his fascination for these works can be explained partly by aesthetic reasons (poetics of acuity, sublime, discontinuous writing), it is also a product of an existential affinity with certain aspects of literary Augustinianism. The way in which Pascal, through the image of the rivers of Babylon, upon the theme of universal flow and the "nocturnal fluidity of the world" (P. Sellier) is echoed abundantly in Debord; and maybe Pascalian meditation on the human condition, and La Rochefoucauld's meditation on the illusions to which he surrenders, present a key to understanding the whole of Debord's path as an artist and as a revolutionary theorist.

Keywords: Guy Debord; literary Augustinianism

Myriam TSIMBIDY

*Is La Blessure et la Soif the Port-Royal novel?*

To what extent can Laurence Plazenet's *La Blessure et la soif* be defined as *the* Port-Royal novel? This article presents an answer to the question by showing how the fictional framework, dramatization testifying from beyond the grave, and the emblematic nature of these melting-pot characters were inspired by a place, by the history of the monastery, by its legends and stories, and by the reconfigurations of the *Vies* and the permeation of spiritual texts. These elements are enhanced by the lyrical potency of writing woven with images and permeated with what we could call the spirit of Port-Royal, a spirit which remains a memory of a resistance and a battle of absolute intransigence.

Keywords: Laurence Plazenet; Novel

Laurence PLAZENET

*Blaise in the bathtub? Pascal in Jean-Philippe Toussaint's works*

"Pascal can be found in all of my novels", declared J.P. Toussaint during an interview. It's a fact. Although the narrator of his first published book, *La Salle de bain*, is an explicit reader of the *Pensées*, references endure and are multiplied in each of his texts. But what role does the author give to Pascal? What case does he make of his reflection? The study carried out on the author's works from the first to the latest to be published, in 2019, shows that irony does not exclude a certain gravity. Pascalian anxiety, behind the playful treatment of allusions, deploys from work to work a veritable *continuo*. J.P. Toussaint works on answering this with creation and human love – without success. Thus in the end, in a winding, numbered way, he seems to tackle the metaphysical hypothesis. *La Clé USB*, a remake of the *Pensées*?

Keywords: Jean-Philippe Toussaint; Blaise Pascal

## *2. Port-Royal and cinema: the mesmerized image*

Marie GIL

*Bresson, Augustinian: allusion and night*

Although Robert Bresson was considered rather quickly as a Jansenist film director, on account of the austere nature of his aesthetics, the fact

remains that the notion of free grace is central in his films and that the film director was a real expert on Blaise Pascal. This can be seen by an Augustinian transcendence which penetrates his works.

Keywords: Robert Bresson; Augustinianism

Hubert AUPETIT

*Giono and Pascalian ideas gone mad*

*Un roi sans divertissement* (*A king without diversion*) seems to be a most Pascalian novel by its title, yet a careful comparison reveals the satirical nature of its numerous, sometimes unusual, nods to the famous chapter of the *Pensées*. For Jean Giono, who was supposed to be forbidden from publication by the national board of writers in 1946, is it a question of fooling prevailing existentialism – which itself appears to be a caricature of the philosophy of nothingness of the great 17<sup>th</sup>-century spiritual authors? By viewing the film Giono kindles for his novel in 1963, we discover, by default, what was authentically Pascalian in it: not so much the philosophical content as the choral form Talking about the truth without ever finding it: that is human's everlasting diversion.

Keywords: Jean Giono; Blaise Pascal

Laurent THIROUIN

*On the theme of Pascal, Éric Rohmer's cinema*

Between *Ma nuit chez Maud* (1969) and *Conte d'hiver* (1992), Éric Rohmer carried on a reflection on Pascal's wager, which actually occupies all his works, including even his only play. His cinema's thematics (chance, encounter, joy, etc.) cross paths with the central notions of Pascal's thought. The archives kept at IMEC (Caen) shed precious light on the maturing of this reference and allows us to formulate new hypotheses on the philosophical and spiritual significance of each of the two films, which must be counted among the major commentaries of the Pascalian argument.

Keywords: Éric Rohmer; Pascal's wager

Faustine CROCHU

*La Princesse de Clèves* by Jean Delannoy (1961), or artificial Augustinianism

Jean Delannoy's adaptation of *La Princesse de Clèves* in 1961, co-signed by Jean Cocteau, fails to find a cinematic equivalent to the literary Augustinianism of Mme de La Fayette's novel, in the way that it imports it artificially in rewritten dialogues or invented scenes. With their pastiche of Augustinian rhetoric, Delannoy and Cocteau bend the original meaning of the work, by adopting a committed stance of excessive clarification and literalism which ends up putting them in an awkward position with the original novel's discretion and mystery. This drives them to offer not an adaptation but a rewriting which falls under the "beautiful unfaithful"

Keywords: Madame de La Fayette; Jean Delannoy

David LENGYEL

*The hypothesis of a God, author of evil: regarding Béla Tarr's Cheval de Turin*

This study addresses Pascalian legacy at work in *Le Cheval de Turin* (2011), the full-length feature film by the Hungarian film director, Béla Tarr. The screenplay is co-signed by the writer László Krasznahorkai, who focuses on Nietzschean nihilism in his writing. Although certain recent works have stressed Nietzsche's proximity to Pascal, what about other links which result from this: Béla Tarr's relationship to Nietzsche, and in the end, the relationship which connects the film director's work to the apologist of the *Pensées*? The ternary structure which is deployed in the argumentation and the development of the analysis (text – film – text) has its intermediary figure: Paul of Tarsus. We use Philippe Sellier's proposal which he attributes to Pascal: "Jansenius = Saint Augustine = Saint Paul".

Keywords: Béla Tarr; Friedrich Nietzsche

Laurent SUSINI

*Pascalian transplants in Un conte de Noël* by Arnaud Desplechin

Desplechin himself admits that *Un conte de Noël* has its origins in the double reading of Stanley Cavell's writing dealing with Emerson and of a work on the transplant co-written by a biologist and a psychoanalyst. It seems, however, that these two references provoked a third: that of

Pascal's *Pensées*, of which different patterns spread, or even organise, the director's film speech. We propose experiencing the coherence of Pascalian reading offered by *Un conte de Noël* by following three closely linked thematic routes in it: the quest for foundation, self-knowledge and the necessity to participate in the game.

Keywords: Arnaud Desplechin; Blaise Pascal

Sylvie ROBIC

*Eugene Green or the cinema as real presence*

Starting with *Toutes les nuits*, his first full-length feature film released in 2001, Eugène Green puts in place a very assertive and personal vision and sound grammar, in perfect coherence with his own essays on the cinema. Our article analyses how this film universe, elaborated at the crossing of a baroque vision of the world and a theology of hidden presence, also dialogues with the reflections of the critic André Bazin on the ontological nature of cinema's image. Through the examples of *Monde vivant* (2003) and *La Religieuse portugaise* (2009), we will examine how these poetics of word and night are played on screen.

Keywords: Eugène Green; Hidden presence

### 3. Solo ostinato: *Port-Royal and 20th-century literature*

Claire DAUDIN

*Péguy, reader of the Prière pour demander à Dieu le bon usage des maladies in the Gripes ("Flu") series*

Once, when he was struck down by a flu, Péguy reread Pascal's *Prière pour demander à Dieu le bon usage des maladies*. This is the starting point for what Romain Rolland calls "the three immortal *Cahiers*." It is a question of a trilogy which appeared in *Cahiers* 4, 6 and 7 of the first series, in February, March and April 1900, under the titles *De la grippe* ("On the flu"), *Encore de la grippe* ("The flu again"), *Toujours de la grippe* ("Still the flu"). The influence of the Pascalian model is established in the creation of *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*. In *Grippes*, Péguy reviews different uses of illness. Here begins the debate between the young Socialist dissident and the great Christian thinker, on the theme of health. Péguy's meditation on Pascal's *Prière*, is prolonged in Péguy's mature works.

Keywords: Charles Péguy; Illness

Dominique MILLET-GÉRARD

*Enough of Jansenists and those with Jansenist tendencies: an aspect of aesthetic Catholicism in the era of Symbolism*

Here we try to define what is meant by “Jansenists” or “*Jansénisants*” (those with Jansenist tendencies), both very derogatory terms, for authors attached to the movement of aesthetic Catholicism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century like Bloy, Huysmans or Claudel. First we carry out a survey of significant instances and a study of sources – which are not directly those of Port-Royal. Then we study the political and religious question: the involvement of Jansenism with liberals and progressives, moral strictness, rejection of sensitive devotions; finally and especially, aesthetic process: dissociation of nature and super-nature, suspicion of the powers of imagination and sensitivity, Atticism on principle, to which is opposed the exuberance of the Asianism of those who claim to be “Catholics of art.”

Keywords: Jansenist tendencies; Aesthetics

Jérôme POURCELOT

*Julien Green and Port-Royal: spiritual and literary devotion of a diarist's entire life in the 20th century*

Torn between two representations, the frenzied quest for the Invisible and the uncontrollable attraction of carnal Beauty, Julien Green found in Jansenism a highly invigorating metaphysical support. Indeed, over eight decades, the diarist tirelessly revitalised himself with the most esoteric authors of Augustinian spirituality. In this regard, we can affirm that no writer seems to have read, meditated or interiorised as much the multiple texts influenced by Jansenist spirituality, to the extent that it is in no way an exaggeration to speak here of a veritable Greenian hermeneutics of Port-Royal. Accompanied in his exegetical Port-Royalist quest by the priest Louis Cognet with whom he forges both intellectual and effusive selective affinities, Green vows an unswerving veneration for Blaise Pascal, embodiment of an ascetic truth to which his whole intimate being leaned asymptotically. We will see too that Pascal constitutes for Green a determining “philosophical” mechanism in his unfathomable work of exploration of the structures of his “self” in perpetual introspective and self-reflexive questioning. A veritable intellectual superego for Green, Port-Royal's Augustinianism also constitutes, in the eyes of the diarist, a landscape of soul and a mirror allegory of the painful, lurching, wearing

quest for the Absolute which haunts each man at night, and most crucially Green.

Keywords: Julien Green; Jansenism

Mykyta STESHENKO

*Thinking, writing and expressing oneself like Pascal: the case of Mauriac, letter-writer*

Blaise Pascal's name is, after Jesus Christ's, the most cited in François Mauriac's works. The philosopher's reflection is evident in all of the writings of the famous member of the *Académie Française*, including in his epistolary works. The latter are permeated with the omnipresent character of Pascal's reflection. Consciously or unconsciously, the letter-writer refers to his master when he deals with political, literary or even religious questions. Moreover, the reading of Pascal's works enables Mauriac to be in perfect communion with the author of the *Pensées*, which leads to a dialogue whose voice continues to reverberate, even in a work often neglected and considered as the result of a simple communication. Thus the study of Mauriac's correspondence establishes an undeniable fact: planet Mauriac and planet Pascal follow the same orbit and do not draw away from one another.

Keywords: François Mauriac; Blaise Pascal

Pierre LYRAUD

*The presence of Pascal in Sartre and Malraux: a style of existence*

Sartre, like Malraux, very quickly saw in Pascal more than a stock of themes. They saw in him a companion of thought, allowing them at once to philosophically shed light on an existence confronted with contingency at the price of displacement from a Pascalian perspective, to write contingency and anxiety by integrating Pascalian fragments into their imaginary and their style, and finally to write to use, be it paradoxically, the model of the *Pensées* as the model of a certain *problematic* writing of the self. This is particularly true of *Mots*, which in the end we propose analysing by means of its perhaps most important hypotext: the *Pensées*, and their favourite interlocutor: Pascal.

Keywords: Jean-Paul Sartre; André Malraux

Anne-Claire VOLONGO

*Port-Royal and the Académie Française: an “immortal” conversation*

Both born around 1635, the *Académie Française* and the group of Port-Royal Solitaires maintained relations of emulation and esteem until the destruction of the monastery in 1709. In the service of the King's glory or God's glory, members of the *Académie Française* and Port-Royalists worked on the elaboration of a clear and intelligible language. After the monastery's destruction and the proclamation of the *Unigenitus* bull, the Port-Royal heirs were kept at a distance from the *Académie Française* in favour of philosophers. With the founding of the *Institut de France* by Napoleon, the *Académie Française* appropriates the memory and legacy of a Port-Royal which had become mythical in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the 20<sup>th</sup> century sees in the destroyed abbey the archetype of the academy *à la française*.

Keywords: *Académie française*; Solitaires