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Jacqueline Pascal, *A Rule for Children and Other Writings*. Ed. and trans. John J. Conley. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003. xxxii + 171 pp. Bibliography and index. \$47.50 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-226-64831-1; \$18.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 0-226-64833-8.

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This collection of documents authored by Jacqueline Pascal (1625-1661) and available for the first time to Anglophone readers should be of interest to early-modern scholars on at least three levels. Pascal's writings provide a window into the development and theology of Jansenism in its early stages. Historians primarily familiar with Jansenism because of its role in the demise of the monarchy in the eighteenth century would broaden their knowledge and appreciation of the movement by reading mid-seventeenth century Jansenist writings.[1] Second, as the title of this collection indicates, Pascal's *A Rule for Children* should be of interest to historians of childhood, youth, and education.[2] Third, Pascal's documents, written while she was a nun in Port Royal, provides further insight into seventeenth-century feminine spirituality and convent life.[3] Carefully edited and annotated by John J. Conley of Fordham University, available in paperback within Chicago's important and successful series "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe," this text would prove a nice addition to reading lists in early modern history courses as well as broader, thematic courses on women's, gender, and childhood history.[4]

Jacqueline Pascal was the youngest of three children born to Étienne Pascal and Antoinette Begon. Her mother died after her birth, and her father and siblings guided her education. Jacqueline was evidently a quick learner. In his introduction, Conley writes that "By age eight, Jacqueline was writing poetry herself. At eleven she became the talk of the Paris salons when she and two other girls wrote and performed a complete five-act play" (p. 2). In 1639, Jacqueline personally "charmed" Cardinal Richelieu and persuaded him to pardon her father who had previously fallen out of favor. The family was exposed to Jansenist theology in the 1640s during their stay in Rouen.

When Jacqueline and her brother Blaise returned to Paris in 1647, they "became ardent members of the lay circle that attended services at the convent of Port-Royal de Paris" (p. 4). Jacqueline decided that she wanted to enter the convent at some point between 1647 and 1651, first against her father's wishes, and then against the resistance of her brother, whom she portrayed as more concerned with marriage, her dowry, and worldly affairs than she. Jacqueline emerged victorious, however, and took her vows on 5 June 1653, four months shy of her twenty-eighth birthday. As Conley explains in his introduction, "The convent Jacqueline Pascal entered was already riven by controversy," because Port Royal was opposed by Jesuits, Richelieu, and Mazarin for its strict Augustinianism (p. 5). In the years following her entry, Popes Innocent X (in 1653) and Alexander VII (in 1656) denounced the propositions of grace and free will outlined by Cornelius Jansenius (1585-1638) in *Augustinus* (1640).

Students new to the period might require an introduction to the broader political history of Louis XIV's minority and the beginning of his personal rule, but Conley's account of the increased pressure on Port Royal in the later 1650s, through the *droit/fait* distinction and formulary crisis of 1661, is concise and clear. Soeur Jacqueline was one of the hardliners who at first refused to sign the formulary. She eventually succumbed to immense pressure, signing after what must have been a tortuous two weeks in June 1661, but only after attaching a codicil specifying the conditions of her signature. Conley's account of Pascal's influence and of effects of the 1661 debates is very brief. Conley ends his introduction by stating that, "Her own untimely death [4 October 1661] seemed to seal in blood the plea for women's

religious and cultural rights that she had crafted in her works on the dowry, on education, and on the limits of ecclesiastical and political history" (p. 13). Professors who utilize the text might highlight Conley's brief point by way of conclusion and transition to another class discussion topic, such as an examination of the historical debate surrounding seventeenth-century French feminism or an overview of the later twists and turns of Jansenism.

Conley provides students with seven different types of sources in the collection. Three types of documents provide insight into Pascal's early literary endeavors ("Poetry, 1638-1643"), her fascination with Jansenist theology ("On the Mystery of the Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ," 1651), and her interesting struggle with her brother over her dowry and entrance to the convent ("Report of Soeur Jacqueline de Sainte Euphémie to the Mother Prioress of Port-Royal des Champs," 1653). In the introductions to the three sources, Conley encourages students to consider the wider issues of gender, family, religion, and power. The poetry, Conley argues, reveals Pascal's use of writing as a sacred expression and gift of God. Pascal's topics and imagery in her later poems "privileges feminine images of divine power" (p. 18). The devotional treatise, composed as a result of spiritual encouragement by Jeanne Arnaud (or Mère Agnès, 1593-1671, mistress of novices and abbess of Port Royal) is an excellent source that students can use to better understand Jansenist theology. Conley argues that the dual themes of "the world's radical opposition to Christ and the absolute passivity of Christ in his suffering and death" permeate the text and reveal the Jansenist focus of "complete abandonment to God's will as an act of discipleship (pp. 30-31).

The third document, "Report of Soeur Jacqueline," could be read as a case study in a young person's struggle between personal vocation, religious sincerity, aristocratic honor, and family obligation. [5] Jacqueline desired to take vows for the convent. Her father and later her brother resisted it, and then the convent's superiors encouraged her to make the vows without her dowry. Jacqueline felt dishonored and struggled with the choice of "defer[ing] what I had desired for so many years with such passion or to undertake it in conditions that seemed so painful to me" (p. 45). Legal action was threatened by all sides, until eventually Blaise succumbed to her requests and let her take her vows with honor.

The centerpiece of the Conley's edition derives from Jacqueline Pascal's eight-year tenure as a full member of Port Royal. "A Rule for Children," sent to Pascal's spiritual director Abbé Antoine Singlin (1607-1664) in 1657, is an excellent source for the daily activities and philosophical underpinnings of the girls' boarding school at Port Royal. The Rule describes the monastic schedule, curriculum, and pedagogical and theological principles for the school. Conley encourages students to pay particular attention to the dichotomy between the strict daily routine that the girls must have experienced along with the pedagogical techniques that encouraged "older pupils [to] teach the younger ones," as well as the "teaching of catechism [that] minimizes rote memorization" (p. 70). What emerges from this text is a deep concern for each student's personal development that takes account of gradations in age and maturity. Despite Pascal's emphasis on discipline, work, and salvation, it is clear that she appreciated the wonderful natures of her charges. Pascal wrote that "Given their youth, we do not try to make them too spiritual, unless we recognize that this comes from God. We fear two problems with too great a zeal. The first is that they struggle too hard and end up exhausting their minds and their imaginations rather than uniting their hearts to God. The other is that they grow too discouraged when they see that they cannot attain the perfection demanded of them" (p. 75).

Conley properly stresses the Jansenist spirit that pervades the text, especially the emphasis on preparation for confession and the overwhelming reverence dedicated to the reception of communion that "clearly discourage frequent reception of the sacrament" (p. 70). And Conley encourages students to read the text in terms of the important connections between religion and gender. He believes that the document is evidence of a subversion of the "hierarchical distinction of clergy/lay and monastic/lay," because a laywoman could learn how to live in the same pious manner as someone who took vows. He stresses that Pascal's document "spiritually empowers women," because the "nun-teacher, not only the

priest-preacher,” presents herself as an example of an intellectually-rigorous personality who offers authoritative guidance on scripture, the sacramental life, and christian devotion (pp. 70-71).

The intellectually and spiritually rigorous personality of Jacqueline Pascal is emphasized in the last group of sources. Conley included a brief account of Pascal’s interrogation by Louis Bail, the superintendent of the convent appointed by Louis XIV. The interrogation reveals the intense interest in free will and predestination during the signature crisis of 1661. Pascal’s plea of ignorance, telling Bail that she “usually [doesn’t] think about such matters,” and that she didn’t “think she [had] the right to sound out the secrets of God,” is belied by her letters that close the collection. In a letter composed on 23 June 1661, she ridiculed those who would sign the anti-Jansenist document as being swayed by “a false prudence and outright cowardice” (p 147). She struggled with her concern to respect authority and the threat of being cut off from the church, but then speaks her mind: “But doesn’t everyone know that you can’t be cut off against your will? Since the spirit of Jesus Christ is the tie that unites its members to him and to each other, we can be deprived of the external marks, but never of the effects, of this union” (p. 148). Pascal clearly understood the theological and political ramifications of the formulary, saying that, “I think you know only too well that what we are dealing with here isn’t only the condemnation of a holy bishop [Conley notes, either Saint Augustine or Jansenius]; it clearly entails the condemnation of the very grace of Jesus Christ” (p. 149).

This powerful document ends the collection, and it clearly reinforces Daniella Kostroun’s recent argument about the importance of the Port Royal women in the history of feminism. “The Port Royal women did not openly voice a ‘feminist’ position,” Kostroun writes, “but the force of their arguments within the discursive and institutional contexts in which they were made was such that they were able to claim authority for themselves as women in a patriarchal society that denied them this authority.”[6] Pascal’s letters will allow students to enter the debates about the history of feminism within important disputes about power and authority, theology and politics, in the seventeenth century. Historiographically timely and important, Conley’s edition of Jacqueline Pascal’s writings allows students exposure to several important threads of seventeenth-century history. Conley’s succinct introductions and suggestions for interpretation provide students with various themes that they might pursue at greater length in class discussion and essays.

NOTES

[1] The recent interest in Jansenism, it seems to me, has been primarily based in the eighteenth century and in its role in the origins of the French Revolution. See, for example, Catherine Maire, *De la cause de Dieu à la cause de la nation: Le jansénisme au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998); Dale K. Van Kley, *The Damiens Affair and the Unraveling of the Ancien Régime, 1750-1770* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); idem., *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). The latter text, for all of its merits, has one of six chapters devoted to the period before Unigenitus. For other work on the early stages of Jansenism, see William Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), chaps. 2-3; and Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France: Voices from the Wilderness* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977).

[2] Elizabeth Rapley recently noted that “Once away from the rich vein of school rules and customs belonging to the foundation period, the historiography of girls’ schooling in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries looks like a desert.” Rapley, *A Social History of the Cloister: Daily Life in the Teaching Monasteries of the Old Regime* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 219. See

also *idem.*, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), chapter 7, "Development of a Feminine Pedagogy."

[3] For seventeenth-century female spirituality, see Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France*; *idem.*, *A Social History of the Cloister*, and the recent article by Daniella Kostroun, "A Formula for Disobedience: Jansenism, Gender, and the Feminist Paradox," *Journal of Modern History* 75 (2003): 483-522.

[4] The press published its first books in the series in 1996. There are currently twenty-nine texts in print, with another fifty projected volumes forthcoming. See the press's website for the list of texts in print, <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Complete/Series/OVIEME.html>.

[5] Despite the fact that the coming-of-age struggle was an extremely popular early modern motif, the secondary literature on life-choices for young men and women in early modern France is scanty. See Jean-Pierre Bardet and Isabelle Robin-Romero, eds., *Lorsque l'enfant grandit: Entre dépendance et autonomie* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003); Barbara Diefendorf, "'Give Us Back Our Children': Patriarchal Authority and Parental Consent to Religious Vocations in Early Counter-Reformation France," *Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996): 265-307; and Konrad Eisenbichler, ed., *The Premodern Teenager: Youth in Society, 1150-1650* (Toronto: Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2002). I am currently working on a book manuscript entitled "The King's Families: Parenting and Adolescence in Early Modern France."

[6] Kostroun, "Jansenism, Gender, and the Feminist Paradox," 520.

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