



Corneille, Classicism and the Ruses of Symmetry (Cambridge Studies in French)

Mitchell Greenberg

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Professor Greenberg's lucid study examines the themes of authority, power and sexuality in Corneille's major plays, drawing on the work of Foucault, and Freudian and feminist critics. He begins by considering the question of myth and of a 'pre-historical' cultural memory in *Médée*, and proceeds to a detailed analysis of each of the four best-known tragedies: *Le Cid*, *Horace*, *Cinna*, and *Polyeucte*. A concluding chapter discusses two middle-period plays and *Suréna*, Corneille's last tragedy. Professor Greenberg argues that the formal symmetries of classical tragedy reflect a desire for control in the realm of both politics and sexuality. He also seeks to show how these principles of symmetry are challenged or undermined in various ways by the plays themselves. The result is an exacerbation of sexual and political desire which invests Cornelian tragedy with its peculiar power and involves us so deeply in its world.

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