



World Authors Series: Pierre Corneille

Claire L Carlin Dr Dr

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The author of *Le Cid* (1637), *Horace* (1641), *Cinna* (1642), and *Polyeucte martyr* (1643), Pierre Corneille (1606-1684) is probably the foremost dramatist of seventeenth-century France, ranking alongside Jean Racine in greatness. Corneille's total dramatic output of some 40,000 lines in more than thirty plays is a staggering achievement, and he also wrote a large number of biographies and translations of Latin works. To Corneille, plot was more important than character - that is, he wanted to entertain his audience - and his plays still have an audience, not only through their regular revivals at the Comedie Francaise in Paris but also at theater festivals like the one held at Avignon each summer. Claire Carlin's engaging study explores the half-dozen or more critical approaches that leading scholars have taken to discern the meanings of Corneille's plays. Carlin's study examines the relationship between Corneille's plays and the baroque and the validity of modern-day psychological insights into the plays, including the Oedipal approach. She shows how Corneille was forever experimenting with his tragedies, comedies, tragicomedies, and machines plays and documents the extent to which Corneille's plays revolve around love, with the couple and the "blocking character" forming the trio necessary to the action.

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