Modern Judgements

RACINE

MODERN JUDGEMENTS

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MACMILLAN EDUCATION

Selection and editorial matter © R. C. Knight 1969

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1969 978-0-333-03082-0

First published 1969 by

MACMILLAN AND CO LTD

Little Essex Street London WC2

and also at Bombay Calcutta and Madras

Macmillan South Africa (Publishers) Pty Ltd Johannesburg

The Macmillan Company of Australia Pty Ltd Melbourne

The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd Toronto

ISBN 978-0-333-06801-4

ISBN 978-1-349-15297-1 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-15297-1

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Acknowledgements

C. M. Bowra, 'The Simplicity of Racine', the Zaharoff Lecture for 1956 (The Clarendon Press); Professor T. Spöerri, 'Trieb und Geist bei Racine', from *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen*, CLXIII; Professor J. C. Lapp, 'Racine's Symbolism', from *Aspects of Racinian Tragedy* (University of Toronto Press); Professor Georges Poulet, 'Notes sur le temps racinien', from *Études sur le temps humain*, vol. 1, translated as *Studies in Human Time* by Elliott Coleman (Librairie Plon and Edinburgh University Press) (the Editor is much indebted to Mr Elliott Coleman for permission to adapt his translation); Jean Starobinski, 'Racine et la poétique du regard', from *L'œil vivant* (Éditions Gallimard); Professor L. Goldmann, 'Structure de la tragédie racinienne', from *Le Théâtre tragique* (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique); Professor L. Spitzer, 'Die classische Dämpfung in Racines Stil', from *Romanische Stil- und Literaturstudien*, vol. 1 (Professor Anna C. Hatcher, literary executrix of Professor Spitzer, and Universitäts- und Verlagsbuchhandlung N. G. Elwert); R. A. Sayce, 'Racine's Style: Periphrasis and Direct Statement', from *The French Mind: studies in honour of Gustave Rudler*, ed. W. Moore, R. Sutherland and E. Starkie (The Clarendon Press); Professor E. Vinaver, 'L'Action poétique dans le théâtre de Racine', the Zaharoff Lecture for 1960 (The Clarendon Press); Professor Jules Brody, 'Racine's *Thébaïde*: an analysis', from *French Studies*, xiii (1959); Professor J. Pommier, 'Tradition littéraire et modèles vivants dans *L'Andromaque de Racine*', Presidential Address to the Modern Humanities Research Association 1962 (Modern Humanities Research Association); Professor P. F. Butler, 'La Tragédie de *Bérénice*', from *French Studies*, iii (1949); Jean Dubu, 'Quelques raisons esthétiques pour le silence de Racine après *Phèdre*', from *XVII^e Siècle*, xx (1953) (the Editor would also like to thank M. Dubu for his collaboration in revising and translating his text for this volume).

General Editor's Preface

LITERARY criticism has only recently come of age as an academic discipline, and the intellectual activity that, a hundred years ago, went into theological discussion, now finds its most natural outlet in the critical essay. Amid a good deal that is dull or silly or pretentious, every year now produces a crop of critical essays which are brilliant and profound not only as contributions to the understanding of a particular author but as statements of an original way of looking at literature and the world. Hence, it often seems that the most useful undertaking for an academic publisher might be, not so much to commission new books of literary criticism or scholarship, as to make the best of what exists easily available. This at least is the purpose of the present series of anthologies, each of which is devoted to a single major writer.

The guiding principle of selection is to assemble the best *modern* criticism – broadly speaking, that of the last twenty or thirty years – and to include historic and classic essays, however famous, only when they are still influential and represent the best statements of their particular point of view. It will, however, be one of the functions of the editor's Introduction to sketch in the earlier history of criticism in regard to the author concerned.

Each volume will attempt to strike a balance between general essays and ones on specialised aspects, or particular works, of the writer in question. And though in many instances the bulk of the articles will come from British and American sources, certain of the volumes will draw heavily on material in other European languages – most of it being translated for the first time.

P. N. FURBANK