



Playing the Martyr: Theater and Theology in Early Modern France (Scènes Francophones)

Christopher Semk

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Playing the Martyr is a book about the interplay between theater and religion in early modern France. Challenging the standard narrative of modernity as a process of increased secularization Christopher Semk demonstrates the centrality of religious thought and practices to the development of neoclassical poetics. Engaging with a broad corpus of religious plays, poetic treatises, devotional literature, and contemporary theory, Semk shows that religion was a vital interlocutor in early modern discussions concerning the definition of verisimilitude, the nature and purpose of spectacle, the mechanics of acting, and the position of the spectator. Well researched and persuasively argued, *Playing the Martyr* makes the case for a more complicated approach to the relationship between religion and literature, namely, one that does not treat religion as a theme deployed within literary works, but as an active player in literary invention. Indeed, it makes the case for a serious reconsideration of the role that religion plays in the development of modern, secular literary forms.

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