The classical past held the European imagination captive for centuries through every art form. Seventeenth-century France, noted for the rise of absolutism and French culture, honored its king as Louis le Grand, but not without classical portrayals. As Louis XIV was held up as *Ludovicus Magnus*, the classical Latin form of his regal name, Greco-Roman antiquity permeated all levels of the French intellectual establishment. Perhaps no example of this is as striking as the theatre of the great tragedian, Jean Racine. However, Racine worked intimately with classical themes and adapted them for the needs of his seventeenth-century French audience. His plays were not merely translations of those of the great Greek playwrights, such as Sophocles, but rather were new creative works, which drew on familiar themes to deliver different messages. Racine’s works reveal both ideas important to the French of his day and his own personal Jansenist beliefs.
Phèdre

The title character of Racine’s Phèdre suffers from her own desires in ways that are perhaps more resonant with Christian France than with ancient Greece or Rome. This play, Racine’s most critically acclaimed, contains the familiar plot of the ancient story of Theseus, prince of Athens, and the Cretan Minotaur, a half-bull, half-man monster. Theseus’ slaughter of the monster, however, only serves as a backdrop in Racine’s version. Most of the action focuses on the character of Phaedra, Theseus’ wife, and her illicit passions for Hippolytus, her stepson. The evils of Phaedra’s forbidden love are immediately presented as the central conflict of the play when Racine has Oenone, Phaedra’s maid, exclaim, “Oh despair! Great Heavens, my blood now freezes in my veins! Oh cursed race! Oh crime!”\(^1\) upon learning of her mistress’ private feelings. While familial incest is not particular to any single culture, this episode is important because it establishes a human’s moral fault as the tragic quality of the protagonist rather than a curse or the ire of divine figures. The French, a strongly Catholic people during

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\(^1\) Jean Racine, Phèdre, trans. Margaret Rawlings (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 51. All subsequent references to Phèdre will refer to the page numbers of this translation.
Racine’s lifetime, would have understood the concept of a moral failure leading to destruction through weekly sermons at mass. Contemporary audiences also would have recognized a Christian message and contrast with the ancient Greek tale in Phaedra’s dying lament: “Phaedra it was who dared to look with love profane – incestuous - upon that chaste and dutiful Hippolytus . . . I resolved to tell you first all my remorse, and by a slower path descend to death” (169). Christian concepts of chastity and acceptable forms of love are evident in this climactic scene. Since Phaedra could not maintain these morals, and caused the destruction of others as a result, she chose to kill herself. The ideals and results of Phaedra’s love for Hippolytus are different in Racine’s play than in its counterparts written by Seneca and Euripides.

Seneca, an ancient Roman Stoic philosopher who wrote plays based on older Greek themes in the first century A.D., wrote Phaedra, which demonstrates the strong influence classical tragedy had on Racine’s works and the subtle changes Phèdre required for its French audience. Both plays decide to focus on Phaedra as the principal character from the outset. Ronald Tobin’s study of Senecan influence on Racine summarizes that the “play turn[s] the spotlight away from Hippolytus . . . and on that
female figure who enters dying in the first act and finally expires in the last, and who in the interim has seen herself responsible for defiling the universe.”² Phaedra possesses all of the attributes of a tragic hero in both Seneca and Racine. The emphasis on a woman, not entirely unusual for ancient Rome, is not where the subtle point of distinction between Seneca’s and Racine’s plays lies. The result of the tragedy in Phèdre is what differs slightly from Seneca’s Phaedra. According to Tobin, Seneca “usually gives free rein to the declaration and catastrophic effects of passion as a stoic lesson on the dangers of excessive sentiment.”³ Racine’s tragedy in Phèdre, on the other hand, is much more reserved and shocking in its emotional appeal. Viewers’ sympathy escalates when the events resulting from Phaedra’s deception and passions cause Theseus, an innocent party, to exclaim, “Oenone dead, and Phaedra bent on death! . . . Oh what despair may follow” (157). Racine’s narration is much more controlled than the chaos of Seneca in its expression of the tragic events which result from the protagonist’s flaws. Such a sense of order may well have appealed to conservative French nobles at the theatre. Regardless, Racine’s treatment of the Hippolytus

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³ Tobin (1971) 150.
and Phaedra story differs substantially from the best known ancient Greek version.

Euripides, the famous ancient Athenian tragedian of the fifth century B.C., wrote *Hippolytus*, Racine’s primary source material for *Phèdre*, which provides its readers with a perspective rather different from Racine’s through its depiction of Phaedra’s doomed passions. While the intervention of a divine force in this central characterization of Phaedra is not incompatible with Racine’s personal beliefs, it does provide an enormously different tone for the Greek play when compared with the French one. Euripides’ Phaedra is completely at the mercy of the goddess Aphrodite from the opening lines of the play: “One day when he [Hippolytus] came from Pittheus' house to the land of Pandion to see and celebrate the holy mysteries of Demeter, his father's high-born wife Phaedra saw him, and her heart was seized with a dreadful longing by my [Aphrodite’s] design.”

This sense of divine nemesis, or vengeance, appealed more directly to a fifth-century B.C. Greek audience than it did to a seventeenth-century French audience. Racine’s emphasis on Phaedra’s moral failings rather than her curse at the hands of the gods was an

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important adaptation of classical tragedy for a contemporary French audience. Racine even admits in his preface, albeit in an understated manner, how he has chosen “a path a little different from the one chosen by this author [Euripides]” (19) in his focus on Phaedra’s faults at the expense of the traditional depiction of Hippolytus as an equal sinner. In Euripides’ play, Hippolytus is accused of violating his stepmother, but in Racine “he is only accused of having the intention” (21). The French playwright chose to adapt this part of the story to increase the audience’s sympathy for Theseus (when he must choose to exile his son) and to stress the tragic guilt of Phaedra. The play has enough room for one crucially flawed character and, for Racine, that is Phaedra. Despite all of her noble qualities, the moral failing of Phaedra’s physical passions come to define her in the end. This theme appealed well to the play’s French audience and deviated from its Greek counterpart quite substantially. The great complexity of Racine’s theatre also allows a further analysis of Phaedra’s simultaneous moral doom and reliance on factors beyond her control.

The will of the divine and personal moral weakness are not incompatible themes in Racine’s Phèdre due to the author’s involvement with the influential Jansenist
movement of seventeenth-century France. Jansenism was a Catholic movement, started by Cornelius Jansen, which sought to restore the fundamental aspects of Christianity, as expressed by St. Augustine, to early modern France. The scope of Jansenist beliefs was highly complex, but one of the most basic and widely shared principles of the movement was to emphasize the “the doctrine of Catholics in the matter of predestination and reprobation.”

With a reputation for harsh teachings about the inadequacy and helplessness of a man before God, Jansenism would have fit well into the concept of divine nemesis in ancient Greek tragedy. This influence undoubtedly remained with Racine, who spent his early years studying the Latin and Greek classics at the Jansenist school in Port-Royal.

Predestination and reprobation, as Jansen saw it, placed a strong emphasis on sin and the grace of God. This latter concept was well beyond the power of humans to control, just as the will of the gods that crushed heroes and heroines in ancient Greek and Roman tragedy. Racine would have been very familiar with, if not sympathetic to, the idea of divine power outside of human control because of his

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religious sensibilities regarding Jansenism and his early education under Jansenist teachers. In fact, Margaret Rawlings has interpreted the final section of Racine’s preface to *Phèdre* as a desire to reconcile Jansenist teachings with the French theatre. Racine writes of using theatre for instruction so that “it might perhaps be a way of reconciling the art of the theatre with many persons, celebrated for their piety and for their learning, who have during the past few years condemned it, and who would doubtless judge it more favourably if playwrights would study as much to instruct as to entertain” (23). The reference to “many persons” is a thinly veiled allusion to the Jansenists, who disregarded French theatre because they believed that it did not teach as ancient drama did. The Jansenist movement was apparently still an important part of Racine’s identity at the time he wrote *Phèdre* and undoubtedly influenced the themes of the play. Racine’s desire to settle with the Jansenist movement and simultaneously adapt ancient tragedy for his French contemporaries led to more striking thematic material in his other plays.
Andromaque

Racine’s *Andromaque*, progressive and sometimes shocking to contemporary Frenchmen, displays an assortment of characters who, despite their best efforts to the contrary, cannot escape their harsh fates because of their lust and cruelty. Different themes from the ancient tales of the Trojan War are apparent throughout the work. The enduring popularity of *Andromaque* from Racine’s time to our own shows the skill with which the playwright adapted a classical story. For Hermione and Pyrrhus, physical lust is the principal flaw and no escape can be found from its doom. Mitchell Greenberg describes Pyrrhus’ lust for Andromache as his own undoing: “Pyrrhus’ desire for Andromache, a desire for the fulfillment of which he is ready to alienate himself and, more important, the state of which he is head from his Greek brethren is thus at once a private and a public challenge to the reigning political order of his world.” The evils of his passion succeed in separating Pyrrhus from every other important force in his life. Only Andromache, who is the object of great lust and not subject to it, can escape from a terrible fate. The characters’ main

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progression from trying to control their situations to their undoing by passion is best evident in the intent of Orestes at the beginning of the play. He intends to convince Pyrrhus to kill Astyanax, a Trojan threat to the Greeks, and take Hermione as his own wife. However, Orestes expected Pyrrhus to refuse and offer Hermione to him. Orestes’ attempt to control the situation backfires when Pyrrhus agrees to kill Astyanax and decides to keep Hermione to spite Orestes: “Yes, my [Pyrrhus’] desires have run too wildly on to find repose, now, in mere unconcern. Look to it well: from this time forward my heart, if it cannot love with rapture, must hate with fury. I will spare nothing in my lawful rage.” Pyrrhus’ passions here set in motion the entire conflict of the play, which will cause the destruction of the things he holds most dear. The failure of the characters to judge their own situations well creates an acute sense of tragedy throughout the entire play that any person could recognize. The sin of passion, especially sexual lust, would have resonated even more with Racine’s Christian audience than with an ancient audience, even if the viewers did not themselves meet the ideals of their faith. Seneca’s version of the Andromache story, one of the

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8 Jean Racine, *Three Plays of Racine*, trans. George Dillon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 15. All subsequent references to *Andromaque* will refer to the page numbers in this translation.
most famous from antiquity, differs in some of this thematic material.

Despite the strong character influences from Seneca’s *Troades* on Racine, *Andromaque* differs greatly in content from its Latin counterpart. As Ronald Tobin states in his study of Seneca’s influence on Racine, “the two plays (the *Troades* and *Andromaque*) lead to two different conclusions: the former ends with Andromacha humiliated and crushed, and Astyanax slain; in the latter, Andromaque emerges triumphant over her enemies and saves her son, at least temporarily. Where then does the similarity lie? Basically in character delineation.”⁹ Although Seneca’s ending reflects his Stoic values and Racine’s echoes Catholic beliefs, their plays’ similarities show the appeal of a certain type of character that French audiences would have appreciated. Both Seneca and Racine have a talent for creating strong, sympathetic female characters, and the story of Andromache provides them both with the opportunity to exhibit this. Tobin cites the passage from *Andromaque* in which Andromache resolves to die with her son if Astyanax must be killed by order of Pyrrhus as an example of her strong resolve and sense of honor. He

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⁹ Tobin (1971) 91.
writes, “Racine, then, in creating his character Andromaque, made her express sentiments which disclose her pride and resolution but also her tenderness and maternal affection. These are precisely the qualities which appear in the Latin Andromacha.”¹⁰ Racine’s audience would likely have appreciated both the allusion to the heroines in Seneca and the emotional strength of Andromache. Racine’s protagonist is loyal to her dead husband Hector, extremely protective of her child Astyanax, and willing to die to uphold her family’s honor. In the rigidly hierarchical social structure of seventeenth-century France, these sentiments would have been immediately recognized. Euripides’ Andromache resembles and differs from this Racinian model.

While Euripides’ *Andromache* contains a sense of the helplessness of humans before the gods, it also comments on social class and Andromache’s life as a slave, rather than evil lust. Andromache is presented as the slave of Pyrrhus, who has Hermione as his new wife, in Euripides’ version. The central conflict in this story, unlike Racine’s, is the relationship between these two women and their roles in society after the Trojan War. Near the play’s beginning, Andromache and Hermione get into an

¹⁰ Tobin (1971) 94.
argument in which Hermione is insulted that a slave like Andromache can address her unpleasantly. She becomes frustrated and yells, “Why do you take this high and lofty tone and enter into a contest of words with me. . . . May your way of thought never come to dwell with me, woman! . . . We do not live here with barbarian customs.”11 This speech suggests that Andromache does not yet know her place, but ought to learn it in order to survive, as Hermione goes on to threaten to kill her. Lust is not the central issue in Euripides’ resolution either. The goddess Thetis arrives to save Andromache in her time of need while Pyrrhus dies. The moral message that ends the play is expressed by the chorus: “There are many shapes of divinity, and many things the gods accomplish against our expectation. What men expect is not brought to pass, but a god finds a way to achieve the unexpected. Such was the outcome of this story” (1284-1288). Racine’s ending, however, sees Andromache saved with her morals intact (although not necessarily because of them) in the face of sinners like Pyrrhus and Hermione. This emphasis on divine grace and

moral superiority reflects Racine’s own Catholic views, particularly through the Jansenist school of thought.

The tragic climax of Racine’s *Andromaque* exhibits Jansenist views on sin and grace, whether or not the influence was intentional or subconscious. Each character is deeply flawed and commits grievous sin through passion. Even Andromache cannot refrain from entering into the various plots schemed by Racine’s other characters; she resolves to marry Pyrrhus, who enslaved her, if that might help her son’s situation. While this may seem self-sacrificing from a modern perspective, the action implicates Andromache in all of the wrongs of those around her. She states, “I give my life, all that remains of it, to Pyrrhus . . . my hand will then at once cut short a life forsworn” (41). While Andromache’s sense of honor would doubtless appeal to Racine’s audience, the acknowledgment of her impending suicide would also be a manifestation of sin. To the ancients, suicide could be a way to die honorably, but for Christians, especially the Jansenists, suicide was a grave affront against God. The basic idea about original sin, which underlies Jansenist thought, is that its consequences are “death, pain, human depravity, and imperfection”
comes from St. Augustine.\textsuperscript{12} All of \textit{Andromaque}’s characters suffer despite their best intentions, one might say, because they are incapable of doing anything else. However, the one who suffers least, Andromache, is also the character who survives in the end. This can be seen as a sign of God’s grace for her. Even Euripides’ Andromache seems to be favored by the gods, an influence which Racine certainly maintained. The Augustinian idea of grace, as envisioned by the Jansenists, provides a good comparison: “Fallen man is so deprived by the legacy of sin that he is incapable, unaided, of willing what is good; let alone achieving salvation through faith in Christ. Divine assistance is essential, in the form of grace.”\textsuperscript{13} It should come as no surprise, then, that all of Racine’s characters are flawed beyond their control in \textit{Andromaque} and also that the one who suffers least among them, Andromache, has been afforded the mercy and grace of God. As in \textit{Phèdre}, Racine’s characters have striking moral flaws which represent their downfall. Christian sins, particularly pride, continue to be evident in Racine’s plays with \textit{Britannicus}.

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Throughout Racine’s *Britannicus*, Agrippina, the mother of the emperor Nero, is presented as prideful and ambitious in a way that differs from the historical accounts of Tacitus. The French viewing public, probably familiar with the story, would have understood Racine’s choice to emphasize the pride of Agrippina over the cruelty of Nero. Racine depicts Agrippina as a plotter in royal intrigue from the very beginning when she reveals, “I know it was I alone that worked their ruin, that from the throne, which his blood claimed for him, Britannicus saw his hopes by me cast down . . . Nero enjoys all; and in recompense I must hold the balance between them [the Roman people] and him.”¹⁴ The title character, Britannicus, does not receive nearly the same attention as Agrippina and Nero because of their tragic qualities. Britannicus just becomes a victim because he was the rightful heir of the Roman Empire and a threat to Nero. After Nero has murdered Britannicus, the play ends with Agrippina predicting her own fate. Her intrigues had angered the emperor and Agrippina’s outlook is not bright: “Did you see, Burrus, when Nero took his

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¹⁴ Racine, *Britannicus*, *Three Plays of Racine*, trans. George Dillon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 65. All subsequent references to *Britannicus* will refer to the page numbers of this translation.
leave, what furious looks he gave me? It is over; he has nothing more to stop him. Now the blow predicted to me will fall upon my head” (119). An oracle that had previously predicted death for Agrippina if she put her son on the throne comes true as a result of her ambition. Racine’s audience would have seen the poignancy of this predicament because pride was perhaps the worst of the seven deadly sins, a common conception in Catholicism since the Middle Ages. This particular concept would have resonated with mainstream Catholics just as strongly as with Jansenists. While Nero’s lust for a woman named Junia also permeates the play, Britannicus leaves its viewers with the sense that the true loser in the entire course of events is the prideful Agrippina. Britannicus, although killed in the prime of life, at least maintained a sense of dignity in the play. Tacitus, an ancient Roman historian from the aristocratic class who wrote during the late first and early second centuries A.D., wrote a version of this narrative in his history which focuses more on the savage ways of Nero and poor omen they bring for the Roman state.

The character of Nero in the Annals of Tacitus must be understood in context in order to understand the Roman historian’s version of Britannicus’ death. Nero is the focal
point for Tacitus, while Racine arguably makes his Agrippina. Tacitus’ first line about the reign of Nero sets the tone ominously, describing “the first death of the new principate [the form of government adopted under the Roman Empire which considered the government’s head to be first among equals]” rather than the usual list of consuls, the senior magistrates under the Roman Republic, which begins most years. The most enduring image of Nero in the *Annals*, which the well-educated Racine must have been familiar with, is that of the emperor singing after the great fire of Rome in A.D. 64. Tacitus writes that Nero “had actually mounted his domestic stage and sung of the extirpation of Troy, assimilating present calamities to olden disasters” (15.39.3). This image of the self-centered and cruel Nero has captured the European imagination for centuries. While Racine certainly hints at Nero’s great harshness throughout the play, the emperor’s lust for Junia receives more attention in *Britannicus*. He speaks in the third person as he threatens Britannicus for supposedly fancying Junia: “The worse for him if he has attracted her, Narcissus; he had rather wish for her anger. Nero will not be jealous without revenge” (77). Nero is even given a

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moment of mercifulness toward Agrippina by Racine: “Make no mistake, Burrus: unjust as she is, she is my mother. I will ignore her caprices” (74). Yet despite this, Agrippina’s ambition is still more central to the plot of Britannicus than either the infamous emperor Nero or the title character. Tacitus’ depiction of Nero and Agrippina in the specific episode of Britannicus’ death further colors Racine’s use of these figures.

Tacitus’ Annals concentrate on the faults of Nero and his murderous intent against Britannicus without the knowledge of his mother, Agrippina. Agrippina is no longer the central character in Tacitus’ narrative by the time of Britannicus’ death. However, just as in Racine’s Britannicus, the would-be heir’s death is a turning point in the relationship between Nero and his mother in a very bad way for Agrippina. Tacitus conveys that “in Agrippina’s case, such panic, such mental shock flashed out, despite her attempt to suppress them in her look, that it was agreed that she had been as unaware [of the assassination] as Octavia, Britannicus’ sister. She had begun to understand that her last source of aid had been seized away and that there was now a precedent for parricide” (13.16.4). Racine confirms this assessment in his aforementioned description of Agrippina’s impending death at the end of Britannicus.
However, the important difference from Tacitus is that Agrippina remains the central figure of even the coming tragedy of her own death. Tacitus’ tragedy is really the story of Rome trapped under despotic tyrants like Nero. An educated French theatre-goer would look for the similarities and subtle differences in Racine’s tale from that of Tacitus. Others might not be quite as cognizant of these things, but they would still be entertained by the story and alerted to the moral message that comes out of it. Racine continued to appeal to this knowledge of ancient Roman history in Bérénice, another of his tragedies.

Bérénice

*Bérénice* explores the idea of devotion to one’s duty over love, certainly recognizable for the French aristocracy, through an ancient Roman tale about the emperor Titus. The historical Titus lived in the first century A.D. and supposedly fell in love with a foreign queen, Berenice, after he suppressed a revolt in Judaea. Racine’s play skips all of the background details to focus on one subject, Titus’ announcement to Berenice of his decision. As soon as the play opens, this decision has already been made: “I’m going to leave her for ever. For a long time my heart has known what it must do. . . if in the end I have chosen my
duty, I want you to know that, to destroy such wanting
there’ve been days of struggle which have left me
bleeding.”¹⁶ Thus it does not play any real role in the play’s
action, and the conclusion is already drawn from the start.
The center of the action is the emotional consequence of
abandoning love and the necessary attention to duty.
Racine’s psychological examination of Titus and Berenice
revolves around these ideas through the climax and end of
the play. The story concludes with Berenice’s last speech to
Titus, in which she realizes how their situation will not be
resolved: “You know my heart . . . I wanted to be loved . . .
I thought that my lover’s feelings were over. I realize my
error; you’ll love me for ever. I’ve watched your tears
falling, what pain you’re in I know . . . goodbye, my Lord,
reign now; I shall never see you” (60). The tragedy in
Bérénice is not what terrible fates befall the characters due
to moral flaw, but rather the same ideal of duty surpassing
love that begins the play. The idea of duty for the state,
while certainly not comparable to modern nationalism, held
a strong sway among the nobility of seventeenth-century
France. Social class and nobility were defining elements of

¹⁶ Jean Racine, Bérénice, Three Plays: Berenice, Le Misanthrope, The
1990), 27. All subsequent references to Bérénice will refer to the page
numbers of this translation.
a Frenchman’s existence at this time and any marriage that could be used for political purposes would be welcomed regardless of love. Racine’s emphasis on this idea definitely applied to both ancient Rome and early modern France, but would have been particularly appreciated by his fellow Frenchmen.

The Roman historian Suetonius, a Roman writer contemporary with Tacitus who wrote biographies of the Roman emperors and Racine’s chief source for Bérénice, does not dwell on the story of Titus and Berenice for long and does not note a particular importance of duty in the decisions of Titus. Much of Racine’s work on Bérénice involved a complete adaptation of an ancient scenario for his French audience. This story especially cannot be accused of merely being a French translation of classical stories and ideas. Suetonius references Berenice exactly twice in his Life of Titus. He says that Titus gave her “a promise of marriage,” according to unverified reports. The line which inspired Racine’s play describes the outcome of Titus and Berenice’s relationship: “He immediately sent away Berenice from the city, much

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17 Suetonius, Titus, trans. Alexander Thomson, Perseus Digital Library, www.perseus.tufts.edu, 7.1. All subsequent references to this work will refer to the section numbers of this particular translation.
against both their inclinations” (7.2). No further information is provided about the dynamics of this relationship, leaving room for Racine to create a tale that could appeal to enthusiasts of French theatre and learned appreciators of classical history alike. Some of the playwright’s own vision undoubtedly contributed to the development of Bérénice as well.

Even more so than for ordinary Catholics, the Jansenist ideal was one of separation from the world and devotion to God. This monastic ideal did not value the sort of worldly love that Titus and Berenice both desired. Although Racine was no longer an active part of the Jansenist movement by the time of Bérénice, the emphasis on one’s duty to God over worldly things would certainly have remained with him for better or for worse. As a boy, Racine was educated in an environment which “wished to separate him from humanity . . . [teaching that] man turned inward upon himself . . . is sinful; therefore he must turn to God.”18 Brereton’s biography claims that this tendency toward isolation from worldly things combined with his withdrawn personality to haunt Racine throughout his life.19 A possible middle ground for this internal struggle

18 Brereton (1951) 84.
19 Brereton (1951) 84.
and ancient Roman themes may be the basis of Bérénice’s plot. The Roman emperor rejects his worldly pleasures for duty, in his context to the Roman people who never appear directly. As noted by Roland Barthes, the Roman public represents Titus’ fears and obligations but is never given any indication of actually existing in Racine’s entire play. Titus’ fear and duty towards these Romans may be similar to the young Racine’s fear and duty towards a God who could not be present in the corrupt physical world. While the most inner workings of Racine’s mind may never be fully known, it is still apparent that his Jansenist education continued to affect him throughout his career and life.

Jean Racine has been credited as one of the greatest playwrights in French history because of his unique artistic vision. In an era dominated by classical antiquity, he brought many familiar and profound themes into the seventeenth century through his theatre adaptations. These plays were not merely translations of great Greek and Roman writers like Euripides, Seneca, and Tacitus, but versions of tales which could appeal greatly to his contemporary French audience. In addition to seventeenth-century French concerns, Racine’s plays also reveal some

of the most important influences on the playwright himself. His education at the Jansenist stronghold of Port-Royal undoubtedly impacted Racine’s views and may have even helped him reconcile classical ideas about the harshness of fate and the divine with Christian ideas. Such a complex creative career certainly places Racine on the same level as his classical forebears and will ensure his enduring relevance in both theatre and the study of early modern French history.
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