

## Conceptualization of Mores in Seventeenth-Century French Tragedy

This thesis is devoted to the study of interpretations of how tragic characters should be portrayed (“mores”, “ethos”, “moeurs”) in French seventeenth-century theories on Tragedy.

The theoretical writings of Jean Chapelain, La Mesnardière, Pierre Corneille, d’Aubignac, René Le Bossu, Rapin, Saint-Évremond, Jean Racine and André Dacier are examined in detail. Their findings are compared with the Latin and Italian commentaries on how the Aristotelian notion “character” (“éthé”, “éthos”) ought to be perceived and understood and what its impact is on dramatic action.

The main focus is paid to the detailed analysis of very divergent and often incompatible interpretations of the four Aristotelian conditions outlined briefly in Chapter XV of Poetics and on how the French theorists and dramatists responded to Aristotle’s requirements.

We have tried to detect the main arguments as it is posed by the contemporary critics and we also draw some genetic lines between the texts. Especially some of Corneille’s remarks which seem to be adopted from Tasso. Racine had probably known the Italian commentary by Alessandro Piccolomini as we suggest in our analysis of Britannicus.

But the main focus is to describe the theoretical frames with which the dramatists were confronted. This knowledge allows for a better appreciation of the intrinsic qualities of the French Seventeenth-Century Tragedy for today’s reader and theater-goer.