THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPANISH THEATER
ON PIERRE CORNEILLE

by

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Preface

Pierre Corneille, as one of the leading French dramatists of the seventeenth century, has been the object of unlimited discussion. The sources of inspiration for his dramas have remained in some obscurity; due, perhaps, more to partiality on the part of critics and an unwillingness to waive such a large share in the glory of their great dramatist—than to the non-existence of evidence. Such evidence, it is true, is in some cases enveloped in a shadow of doubt. But some sort of proof—on whichever side of the question, lurks behind this shadow. The critics who have devoted themselves to a study of this situation, carry their conclusions first to one extreme and then to the other. Those who disclaim Spain's share in the success of Corneille, apparently begrudge her the slightest crumbs of evidence. On the other hand, those who have attempted to prove the extended influence of Spanish literature on Corneille, have constructed a fabric which to all appearances is entirely too flimsy. In this connection the oft repeated statement is made concerning the fury of the heroine of the Spanish comedia, of the indomitable vengeance of the Spanish pendonor, and the brutality of the Spanish race. Such a generalized impression is not fair to a literature nor to a people. It is the purpose of this study to investigate the
real value of these statements, and the true extent of the influence of Spain. For the dates of the several plays, I have followed Lanson, in his *Histoire de la Littérature Française*. To Professor Arthur L. Owen and Professor José M. Osma, I wish to express my gratitude for their kind interest and their valuable assistance.

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The French drama of the seventeenth century was influenced to a marked degree by the literature of Spain. Of the French authors of this period, there are five who show a decided Spanish influence. These are Hardy, Pierre Corneille, Scarron, Molière and Thomas Corneille. Racine was apparently unaffected by this influence. It is the purpose of this study to consider only one of these men, Pierre Corneille; in whose production the Spanish influence bulks large.

Alexandre Hardy has a twofold importance in the drama of this period. In direct connection with our subject, that of being the introducer of Spanish ideas and influence into French drama, and secondly, by reason of the fact that he was the first French tragedian to write for presentation, he merits the name of the seal founder of the French theater. At the end of the sixteenth century, the theater was solely for the educated, and the dramas were not destined for presentation. It remained for someone to write plays which would produce upon the stage, and which would be for the benefit of the public, and not merely for the learned few. Alexandre Hardy was the one to do this, and from 1600 to 1630 he reigned supreme on the French stage.

Since 1548, by a decree of Parliament, the Confrères de la Passion had been prohibited from presenting their mystères, and the Italian comedians, protected by royal favor, had been playing regularly. In 1598, Henri IV granted permission to the Confrères to resume their presentations, and a regular troupe came to establish themselves at Paris. With this troupe was Hardy, who was their producer, supplying in all some seven or eight hundred plays of different kinds. To supply this enormous production, Hardy made use of various sources — Italian, Latin, Greek and Spanish.

Of these seven or eight hundred different plays, there remain only some forty, including dramatic poems, pastorals, tragi-comedies and tragedies. Public taste wavered as to the various genres. For a while the pastoral triumphed, then the tragi-comedy, and finally the tragedy (due to Horace and Cinna.) The pastoral owed its popularity to the great Italian influence then present, but the Italian comedies presented too passive a heroine, a love which was only a desire, a caprice, and accordingly not capable of being a ressort dramatique. Action was what was needed, and action was what Hardy supplied. To produce this action, he sought variety in subjects and characters, the new and the fantastic, and some of this he found in Spain.

The character of the Spanish comedia, the mixture of the comic and the tragic, fitted well into the tragi-comedy then popular in France. In order to produce action, Hardy cast aside

all rules and restrictions, following in this the example of his Spanish models. He found here freedom, an endless variety of rich and fantastic colors, and splendid opportunity for the desired action. Hardy has been accused of pillaging the works of Lope de Vega and Calderón, but this seems doubtful, especially as to Calderón, whose works were not printed until eight or ten years after the death of Hardy. However, he used as sources, not only comedias, but also novelas — which seemed to him to present possibilities for dramatization. From the Novelas ejemplares of Cervantes, Hardy took — Cornélie, La Force du Sang, and La Belle Egyptienne; and from the Diana of Montemayor, his Félimène. Roland Furieux, Frère Indiscret and Frégonde may have been taken from the Spanish, although the source is uncertain. Diego Agreda has been mentioned as a possible source.

The things which Hardy took from the Spanish authors, or the Italian, he treated in his own way. But he was lacking in more than one essential quality of a dramatist, in spite of his new ideas and his invention. He lacked, first of all, genius, and he lacked also style and art. However, he took a step forward, and determined the general character of the drama and its essential elements. He changed the French tragedy from mere oratory or lyricism to something like drama, and prepared the way for the tragedies of Corneille. It might be said that Hardy represents in the history of the French theater, more a

2. Id.  
moment than an author, and his productions an epoch rather
than a work (moins un auteur qu'un moment, et son théâtre
bien moins une œuvre qu'une époque.) His period is one of
liberty for the drama, a period of transition.

The Spanish influence, introduced into French literature
by Hardy, was growing stronger and stronger in social and polit-
cical life. By the time Corneille's production was well under
way, all of France, social, political and literary, was
dominated by Spanish ideas. Charles V was at the height of
his power, and the Spaniards were winning fame the world over
with their political and military deeds — which gave an
impetus to their literary fame and popularity. The Amadis de
Gaulle, translated into French, won almost instant success,
and was followed by the Diana of Montemayor, and an imitation—or perhaps better — a translation of it, l'Astrée, by Honoré
d'Urfée. These were followed by others, and their popularity
increased. There entered French literature two new elements,
unknown to the sixteenth century — the romanesque and the
chevaleresque — both elements of Spanish literature. As Doumic
puts it — Désormais le chemin de la France est ouvert: beaux
esprits, romanciers chevaleresques et picaraques, moralistes et
casuistes passent par la brèche. Writers showed a marked taste
for the extraordinary, both in action and in characters. The
bravery and audacity of their heroes were almost superhuman,
and their complicated experiences were unbelievably thrilling.

3. Études sur la Littérature Française, p. 3.
At the time of Louis XIII, the Spanish influence dominated all modes and customs, social relations, even the methods of feeling and thinking. It was at this time and under these circumstances so favorable to Spanish ideas, that Corneille introduced into his work the Spanish comedia.

The comedia was original and essentially Spanish. It drew its inspiration from the annals and the history of Spain, and presented vividly the customs and aspirations of Spanish society. It was a genre of strength and force, and owed its grandeur to the expression of the distinctive traits of its race.

Since this racial spirit was so essentially a part of the comedia, it was only natural that on leaving Spain it should lose some of the characteristics which distinguished it. The grandeur and the force which dominated in its Spanish setting, were lost when transplanted and introduced into general literature. French ideas and customs were not those of Spain, and the result of disguising a Spanish comedia — à la francaise, was to take from it its real spirit, its freshness and newness. Morel Fatio expresses it well, when he says that in crossing the Pyrenees the comedia was forced to prendre l'habit à la francaise et renoncer à son accoutrement de caballero español, and that the interest which it drew was merely an interest of curiosity.

In spite of this spirit which the comedia lost in its transition, it brought into French literature a new impetus.

2. La Comedia au XVIIe siècle. cited in Doumic, p. 5.
and a great many new ideas. We have spoken of the conception of love which was found in the Italian comedies — the idea that love was a mere caprice — and such an idea could not be used as a *ressort dramatique*. The Spanish comedia furnished for the theater two of these *ressorts dramatiques* — in which it was sadly lacking. The first of these was love, a love which was felt to be real and powerful, and the second was the *pudonor*. It was the latter which still retained so much of the Spanish character and atmosphere, and which, so difficult to borrow without complete taking over, caused endless criticisms and accusations of pillaging and copying.

The conflict of a strong passion, such as was the Spanish conception of love, with the magnificent and heroic — though extravagant — idea of honor and personal dignity, offered a marvelous field for production. The problem now was to tone down this mass of color, to eliminate, and to choose the elements suitable for French tragedy.

This was the task which Corneille had before him, and which Hardy, because he lacked in genius and art, had not been able to accomplish. His problem was to choose well from this wealth of material, to introduce order and clearness, and to develop the study of characters. Corneille had a natural liking for Spanish subjects and ideas, a taste for the *romanesque* and the extraordinary, and a spirit inclined toward the heroic — which lent themselves readily to his work. For this reason he has been called by some critics, Spanish, and the assumption made that there is some Spanish influence in the majority of his plays. This seems,
however, too much of an assumption, and although his liking for Spanish literature is unmistakable, and its influence marked in a number of his plays, to say that it affects the remainder, is to exaggerate. Corneille knew well the Spanish dramatists — Lope de Vega, Calderón, Guillén de Castro — but in borrowing from them he knew how to choose, and choose well. It is on this fact that the French base their chief claim for his originality.

His handling of the question of suppressing the accidental and the bizarre, says Martinenche, and retaining only the essential, shows his power of invention. It is a difficult task to borrow a subject such as the Cid, following the original as closely as did Corneille, cut out the non-essential and the un-acceptable, confine it to the rules of the French tragedy, and still have left a work of originality and character. His characters, in losing their essentially Spanish attributes, must gain in some way in depth and strength, and must be humanized. The mixture of comic and tragic was not acceptable, and the comic must be eliminated. Corneille was aided in this by the fact that his temperament was in itself profoundly tragic. With all his eliminating and polishing, his main purpose was to bring out more strongly the conflict between the two emotions — love and honor.

Whether or not Corneille improved upon the Spanish comedia is a much debated question. It can be seen that the Comedia lost

much of its originality, its true Spanish allure on leaving Spain — and it can be seen that Corneille cut out a great deal that was non-essential, and polished and finished the remainder as to ideas and form. Which of the two is preferable and superior? This is one of the main problems of this study, and will be discussed further in connection with individual plays.

Another problem which arises from this question as to improvement, is the problem of the three unities. Doumic says that Corneille was aided in his condensing by the rules of the three unities — that the drama thus stripped of its exterior appeals and its quality of appealing only to the imagination, must develop in depth and profundity. In this way, he says, arises the study of the soul, the psychology of the conflict of feelings — from which comes real dramatic interest. On the other hand, we find cases in which the play is crowded too much by the demands of the unities and which circumstance unquestionably detracts from the effectiveness. In several cases, Corneille found it impossible to carry out to the letter these three rules without detriment to his plays, and accordingly fulfilled only in general their demands. The rule of unity of place is the one which has to be slighted the most frequently, and Corneille has explained in his Examens that he has kept the general setting of the whole play the same throughout — e.g. a town or a palace — but has found it necessary to change the location of some scenes, presenting divers streets, rooms, etc. It is a question

as to whether these restrictions did not rather hinder Corneille than otherwise — and this question will be discussed more fully, especially in connection with the Cid.

Corneille accepted also, to a certain extent, the restraints of history. When he chose an historical subject, he generally followed it quite closely. However, he chose those incidents which would, to his mind, dramatize well, and did not allow the historical aspect to prevent him from developing and introducing new characters. Yielding to his own and his contemporaries' love for the extraordinary, he went for his subjects to history, and chose from it personnages who were great, those nés pour la grandeur. From the extraordinary subject he made a heroic subject, and from the superhuman personnage so in vogue, he made a personnage who is extraordinary, but does not find himself so — who is simple in his grandeur.

From the time of Corneille, dates a transformation in the conception of dramatic action. This action, prior to the time of Corneille, consisted in the use of scenic effects. Corneille transferred the action to the characters themselves, and thenceforth dramatic action consisted in the moral struggle in the souls of the characters. It was his rule to eliminate all personnages who were not necessary to the action, and who held a part of mere interest or sympathy. A few such characters appeared in his first tragedies — such as the Infante of the Cid, Sabine of Horace, but in general he held to this rule. This also imposed upon him a certain constraint, forcing him

to place upon one or two secondary characters all of the action which could not be worked out in direct connection with his heroes and heroines.

The *pundonor*, so prominent and so important in Spanish literature, plays also an important part in the drama of Corneille. It has been thought, however, that there is a difference between the two. With Corneille, this *pundonor* becomes the *volonté*.

Doumic regards the Spanish idea of honor as one of pride simply, a cold brutal sort of theology that makes insistent demands for blood. His statement that this is *above all* a trait of the race, an effect of the somber imagination and the cruel humor of the Spaniards, is absurd. The Spaniards allowed upon the stage scenes which to the French were shocking, but the French erred equally in the opposite direction. It may be safely said that it was a very difficult task to conform to the rules of French tragedy, of the seventeenth century. Of course, many incidents are found in the Spanish comedias which could be safely omitted—and perhaps better so. But is equally evident that too many artificial restrictions tend to destroy the life of any production. In making of the *pundonor* the *volonté*, Corneille introduces, according to Doumic, something deeper and more human. It is no longer, he says, a matter of mere pride and outraged dignity, but a will which works clearly and strives in spite of all obstacles to accomplish the duty imposed on it by reason.

It is for his creation of this *volonté* in his first tragedies that Corneille has received so much praise, and in

his later ones so much criticism. We are told that the element of pride, which at first he subordinates, re-enters, and grows stronger and stronger; that Corneille seems no longer to carry out his conception that the *volonté* is a means, and that its moral value comes not from itself but from the end to which it is destined. This Spanish trait, as Doumie calls it, makes itself felt in his characters, beginning with *Cinna* and becoming gradually more marked.

It is true that Corneille's later tragedies cannot be compared to his first ones. But the reason for this is questioned. Again quoting Doumie, Corneille's respect for history lessens, and after *Don Sanche d'Aragon*, the romanesque again triumphs, thus reappear all the faults of the *comedia*, reinforced by others. Love, he says, ceases to be a passion worthy of being studied in itself and capable of furnishing the conflict of emotions — and the tragedy falls back into all the errors from which Corneille had drawn it. To a certain extent this can be seen, but why lay the blame at the door of the *comedia*? The romanesque may have been a fault of the *comedia*, but was it necessarily to blame for all the other deteriorations in the tragedy? Corneille breaks away from his Spanish models — if their good qualities leave him, why should all the poor ones remain? The *comedia* was not all crude nor all superficial, and offered many good elements for the tragedian. It seems hardly fair to say that it appears as the limit, above which the tragedy must be elevated, in order to be itself. Broadly speaking, Corneille's masterpieces are the plays which have definite Spanish sources,

and which follow these sources fairly closely. His lesser plays do not have Spanish sources, nor do they show necessarily Spanish influence. The claim that is made by critics that many of these plays are typically Spanish in their atmosphere, that their characters in their relentless vengeance and their false pride are typically Spanish, is entirely too vague and unsubstantiated. Such a statement could be argued from either side of the question, according to the writer's general idea of the literature and the nation under discussion. The typical Spanish atmosphere does not seem, to the present writer's mind, to be produced, nor can we find evidences of any attempt to do so. To say that in such plays as Médée, l'Ilusion Comique, Rodogune, Théodore, Héraclius, Andromède—Spanish influence can be seen, requires more definite proof than the mere assertion. Corneille had admiration for the Spanish authors, but he also admired the ancients. Of course, Corneille may have had in mind the Spanish comedias in writing his later plays, but it seems rather doubtful. Not only does he acknowledge the sources to which he is indebted, but as a rule they can be plainly seen in his dramas. And it is these dramas, in which they are acknowledged and can be seen, that are superior. Apparently, then, Corneille is at his best in the reproduction of these Spanish comedias, and their influence upon him is a good one.

The number of these plays of which the Spanish origin is certain and definite, has been disputed. According to different critics, it varies widely. Huszar seems to think that all of Corneille's plays, beginning with Médée (1629), and including

Sureña (1674), show the influence, in one way or another, of the Spanish comédie. He speaks often of the dénouement as one which is frequent in the comédie, of the début tragique et le dénouement heureux which recall the comédie, of the intrigue amoureuse which carries the Spanish imprint. As has been said, such claims are too vague and too general to constitute proof, and to include all of Corneille's plays among those showing Spanish influence, is to greatly exaggerate. Martinenche speaks of about twenty as showing traces of this influence. In one half of these— including Médée, l'Illusion Comique, Le Cid, Horace, Cinna, Pompée, Le Menteur, La Suite du Menteur, Rodogune, and Théodore—he says that the Spanish ideas can readily be seen. He then speaks of Héraclius, Andromède, Don Sanche d'Aragon, Nicomède, Perharite, Sertorius, Sophonisbe, Toison d'Or, and Agésilas as having the marks of the comédie. To him the volonté of the characters has deteriorated into the false gloire of the Spanish pundonor. Voltaire limits the influence of Spain to five—Le Cid, Le Menteur, La Suite du Menteur, DonnSanche d'Aragon, and Nicomède. The last two he mentions as of the genre and of the taste of the Spanish comédie. Liéby notes only three which he says are of Spanish origin—Le Cid, Le Menteur, and La Suite du Menteur—and Brunetière gives the same three.

After investigating this question, and comparing the different plays with all their possible sources, and examining their alleged points of influence, the writer would set the time of the influence of Spain on Corneille as the period from 1636

to 1645. This includes Le Cid, Horace, Cinna, Polyeucte, Pompee, Le Menteur and La Suite du Menteur. Cinna, Polyeucte and Pompee are doubtful. It would seem natural that since these three plays were in the very midst of the period in which Corneille was drawing from the Spanish, that they should be influenced also by the comedia. It is also entirely possible that they may have escaped this influence, and that their inspiration came from elsewhere. Mere chronological order does not necessarily prove similarity in the ideas and sources.

With these plays, the attempt will be made to ascertain whether or not Corneille has improved upon his Spanish sources. If he has improved upon them, the question is then in what ways he has made this improvement, and the causes for the different changes which he has made. At this point enters what we shall call the psychology of the audience. The question is whether many of these changes in the comedia were not felt necessary by Corneille, not because of his own tastes, but because of the demands of his audience. Elements suppressed by an exacting audience might have had a detrimental effect upon his plays. Did the omission of certain scenes — such as, for instance, the scene of the famous slap in the Cid — help make the tragedy superior to the comedia, or was its omission necessary merely because it would have displeased the French public? Would a given scene necessarily have detracted from the play itself, or would it have added?

Outside the period of which we speak as showing the influence of Spain, there are several plays upon which there
is a possibility of this influence. Don Sanche d'Aragon, written in 1650, belongs perhaps with the plays of the period just mentioned, since in his *Examen*, Corneille states that his idea of the dénouement and some of the general ideas were taken from Spanish sources. Following the theory of chronological order, the plays between *La Suite du Menteur* (1645) and *Don Sanche d'Aragon*, then, would have their derivation in the *comedia*. This list includes *Rodogune*, *Théodore*, *Héraclius* and *Andromède*. Again, however, the proofs here are vague and general. With these plays, the investigation will be as to whether the ideas set forth are necessarily Spanish. If so, then the theory might perhaps be applied — as is done by Huszar — to the rest of Corneille's dramas. *Médée* and *l'Illusion Comique* will be included in the investigation, and the question as to the first appearance of the *comedia* — whether in *Médée* or in the *Cid* — will be discussed.

With Pierre Corneille, we will leave the tragedy, and turn our attention to the comedy — since it is with this genre that Scarron, Thomas Corneille, and Molière are concerned. The development of the comedy was much slower than that of the tragedy. The comedies of the sixteenth century were chiefly translations from the Italian, and were merely, as were the first tragedies, to be read, and not presented. The works of Hardy — who, as has been said, was the first dramatist to

write for production — contained no comedies. However the
tragi-comedy and the pastoral incorporated some comic elements,
and the farce was still in favor. The years between 1598 and
1628 produced not more than four or five real comedies. The
comedy as a genre was reestablished by Rotrou, Corneille and
Mairet — about the time of 1630. Le Cid and Horace, in separat-
ing definitely the tragedy from the comedy, helped in the
formation of a distinctive type for the latter — which type
was carried on by various writers, including Scarron, thus
paving the way for Molière.

The name of Scarron is best known in connection with
the burlesque, which was so popular in France between 1640
and 1660. This period was characterized by a spirit of
rebellion against discipline — in literature as well as
in society — and there was present also a growing protest
against the affections of the précieuses. The burlesque was
well suited for such subjects, and took readily from the
comedia of Spain. Of Scarron’s works, those which show plainly
the Spanish influence are — Jodelet, ou le Maître Valet,
Don Japhet d’Arménie, l’Ecolier de Salamanque, and Le Précaution
Inutile.

In the works of Molière are to be found a continuation
and development of the ridicule of Scarron of préciosité. It
is on this idea that Huszar bases a claim for Spain’s share
in the greatness of Molière. This reaction, he says, took place

2. Id. p. 505, n. 2.
in Spain before Molière entered the field, and the *gongorismo* of Spain probably influenced to a large extent the *préciósité* of France. Huszár allots to the Spanish *comedia* an influence on Molière equal to that on Corneille. The present writer finds, however, that here, as also in the study of Corneille, his proofs are rather too vague. The statements that in Molière are to be found principles identical with those in the Spanish theater and that Molière has not escaped from the romanesque and the heroic elements of the *comedia* — do not sufficiently sustain so broad an assertion as that the Spanish influence is shown throughout the works of Molière. However, certain of Huszár's claims are not without foundation, for the influence of Spain is shown in some of Molière's comedies.

That which is of the utmost importance to Molière is the development of his characters. In his *Menteur*, Corneille produced the first comedy of character — and it is in this type that Molière excels. The claim that Molière was not influenced by Spain is based by some on the statement that the *comedia* was purely a development of intrigue, and not of character. This claim, as well as some others mentioned by supporters of the opposite side of the question, is too vague and general to be maintained.

It would appear that the influence of Spain on the works of Molière offers as large a subject for investigation as the influence upon those of Corneille. However, it is not

the purpose of the writer to study in detail the extent of
this influence, and before taking up definitely the real
subject of this study, those plays upon which the influence
is most apparent will be merely named. These, according to
Fitzmaurice Kelly, are — Les Femmes Savantes, L'Ecole des
Maris, L'Ecole des Femmes, Le Médecin Malgré Lui and
Tartuffe. Ticknor mentions Tartuffe, and Martinenche Le Dépit
Amoureux, Les Précieuses Ridicules, Sganarelle, L'Ecole des

Molière did not have a very great influence on the
development of the French comedy. He did not belong to any
particular school, nor did he form a school. After his period,
the comedy continued to develop much as before — apparently
unaffected by his works. In Thomas Corneille we find what
appears to be merely a continuation of Scarron. He reflects
the influence of the Spanish comedia to a very marked degree —
and his types continue to increase in grotesqueness. The
influence of Spain is most outstanding in — Les Engagements
du Hasard, Don Bertrand de Cigarral, and Le Gêolier de Soi-même.

The comédie de moeurs disappeared, and the comedy of
intrigue and bouffonerie again took the lead — the most
popular being of one act, a sort of farce. It was not until the

5. Id.
6. Id. p. 505, n. 2.
last twenty five years of the reign of Louis X1V that the comedy was again elevated to its rightful position by Regnard, Dancourt, and Lesage.
Chapter 1

The subject of his first real tragedy — Médée (1655), Corneille took from the Medea of Seneca. It is evident that he also knew the Medea of Euripides, and introduced into his play various of its minor details. The plot of the two Latin poems is practically the same — Jason, having come to Corinth, and bringing with him Medea, marries Glauce, daughter of the king. Medea is ordered banished from Corinth by king Creon, but finally obtains a day's grace. She sends to Glauce — by her two sons — a poisoned robe, which Glauce puts on and perishes; and Creon, in trying to free his daughter from the robe, is killed by the poison. But Medea slays her two sons, flings their bodies at the feet of Jason, and escapes to Athens in a chariot drawn by winged dragons.

There is a difference, however, in the atmosphere and the attitude of the characters. In Euripide's version, there is more pleading on the part of Medea, who attempts to move to pity the hearts of Jason and the king. In Corneille we find the Medea of Seneca, with her stony hatred and her fierce, unquenchable thirst for vengeance.

On this idea of vengeance, Huszar bases one of his principal claims for the influence of the Spanish comedia on the tragedy of Médée. That which gives it a Spanish character, he says, is the sentiment indomptable de vengeance qui dirige l'héroïne et lui fait commettre ses crimes. The

conception of vengeance, in this case, does not appear to be, however, typically Spanish. The Spaniards sought to avenge themselves for wrongs committed, but not with the same merciless undying hatred which animated Médée. In the Spanish drama, we do not find characters who go so far in their lust for revenge as to murder their innocent children — merely because such children belong to the father whom they hate. Just such a situation is the one which Corneille takes over from Seneca, and reproduces in a similar manner. There are numerous passages throughout the play which show themselves to be practically translations of passages from Seneca.

Médée is spoken of as being no more than an amante offensée, a fury. Such a character does not fit at all the type of woman of the comedia. She may seek vengeance, as has been said, but not the extreme sort pursued by Médée. When Médée says —

N'en delibérons plus, mon bras en résoudra
Je vous perd, mes enfants; mais Jason vous perdra,

she does not resemble the Spanish heroine, but rather the Medea who says —

Resolved is this way of vengeance, rightly resolved, for a last deed of guilt, I see it now, must my soul make ready. Children that once were mine, do you pay penalty for your father's crimes.

This is the Medea who can say —

Glad am I, glad, that I tore off my brother's head,
glad that I carved his limbs, that I robbed my father
of his guarded treasure, glad that I armed daughters
for an old man's death.

Act 1, Scene 5 of Médée contains a passage which is one
of the well known expressions in the drama of Corneille.
Médée, betrayed by Jason, and cast out by the entire court,
when asked by her companion — the only one who has remained
faithful to her — what remains for her, replies —

Moi, Moi, dis-je, et c'est assez.

This moi, moi, a famous phrase in French tragedy, is in the
Latin original. It is known as the Medea superstas of Seneca,
and is taken bodily from his play. Medea says in answer —

Yet I am left. There's left both sea and land and fire
and swords and gods and hurtling thunderbolts.

There is, and this more fearsome still, Medea.

The theory which Huszar seeks to uphold, that this
moi is a product also of the Spanish drama, is considerably
exaggerated. It is true that situations are to be found in
which the Spaniards express a somewhat similar idea. But
this idea, though similar, is not identical. Huszar cites
as proof for his assertion, two passages, one in Calderón's
En esta vida todo es verdad y todo mentira, and one in Lope
de Vega's Querer la propia desdicha. Both of these appear to

the writer to be entirely different situations. In *En esta vida*, the difficulty is to discover which one of the two young men is the son of the emperor Mauricio — Focas having sworn to kill the one who is. He asks which one of them is Mauricio's son, and they both reply — Yo.

Quererla propia desdicha shows Doña Ine's love for Don Juan quickly dwindle when she hears of his loss of fortune and power. She asks who would love a man who had fallen from the king's grace, and Doña Angela answers — Yo.

Between these *Yo's* and the *moi* of Médée, there is a decided difference. The former do not express, as does the latter, the confidence in the absolute ability of self, the unquestioned and undoubted efficiency to stand alone. It seems evident that Corneille, when following an original as closely as he did Médée, would not seek in other and scarcely similar sources what was presented so admirably by Seneca.

3. Martinenche selects as the two main elements of Médée that remain, *le mot*(moi), and *le mouvement*. This *mouvement* — Médée — *Où me renvoyez-vous, si vous me bannissez?* *Irai-je sur le Phase où j'ai trahi mon père?* was that which was imitated by Racine in his *Phèdre*. Racine escaped the Spanish influence entirely, why should he then pick a *mouvement* which was Spanish? Or, if he chose it unintentionally, would it not have imparted a tinge of this

2. Comedias escogidas de Lope de Vega, B.A.E. Vol.34. p.287.
influence to his work?

At the time of the appearance of Médée, the French stage offered no productions of merit. Mairat's Sophonisbe (1633), was about the best of those which were produced. The public in general was acquainted only with mediocre translations of Greek and Spanish tragedies, or very weak imitations of them. Médée was far superior to any of these, but in spite of this fact, won only moderate success. Its failure of success apparently lay in the absence of a compelling interest — such as, for instance, animated the Cid, and the superabundance of long speeches. In this latter point, Corneille seemed unfortunately to copy the weaknesses of Seneca as well as his strong points — since the Latin poet's version was not successful. Another point of weakness in Corneille's play was the lack of a character who would appeal to the spectator, and gain his entire interest. Médée is too vengeful, too stonily inhuman.

Voltaire's criticism, however, of her character as a magician, is too severe. He says that a magician does not appear at all in place, nor a proper subject. But he admits that if she were not a magician, her acts — especially in killing her sons — would be disgustingly impossible. Corneille presents to us merely one episode in the life of Medea, and its tragic ending — but the history of the Argonauts forms the background for this episode. It is the

2. Id. p. 5.
same Medea who helped Jason with her magic art to secure the golden fleece, making it only the more treacherous of him to turn from her. The background is necessary for the tragedy, and the background of character is necessary for Medea. She must be a magician, or Corneille must choose an entirely different subject.

Apparently, in order to have suited his critics, Corneille would have had to choose a different plot. He certainly could not have omitted from Médée the vengeance and the magic art of its heroine, and have left a play worth presenting. Yet these were the very points to which were offered the most objection. When Corneille took a subject from history, he followed it as closely as possible, as he has done in this case. The objection, then, apparently narrows down to his choice of subject — which objection should not prevent appreciation of the results obtained with the one chosen.

The magic art introduced into the play, says Huszar, shows the influence of the comédie. The role which he assigns to this art in the Spanish comédie, appears larger than is warranted. Magic is present in some — but not in the majority of the comédies, and by no means stands forth as a distinctive trait. This being the case, it is not at all clear to the writer why Corneille should find his inspiration for this in the Spanish authors, when his

Latin model presents it exactly as he has done. Especially since his plays which are known to be of Spanish source or influence contain no trace of this magic — does Huszar's assumption seem absurdly exaggerated.

The magic which we find in some of the Spanish comedias would scarcely seem to inspire of itself the magic of Médée. The mere presence of magic art, unless of similar circumstances or purpose, hardly offers a basis for a charge of imitation. In the En esta vida of Calderón, cited by Huszar as perhaps having furnished Corneille with some ideas, we find the following —

Suenan el terremoto, obscurécense el teatro con truenos
y relámpagos, y salen todos tropezando.

This device is merely to allow the two young men to escape from their captors. Medea, in Seneca's play, with her magic art fashions a cloak which is filled with a poison fatal to the life of Clauce, her hated rival.

Let them cheat the sight, let them endure the touch,
let burning fire penetrate to heart and veins; let
her limbs melt and her bones consume in smoke
chants the magician of Seneca.

What then could the conclusion be but that Corneille utilized the Latin source and not the Spanish.

The statement of Huszar that Seneca, and also Lucain,

whom Corneille imitated the most, were Spanish in origin, both being born at Cordova, and that Corneille himself said that in imitating them he was not far removed from Spain, is true. Nevertheless as a proof of the influence of Spanish literature on Corneille's works, it is ridiculous. Seneca may have been born at Cordova, but he did not write Spanish comedias, nor was there anything in his works that might be considered essentially Spanish. His plays were Roman, and the ones that Corneille copied from him were Roman also. To find Spanish influence, we must turn to true Spanish sources.

The basis of the tragedies which Corneille takes from the Spanish comedia is a struggle between a passion — such as love, and a strong duty — such as the honor of the family or country. We do not find this struggle in Médée, nor are there present the two elements necessary to form this struggle. There is no great love, nor is there a duty. There is only treachery on the part of one, and implacable hatred and desire for revenge on the part of the other. And it is this hatred and this revenge which form the plot and the action. For this reason there can be no character strong and great enough to gain and hold the interest and sympathy of the spectator. How then, can Huszar's assertion be accepted that Médée paraît être dans l'exécution de ses projets meurtriers, un type dégénéré des caballeros
obéissant aux commandements impitoyables de l’honneur.

The brutalities of which he speaks in the same paragraph hardly merit such a strong name. The *comedia* admitted scenes which to the French were impossible, but certainly no such scenes, as has been said, as Medea’s murder of her two children. Such a point was by no means incorporated in the Spanish *pundonor*.

The *Illusion Comique* (1636) offers nothing, as far as the writer can see, that shows Spanish influence. It is an odd play — Corneille himself in his *Examen* calls it *galerie extrava­gante* — qui a tant d’irrégularités qu’elle ne vaut pas la peine de la considérer. We find here an element of magic, but do not, as has been said, in connection with *Médee*, hold this as a characteristic of the *comedia*.

The play is a strange mixture of comic and tragic elements — the ending being tragic, but the style and characters being those of the comedy. The claim might be made that this shows the influence of the *comedia* — its mixture of the comic and the tragic. This is hardly sufficient proof, however. This combination of the two styles might be explained by the fact that Corneille’s first productions had been comedies, but that he was now turning toward his true sphere, that of the tragedy. He made his start in this direction.

with Médée in 1635, and in the same year as the Illusion Comique — 1636, produced his masterpiece of tragedy, the Cid.

Corneille mentions in the first act — which is a sort of a prologue — the names of several Spanish characters. He speaks of Buscón, Lazarillo de Tormes, Sayavedra and Guzmán. This shows of course, as Huszar says, that he knew well the Spanish authors. But it does not necessarily prove that he as yet made use of them. However, it is not impossible that on the eve of his great production — the Cid — of which the Spanish source is unquestioned, Corneille should begin to feel and show the presence of their influence.

In his Au Lecteur, Corneille divides his plays into two distinct periods. In the first are included his first eight plays — the last of these being Médée and the Illusion Comique. The second period embraces — Le Cid, Horace, Cinna, Polyxène, Pompe, Le Menteur and La Suite du Menteur. The plays of the latter period, he says, are un peu plus supportables than those of the former. They are more regular, the unities are observed, and the subjects are chosen from those of history. This would apparently indicate that Corneille divided in his own mind these plays and their sources in much the same way that is attempted in this study. The plays of the second period are the ones which

are superior, and which show Spanish sources or influence. *L'Illusion Comique* is included in the first period, and although the Spanish influence is possible, it does not appear likely, and certainly has not been proven. Our conclusion, then, would be that the influence of the Spanish *comedia* did not make its appearance in the works of Corneille until the *Cid*. 
Chapter 11

Corneille produced in the Cid (1636) his masterpiece, and the first of the series of his best plays. He tells us in his Examen that the subject is taken from a fragment of Mariana’s Historia de España, and that the development is based on that of the Mocedades del Cid of Guillén de Castro. It is with this play that the period of the influence of the Spanish comedia begins.

Don Diego has been insulted by Count Gomez, and too old and feeble to avenge himself, the duty of avenging the family honor falls upon the son, Rodrigo. Rodrigo loves and is loved by Jimena, daughter of the Count. But when in a duel he kills the Count, Jimena must in turn seek vengeance upon him for the death of her father. At last she offers her hand to the one who shall be the victor in a duel with Rodrigo. However Rodrigo — now named Cid by the Moors because of his bravery — is victor, and love triumphs.

This is the plot of the Mocedades del Cid, and that of Corneille’s Cid is practically the same. There is no question as to the fact that Corneille took his tragedy from the Spanish comedia. Not only is the plot the same, but we find passages throughout which are identical, and which are practically translations from the Spanish to the French. The following are examples —
Don Arias reasons with the Count and endeavors to make him see the folly of his hasty action, and the danger in which he has placed himself. The count replies arrogantly —

*Perderme no; Que los hombres como yo
Tienen mucho que perder; y ha de perderse
Castilla, antes que yo.*

Le comte of Corneille —

*Un seul jour ne perd pas un homme tel que moi.
Que toute sa grandeur s'arme pour mon supplice,
Tout l'Etat périra, s'il faut que je périsse.*

Rodrigo's sense of duty has triumphed over his love, and he challenges the Count —

*¿No sabes que fué despojos — De honra y valor?*

El conde — *Sí sería.*

Rodrigo — *¿Y que es sangre suya y mía,*

*Lo que tengo en los ojos? —¿Sabes?*

The French Rodrigue's challenge —

*Sais-tu que ce vieillard fut la même vertu,*

*La vaillance et l'honneur de son temps? le sais-tu?*

Le comte — *Peut-être.*

Rodrigo — *Cette ardeur que dans les yeux je porte,*

*Sais-tu que c'est son sang? le sais-tu?*

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Castro's Rodrigo goes to the home of Jimena, to implore her to take his life, and there is met by Elvira, who is astounded to see him there.

Elvira — ¿Qué has hecho, Rodrigo?

¿No mataste al conde?

Rodrigo — Es cierto — Importábase a mi honor.

Elvira — ¿Cuando fué casadel muerte

Sagrado del matador?

We find in Corneille, Rodrigue met by Elvire —

Elvire — Rodrigue, qu'as-tu fait?

Quoi! viens-tu jusqu'ici braver l'ombre du comte?

Rodrigue — Sa vie était ma honte;

Mon honneur de ma main a voulu cet effort.

Elvire — Mais chercher ton asile en la maison du mort!

Jamais un meurtrier fit-il son refuge?

There are, of course, essential differences between
the Spanish comedia in general and the French classic tragedy. These differences would show themselves in the handling of the plot, the omission or presentation of certain scenes, and the psychology of the characters. Corneille has changed some scenes found in Castro's play, and omitted others. Now comes the question of his reasons for these changes, and the effect, whether beneficial or not, of such changes on his play.

In Castro's *comedia* we find among the scenes which are omitted by the French dramatist, the following:

Don Rodrigo, in the presence of the court is knighted by the king. This scene is not essential to the play or the development of the plot, but it makes the setting for the picture more complete. The Cid is an essentially chivalrous character, taken from the age of chivalry and knighthood, and this detail but strengthens the impression. Would it have a similar effect, however, in the classic setting of the French tragedy? The atmosphere of the play has been so altered that such a scene would be merely superfluous.

The Spanish *comedia* presents two brothers of Don Rodrigo, to whom Don Diego first appeals. To test their strength and bravery, he bites their fingers; and because they shrink, he turns to Rodrigo, who takes up the cause of outraged dignity. This is one of the scenes regarded by French critics as brutal, and which undoubtedly could never have found a place in the French tragedy. To Corneille's public, the father biting his son's fingers to test their courage, was not only brutal but entirely superfluous. On the other hand, Corneille's rendering of the scene, in which he asks —

1. *Rodrigue* — as-tu du coeur?

has been criticized by the Spaniards as — *una frase infeliz en una escena terrible que nunca puede ser en una escena española. El padre sabe que el deber de su hijo es vengarle.*

The idea of duty in Spain surmounted all else, and even family ties did not interfere. To the Spaniards, the question as to Rodrigo's heart was mild and weak.

Castro paints vividly the battle between the forces of the Spaniards and the Moors, the capture of the Moors and the naming of Rodrigo Cid by the Moorish king. This entire scene is condensed and related by one of the characters in the play of Corneille. Liéby says that Corneille's rendering of the scene is much superior and much more effective than is Castro's. The poetry and the souffle heroïque, he claims, produce a better impression from the recital than from the scene itself. Voltaire holds a similar opinion, and criticizes the unnecessary presence of the four Moorish kings in the comedia. Granting that some of the characters are superfluous and the scene of the battle a difficult one to present — do we obtain better results from the relating of the story? Is the description of the picture of the glorification of Rodrigo more vivid and thrilling than the picture itself? There enters again at this point the essence of chivalry so a part of the Spanish Cid. This scene is but another example of this spirit — and would accordingly be misplaced in the tragedy. The souffle heroïque of which Voltaire

1. Professor José M. Osma, Lecture on Origin and Development of the Spanish Drama. (Unpublished).
speaks, incorporates what remains of this spirit in the tragedy. Just as the whole atmosphere is toned down — so must the elements which go to make it up be altered.

The very incarnation of the chivalrous spirit of the Spanish caballero is found in the description of the Cid and his soldiers in the field — in which Rodrigo befriends and feeds a poor leper. The presence of such a scene would not for a moment be tolerated in Corneille's tragedy. Nor would it be in place — even less so than the scene of the battle with the Moors. Liéby suggests that Corneille omitted the incident of the leper because it was a Spanish legend, and Corneille was not concerned with legends nor history. Corneille had a great respect for history, however, and unless the scene would have detracted from his play, he would probably have included it. The mere fact that it was a legend would not suffice to keep it from the tragedy — but the fact that it was a legend so characteristic and so reeking with the atmosphere of Spanish chivalry and heroism.

The plans of the king as to the distribution of his kingdom, and the resulting disgust and dissatisfaction on the part of the prince, does not appear necessary nor especially characteristic — and its omission by Corneille is entirely natural.

At the close of the play, Castro brings to the court

the Aragonés, Martin, who demands a Castillian to fight with him. This supplies the desired opponent for Rodrigo, allowing him incidentally to uphold still farther the glory of his king. They fight, and Rodrigo, the victor, brings to court the head of Martin on a spear and presents it to Jimena. Could such a scene be imagined on the French stage of the seventeenth century? Corneille presents an admirer of Chimène, from whom Rodrigue wins the combat. But Corneille goes even a step farther. Rodrigue spares the life of his vanquished opponent — and thus escapes from a possible charge of being twice a murderer, of Chimène's father and of her lover.

Did Corneille omit some scenes and change others because they seemed to him impossible and were directly opposed to his tastes, or because of the demands of his audience? The psychology of the audience plays an important part with any dramatist, and it apparently influences Corneille extensively. Many of the differences present in the two versions of the Cid may have as their basis this very dissimilarity of public taste. The Spanish audience accepted what to them fitted in with their idea of chivalry and rugged power. The French audience rebelled at anything suggestive of the rude or shocking, and demanded productions which were smooth and polished. Martinenche remarks —

L'épisode du lépreux était admirable en Espagne. Il aurait

gâté en France les exploits du Cid. If the Cid is the same character in both literatures, why then should an episode so admirable in one be so unbecoming in the other? Is this the fault of the Cid — or of what the audience expects?

Although placed in a different setting, the Cid is still the Spanish hero, and as such should be able to support exploits of a Spanish character. The French, in demanding the suppression of all these elements, demanded another hero entirely — a polished French gentleman of the seventeenth century.

This same idea is shown in the episode of the famous slap given Don Diegue by the Count. The objections to this action taking place on the stage were numerous and insistent, and some actors were very much embarrassed over playing such a scene. Corneille recognizes the undercurrent of feeling against this scene, and excuses its presentation, saying in his Examen — L'indignité d'un affront fait à un vieillard chargé d'années et de victoire, le s'jette aisément dans le parti de l'offensé — and says further that he regards the actual execution of such an insult far more effective than the mere recital of it could have been.

It is for this and similar reasons that Huszar says —

La pièce de Castro est une fleur sauvage née dans le sol et l'atmosphère qui lui conviennent. La pièce de Corneille est une plante artificielle qu'un jardinier artiste cultiva et embellit dans une serre; ses couleurs sont moins vives, son parfum moins naturel. To a certain extent this is true. A

2. Id. p. 254.
typically Spanish hero, transferred to the atmosphere of French tragedy, stripped of his heroic and romantic characteristics, and bound by rigid rules, cannot help but lose his natural and appealing allure. The episode of the leper, the knighting of Rodrigo, the conferring upon him of the name of Cid— all such scenes add to the atmosphere and the natural setting so essential to the Spanish hero of chivalry.

On the other hand, Corneille gives us a tragedy which is polished and finished beautifully, both as to ideas and form. All the non-essential is gone. Only the characters who are of importance to the plot (with perhaps the exception of the Infante), are present — and perform only the acts necessary to the development of the play. We have as a hero a more polished, more refined character, and thus it is with the heroine. There are no rude details, no incidents which might be called shocking or barbaric (barring the incident of the soufflet, previously discussed). Which of the two is superior? Do we prefer a subject true to life, yet rugged and unfinished — or one not so accurate but which conforms to given rules and demands?

The question now arises as to the influence of these rules, whether beneficial or harmful. The three unities are fairly closely observed, the unity of place being the one which Corneille found impossible to fulfill to the letter. Castro was unhindered by any rules and regulations, and could accordingly do as he pleased. The unity of plot Corneille
succeeded in keeping -- the struggle of Chimène and Rodrigue between love and duty. The unity of place, as we have said, was not kept to the letter, but was in general observed. Corneille explains in his *Examen* that he found it necessary to change the location of certain scenes. He laid the general situation at Seville -- so as to make more natural, he tells us, the quick descent of the Moors, and to allow Rodrigue time to reach them after his duel with the Count. But the place of the various scenes is now in the palace of the king, now at the home of Chimène, and again in the public square. Even then, it is necessary to use the imagination considerably -- to explain, for example, the violent quarrel of the Count and Don Diegue in the public square. Corneille suggests in his *Examen* that they might have quarreled as they were leaving the palace, and that the quarrel came to a head in the street just before the house of Don Diegue.

The unity of time, though kept, presses considerably the development of the plot. Twenty four hours is a very short time into which to condense so many incidents. The death of the Count must be followed immediately by the arrival of the Moors. The battle with the Moors must of course have tired Rodrigue, and it would appear only humanly necessary that he should need rest and recuperation before his combat with Don Sanche. This same rule makes it necessary for Chimène to demand justice a second time, upon the heels, so to speak, of her previous demand.

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Lieby's idea is that this rule of twenty four hours is beneficial to Corneille in regard to this latter point. It allows Chimène to beg only twice the aid of the king in her vengeance on Rodrigue — thus, he says, avoiding the monotony of a complaint too often repeated without new motive. But the time of Castro's play extends over three years — and in such length of time, three supplications on the part of Jimena are surely not too many. The king would naturally hesitate to take action against one so brave and so valuable to him as the Cid. But if Jimena did not continue her efforts, of what value would be her vows of vengeance for her father? Two demands within twenty four hours, are, to the mind of the writer, more out of proportion than three within three years. Her first supplication, Chimène makes in the evening, and is promised aid by the king. The next morning she appeals again to the king — scarcely twelve hours later. Between the pleas of Corneille's heroine, there elapses only twelve hours; while between those of Castro's, there elapses a year.

What Corneille has supplied above all else offered by the Spanish comedia, says Bruntière, is the true struggle in the soul of Chimène. Will the voice of love or the voice of honor — called by the blood of her father — triumph in her heart? This, he says, is the true basis of Corneilleian tragedy and supercedes all else. Lanson carries the theory

even farther — Dans tous les facteurs internes de nos actes, il isole un principe: la raison; une force: la volonté; il recherche comment la volonté fait triompher la raison. Thus volonté, he says, is the mainspring of the tragedy — all else follows it. The Spanish pundonor, it is claimed, is but pride, cold and brutal pride, forever demanding blood. Corneille's volonté contains an element deeper and more human.

On his conception of this volonté, Voltaire and Liéby base a strong claim for Corneille's originality. The pundonor in Castro's comedia loses the struggle to love, and Jimena marries the murderer of her father. Of course they admit that three years have elapsed since the death of the Count, but hold that nevertheless it seems distasteful. The volonté of Chimène holds its own, and finally conquers over love. They point as proof to the ending of Corneille's play, in which the king says that in a year the Cid will return and Chimène must marry him, and Chimène answers — It is for me to obey. This scene has been severely criticized, and Chimène called a fille denaturée because of her willingness to marry the murderer of her father. It is evident that Corneille, because he feared the reaction of his audience to such an ending, postponed the marriage for a year. In this scene itself, however, Voltaire and Liéby claim the superiority of Chimène over the Spanish heroine. Her words, they say, give no

promise of her marriage to Rodrigue, she refuses to the last, and merely replies to the king's orders — *It is for me to obey.* The beauty of the dénouement, says Voltaire, consists in the fact that she does not say — *I will obey,* yet the spectator feels that she will. For this reason, Liéby awards to her character an impression of a higher and purer morality, and a status more poetic and more ideal.

The interview which Corneille introduces between Chimène and Rodrigue is entirely original, and, according to the two above mentioned critics, brings out even more strongly the force of Chimène's love. This ending, then, for them intensifies the struggle between love and volonté and glorifies the victory of the latter.

This question could be debated from either viewpoint — depending upon the reader's interpretation of the final scene. 1 Martinenche mentions the fact that Corneille allows a year to elapse before the marriage of Chimène and Rodrigue, and also says that Corneille was not attempting to make a sermon out of his play; that it sufficed that it should be good, and the emotions and passions represented with sincerity. This latter is the present writer's viewpoint. This discussion brings out again the psychology of the audience. Corneille knew that his tragedy terminating with the marriage of Chimène and Rodrigue would not be accepted, and accordingly altered it. 2

He says in his *Examen* of the answer of Chimène — *Je sais*

bien que le silence passe d'ordinaire pour une marque de consentement; mais quand les rois parlent, c'en est une contradiction — Il est vrai que, dans ce sujet, il faut se contenter de tirer Rodrigue de peril, sans le pousser jusqu'à son mariage avec Chimène. Il est historique, et a plu en son temps; mais bien sûrement il déplairait au nôtre.

Chimène —

—Il faut l'avouer, Sire.

Je vous en ai trop dit pour m'en pouvoir dédire.

Rodrige a des vertus que je ne puis haïr,

Et quand un roi commande, on lui doit obéir.

The king —

Le temps assez souvent a rendu légitime

Ce qui semblait d'abord ne se pouvoir sans crime.

Rodrige t'a gagnée, et tu dois être à lui,

—Cet hymen différé ne rompt point une loi

Qui, sans marquer de temps, lui destine ta foi:

Prends un an, si tu veux, pour essuyer tes larmes.

Rodrige, cependant il faut prendre les armes.

—Mais parmi tes hauts faits sois-lui toujours fidèle;

Reviens-en, s'il se peut, encore plus digne d'elle.

Voltaire cites the following passage as being the core of the entire play, and answering all the criticisms made against the character of Chimène —

Le poursuivre, le perdre, et mourir après lui.

Castro's Jimena —

Y habré de matar muriendo.

Seguiréle hasta vengarme.

Since this passage is found in the *comedia*, concludes Voltaire, the Spanish original contained the true beauties which made the fortune of the French *Cid*.

It is generally conceded that the *Cid* showed the true genius of Corneille. The *Cid* is known to be of Spanish origin — would this not indicate, then, that Corneille's best accomplishments were in this direction. Doumic expresses it well — *C'est en tournant vers l'Espagne que Corneille va trouver les exemples qui donneront l'éveil à son génie*.

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Chapter 111

Corneille's tragedy *Horace* (1640) and Lope de Vega's *comedia El honrado hermano* are both based upon a legend of Roman history, found in chapters twenty three and four of Livy. Whether or not Corneille was indebted to the Spanish version, is a much debated question — the affirmative of which is taken by the present writer. There is little if any direct taking over, but a careful comparison of the two plays shows that Corneille undoubtedly knew that of Lope, and was influenced by it.

The legend is of the war between Rome and Alba, in 640. Because of the many relationships and inter-marriages between the two countries, many of the soldiers are forced to kill those of their own kin, or close friends. The two kings accordingly confer upon a way to end the slaughter, and decide to choose three warriors who shall uphold the honor of each side. The country of the three who conquer shall rule over that of the three vanquished. The king of Rome chooses as defenders of his country the three Horatii, and the king of Alba the three Curiatii. They fight, and two of the Horatii are killed. The third flees — then turns and kills the three Curiatii one by one as they follow him. Horace now returns, the proud victor proclaimed by all, and is met by his sister, who had been the promised wife of one of the Curiatii. She sees on her brother's shoulders the military cloak she had woven for her lover, and weeps bitterly.
Horace, enraged, draws his sword and kills her. He is seized and tried before the king, but because of his great valor and service to Rome, and his father's plea that his daughter was justly slain, is acquitted by the people.

A direct comparison of the French *Horace* and the Spanish *El honrado hermano* can scarcely be made, since they are widely different. As plays they are not in the same category — that of Corneille ranking among his best, and that of Lope holding a very inferior place. There is little doubt as to the superiority of the tragedy, but the question now arises as to the contributions made toward this superiority by the *comedia* of Lope de Vega.

In his introduction to *Horace*, Hémon speaks of this tragedy as marking the point of maturity in the work of Corneille. Here are found strictly observed the three unities, the requirements of which are entirely fulfilled in only a few of Corneille's plays. It was for this reason that Corneille received a great deal of criticism, and as has been said, found it necessary to crowd at times the development of his plots. The criticism has arisen in connection with this play, that there are really two actions — which point will be discussed later. Corneille, in his *Discours de la tragédie*—*Discours des trois unités*, names *Horace* as one of the three which he says measure up to the demands of the three unities. (The other two are *Polyeucte* and *Pompée*). *Horace*, says Hémon,

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although in general less harmonious in construction than the Cid, marks a progress in the development of Corneille's genius. This is true, according to Hémon's theory, because Corneille has rid himself of the faults of his contemporaries — some of which were still shown in the Cid — and only those faults remained which would always be present, since they were inherent in his genius. This genius, shown in its true form by the Cid, and carried on by Horace, was brought to light in the Cid by the inspiration of the Spanish comedia. Would not its continued development along similar lines show parallel inspiration?

In Horace we find the struggle which forms the basis of the tragedies for which Corneille is indebted to Spain. The conception of a powerful love, opposed to an equally powerful sense of duty and honor, produces a mainspring which is unequalled for a tragedy. It was from Spain that the French dramatists — notably Corneille — received this conception of love and honor and the resulting conflict so successful as the core of many tragedies.

This conflict is present only to a certain extent in the history of Livy. We are told by the historian that Horace, returning victorious from the battle with the three Curiatii, was met by his sister — who had been promised to one of the Curiatii. This in itself offers a basis for Corneille' character of Camille — the sister of Horace. But Corneille strengthens the tragic thread and complicates the situation still further by adding Sabine, the wife of
Horace and the sister of the Alban, Curiace. Now turning to El honrado hermano, we find Julia, the sister of Horacio, and the promised wife of Curiaco — as in Corneille; and Flavia, the promised wife of Horacio. Flavia is Roman, and accordingly is not a party to the fierce struggle between love and duty. But her character is original with Lope, and might well have been the source of inspiration for Corneille's Sabine. No such character is included in the legend, and it is only probable that Corneille drew his idea from Lope. Flavia, although Roman, affords a cause for the reluctance of Horacio to go into combat with the three Albans — and also a basis for the development of love in the character of Horacio. The Spanish Horacio is torn by love and duty — although of course a conflict not nearly so strong as that in Corneille — his reluctance to leave Flavia, and his duty to Rome. Corneille strengthens this situation by making Horace's wife, Sabine, an Alban, and the sister of Curiace. Her character, then, is developed and strengthened, and forms a part of the essential spirit of heroism and bravery. But the basis of Sabine's character, the germ of the idea, we feel sure, is in Lope's Flavia.

In this we agree with Martinenche, who says that to his mind, there is no doubt that Sabine originated from the character of Flavia. Corneille states in his Examen that the personnage of Sabine is original. But here again the idea of Martinenche seems only plausible, that the idea for such a

character Corneille owes to Lope. Sabine is still, he says, enough the creation of Corneille to permit his calling her original.

In considering these two characters, Lope's play contains a scene between Julia and Flavia which might have had a slight influence upon Corneille's scene between Camille and Sabine. Sabine reproaches Camille for her grief, saying that one who is merely promised to wed cannot be so deeply affected as one who is married — that to lose a lover is not such a serious thing as to lose a husband.

Sabine — Mais, pour vous, le devoir vous donne dans vos plaintes, Où porter vos souhaits et terminer vos craintes.

The two Spanish women come to words over Julia's grief for Curiacio, and Flavia says to her —

Ni eres Horacia, ni haces lo que debes.

As in the two characters themselves, we find in these two scenes, not a reproduction, but a suggestion for utilization and development.

Camille, when reproached by Sabine, replies —

Vous ne conaissez point ni l'amour ni ses traits; On peut lui résister quand il commence à naître, Mais non pas le bannir quand il s'est rendu maître,

— Il entre avec douceur, mais il règne par force; Et, quand l'âme une fois a goûté son amorce,

Vouloir ne plus aimer, c'est ce qu'elle ne peut,

Puisqu'elle ne peut plus vouloir que ce qu'il veut; 
Ses chaînes sont pour nous aussi fortes que belles.

It appears likely that Corneille knew the response of 

Julia —

Esto es amar, esto es temer, que en esto 
Consiste el fin de mi amorosa vida; 
Temer de un alto estado gran caída, 
Quién duda que ha de estar en razón puesto.

—Un amor, si eres manjar para discretos, 
¿Que confianza quieres que me quede, 
Sí es de necios la propia confianza?

Throughout the two plays, there are examples of 
similarity in ideas, although not in the exact language. 
These ideas are ones which Corneille could scarcely draw 
from the historical source — such as the ones just cited. 
In some of these scenes, we find passages of which the 
language itself approaches similarity, as the following —

The Spanish Horacio, upon hearing of the choice of 
himself and his brothers to fight the three Curiatii, says to Curiacio —

Que ya no eres para mí 
Más de enemigo.

Corneille's Horace says to Curiace —

Albe vous a nommé, je ne vous connais plus.

In both plays, it is the king of Alba who makes the proposal that the three warriors be chosen. Lope presents the scene directly; Corneille has it described to Camille by Curiace. Lope's king—

Mas si verdad decimos unos y otros,
Guerra entre dos vecinos y parientes,
Debe de ser codicia del imperio.

—Busquemos pues alguna industria, o traza,
Por donde sin que tanto se aventure,
Queden señores los de Roma de Alba,
O los de Alba señoreen a Roma,
Y juntos los señores y sujetos,
Vencer podremos nuestros enemigos.

Corneille's king says—

Nous sommes vos voisins, nos filles sont vos femmes,
Et l'hymen nous a joints par tant et tant de noeuds.

—Que si l'ambition de commander aux autres
Fait marcher aujourd'hui vos troupes et les nôtres,
Pourvu qu'à moins de sang nous voulions l'apaiser,

—Nommons des combattants pour la cause commune:
Que chaque peuple aux siens attache sa fortune;
Et, suivant ce que d'eux ordonnera le sort,
Que le parti plus faible obéisse au plus fort;
Ainsi nos deux États ne feront qu'un empire.

The combat is then decided upon by the two kings, and the general terms fixed. They agree —

1. Hagase tres a tres esta batalla.

2. Trois combattront pour tous.

As Horacio leaves to take up his sword with his brothers against the three Albans, his father gives one last word of advice —

---hijos, defiende

Su patria justamente, y en sus ojos

Tiene la gloria que en el fin pretende.

The French father tells his son —

3. Ne pensez qu’aux devoirs que vos pays demandent.

Horacio returns victorious, expecting his sister to join in the rejoicing, but she cries —

4. Sino cubierto de luto

Allorar mi esposo albano.

---No vengo con alegría

Sino con mi llanto triste.

In Corneille, we find her saying —

5. Recevez donc mes pleurs, c'est ce que je lui dois.

Horacio replies, furious —

Ansí vienes a llorar

La muerte de dos hermanos.

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Y el que está vivo a abrazar?

Corneille's Horace —

Et nos deux frères morts dans le malheur des armes
Sont trop payés de sang pour exiger de larmes.

Horacio, having drawn his sword and killed his sister, hears the horrified question —

¿Qué has hecho?

Que venuz-vous de faire?

Other similar scenes might be cited, but in order not to become tedious, the remaining references will not be given. However, one more will be quoted, which is the one example in the plays of practical identity in the language itself. The old father pleads for his son —

Cuatro hijos hoy tenía
Gloria de mis largos años,
No he dado a la patria poco,
Pues que le doy tres de cuatro.

Déjame, Roma, este solo,

Dámeme este solo, romanos.

In the French play, the father's plea —

Rome aujourd'hui m'a vu père de quatre enfants;
Trois en ce même jour sont morts pour sa querelle;
Il m'en reste encore un, conservez-le pour elle.

It is these similarities, then, that form a basis for the theory that Corneille made use of Lope de Vega's play.

The question now arises as to in what ways Corneille has made his *Horace* an improvement over the Spanish *comedia*.

Apparently, Lope de Vega in following the history of his subject, did not pay much attention to the manner in which his drama took form. Of course Lope was not restrained by any rules, and could accordingly develop his play as he wished. But this play is so inferior to the genius of Lope de Vega, that it appears probable that he took little thought as to its development. He has presented the story of a portion of Roman history, merely adding one by one the elements as they appeared in the history. Corneille has stricken out the unimportant incidents, combined and condensed the remainder, and woven a powerful tragedy. He has taken as a foundation the idea of the conflict of love and duty, not so fully developed in the Spanish *Honrado hermano*, and increasing this, has also increased the struggle in the hearts of his characters.

By some critics, the character of Sabine has been judged an exception to Corneille's rule of presenting only those that are necessary to the development of the plot. Lanson speaks of Sabine as one of the personnages who suffer, but who do not take any real part in the action itself—as the Infante of the Cid. Her presence, however, serves to strengthen the bonds between the two families, and to make more difficult the complete triumph of duty.

The father of Horace plays a small part in the Spanish play. Corneille gives him a position of importance and develops his character strongly. It is for this reason that the criticism has been made that the tragedy should have been called *Les Horaces*, rather than *Horace*. In the old father is found the "power behind the throne" — the real cause of Horace's consideration of Rome alone. The elder Horace is Roman through and through — love, family ties, nothing matters when Rome is concerned. His son at first is torn between his love and duty, but the state, represented so well by the father, conquers. The criticism arises here of the unity of action. Voltaire's claim is that there are three separate actions — first, the victory of Horace; second, the death of Camille; and third, the trial of Horace. Liéby decides, however, that the action is sufficiently well unified, and that unity of impression is secured. If Corneille attempted here to observe in its strictest sense the unity of action, the result would not be of much value as a tragedy. The unity of place he has maintained absolutely, as also that of time. But here as elsewhere, try as he might to conform to these three rules, he could not be absolutely successful without injury to his play.

Martinencche agrees that the germ for the tragedy Corneille found in Lope rather than in Livy. He maintains,

however, that the character of Horace is more original and is superior to that of Lope's Horacio. Camille, he says, has no grounds for calling him brutal — he does not yield to blind fury, but as obeying his idea of right, and the voice of his patriotism. However, Lope's Horacio did not kill his sister merely because of his own outraged feelings, but because she raised her voice in protest against his deed of patriotism and the merciless demands of the state.

In this connection, the murder of the sister of Horacio was better prepared for by Lope than by Corneille. This scene was the cause of much protest on the part of the French. Some critics wanted the play to end with the victory of Horace — but of course this would have removed all the second danger to his life. Others even suggested that Camille, desperate with grief, throw herself upon her brother's sword. Corneille as an answer to this, pointed out the history, saying it was too well known to alter in such a manner. A change of this sort would also have had an effect similar to the first mentioned. If Camille killed herself, there would be no grounds for the trial of Horace. But the criticism still remains that the preparation for the murder of Camille was not sufficient. Lièbès decision in regard to this criticism is that the death of Camille was sufficiently prepared for from the standpoint of the characters — but not in the

logical development of the play itself. He then goes on to state that the main fault of Horace is the absence of a hero who is truly sympathetic to the reader, and that neither can Camille fill this place, because she goes too far in her rage against Horace. On the other hand, if Camille did not show her fury toward her brother, how high would be the reader's estimation of Horace? Such an attitude would rob Horace of his only excuse for killing his sister.

Lope makes the character of Julia throughout more masculine and aggressive. The sister of Horace cannot be the person to hold our entire sympathy and admiration, and still furnish a cause for her death. Then why is not a figure preferable which strengthens this cause, and thus lightens the feeling of repulsion toward Horace. Toward the first of the play, Lope's Julia is described —

—Tiene de nieve el pecho

Y de piedra el corazón.

Porque en el decir y hacer,

Tan valeroso es su nombre,

Más tiene costumbres de hombre,

Que blandura de mujer.

We receive the same impression from several of her excursions, which are depicted; and on one occasion she, in company with her slave, dons mens' clothes and goes to the rescue of Flavia — whose father has locked her in at —

home, threatening to force her to enter a convent upon her refusal to marry the senator he has chosen for her. Such a character seems less helpless, and accordingly the crime of her brother not so monstrous. From the standpoint of the development of the action, we are better prepared for the death of Julia by her brother's hand, than we are for that of Corneille's Camille. When Julia learns that her lover is to fight her brother, she takes the latter's sword, and with the help of Flavia — whom she tells that the sword belongs to Curiacio — destroys it. Then she turns to Horacio and says proudly —

Ve, mátale, tigre fiera,
Indio leon, sierpe, harpía,
Que Dios ha de castigar
Esa arrogancia.

Such an action would not be expected to escape punishment by a proud and intensely patriotic character like Horace. Her outburst then against the utter selfishness and unfairness of Rome, following, so to speak, on the heels of her first act of revolt, comes as a climax — rather than, as in Corneille, a somewhat startling action.

In regard to respect for history, both Lope and Corneille appear to have followed their subject almost equally closely. Lope made use of more of the legend, including the first part of the quarrel between Rome and Alba, and the sending of their ambassadors to declare war. But the main
body of the history itself is unchanged except for a few minor points. Lope presents the combat between the brothers, two of the Horatii are killed, and the third kills the three Curiatii. Corneille takes advantage of the words of the legend that two of the Romans fell fatally wounded, the third, surrounded, fled, thinking to divide the attack of the three Curiatii — and that they would follow him each as his wounds permitted. This they did, and he turned and killed them as each one came up. By this means he brings out in stronger relief the character of the elder Horace — who when he hears that his son has fled, rages with shame and grief. Far better die, he cries, than thus bring dishonor to family and country. His cry, when asked what he would have his son do against three men, is famous — Qu'il mourût!

Horacio of the Spanish play brings in the mantle woven by Julia for her lover — of which we are told by the legend. Corneille's hero brings in the swords of the three Curiatii. This is an item of apparent unimportance to the play — but would not the sight of a robe which she herself had woven and given to the one she loved, produce more of an effect upon Camille than the swords of the three brothers?

The death of Camille brings up the question of the psychology of audience, previously discussed in connection with the Cid. As has been said, Horace's murder of his

sister was severely criticized by the French. But Corneille, although he recognized and was affected by such criticisms, did not do away with the scene. Not only would its omission have contradicted the history for which he had such great respect, but it would have detracted immeasurably from the development of his plot. Camille, who represents, according to Liéby and Hémon, love — as opposed to honor personified by Horace and Curiace — could not yield so easily. And this honor, exemplified in Horace, must have more opposition and necessity for a harder struggle. Corneille attempts to tone down somewhat this scene in some editions, by having Camille, frightened by her brother's sword, flee from him behind the scenes, where she receives the fatal blow. He explains in his Examen — Tous veulent que la mort de Camille en gâte la fin, et j'en demeure d'accord; mais je ne sais si tous en savent la raison. On l'attribue communément à ce qu'on voit ce mort sur la scène: ce qui serait plutôt la faute de l'actrice que la mienne, parce que, quand elle voit son frère mettre l'épée à la main, la frayeur, si naturelle au sexe, lui doit faire prendre la fuite, et recevoir le coup derrière le théâtre comme je le marque dans cette impression—— What he then goes on to say, appears to indicate that at heart he revolted against the strict rules and demands of his audience —— D'ailleurs, si c'est une règle de me le point ensanglanter, elle n'est pas du temps d'Aristote, qui nous apprend que

In regard to a proof which Huszar offers for the presence of the influence of the Spanish comedia in Horace, the writer cannot refrain from disagreeing, in spite of the fact that it argues for our side of the question. He cites as a counterpart to the famous Qu'il mourût of the elder Horace, a scene from Calderón's A secreto agravio secreta venganza. But on comparing the two scenes, the circumstances are found to be entirely different. Don Luis, returning from a long absence, finds Leonor, whom he loves, married. Celio, the servant, says pityingly —

---Ta no hay estilo, ni medio,
Que tú debas elegir,

and he answers —

---Morir, Que es el ultimo remedio.

Horace's only thought is that his son defend his country — and his grief and shame at the thought of his son fleeing from the enemy, is more than he can bear. No matter if the odds are great, let him fight, and if he be outnumbered — Qu'il mourût!

This scene does not take a place among those which show Spanish influence upon Horace, but the number of such scenes is large enough to warrant the statement that Corneille was influenced by El honrado hermano.

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Chapter IV

Cinna (1640), Polyeucte (1642) and Pompee (1643-4)

bring us to the center of what we designate as the "Spanish period" of Corneille. The question now arises as to whether or not these three plays show this Spanish influence. The majority of critics appear to think not. The matter is a difficult one to decide definitely, as there is no positive proof on either side.

Corneille quotes in connection with his Examens an extract from Seneca -- Book 1, De Clementia, Chapter 9 -- from which he took the subject for Cinna. Emilie, loved by Cinna, has sworn vengeance upon the emperor, Auguste, for the death of her father. Through Cinna's love for her, Emilie persuades him to join in the conspiracy against Auguste -- although it is with great reluctance that he does so, because of the many favors he has received from the emperor. The conspiracy is discovered, but Auguste, with great kindness, pardons both Emilie and Cinna.

In searching for ideas which have had their inspiration in Spain, the discussion centers upon the intrigue. Does the plot of Cinna contain either or both of the ressorts dramatiques which are so commonly known to have entered French drama through the Spanish comedia? The question is, then, is there a conflict between a strong love and an equally strong duty? The answer to this question, may, according to the present writer's viewpoint, be affirmative. The struggle
to which the heart of Cinna is subjected, is between his love for Emilie and his duty to Auguste. There is also a minor struggle in the heart of Auguste, between his affection for Cinna and Emilie, and his duty as emperor. In both of these conflicts, love emerges victor. It is perhaps for this reason that the tragedy, to some minds, was not such a powerful one as Horace. In fact, the word tragedy, in its true sense, could not be applied.

But the clemency of Auguste, which is the saving factor, supplies, as Liéby puts it, the unity of the play.

On this clemency of Auguste, Martinenche bases a theory of the presence of Spanish influence. Corneille’s Auguste, he says, responds not to his kind impulses, but to his pride, and pardons because he wishes to show that he is master of himself. However, Martinenche likens this conception of Auguste to that of Seneca. It was not in vain, he asserts, that Seneca was born at Cordova. He presents clemency, not as a generous effort of the soul, but as a means of winning over people through the pundonor. The idea that merely because Seneca was born at Cordova he was Spanish, has been previously discussed. Such a thread is far too thin to support the theory of Spanish influence. Seneca's works were Roman, and Seneca's characters were Roman — and not Spanish. We cannot, on such a basis, accept Martinenche's statement that Corneille, with Cinna, falls back into the excesses of the Spanish pundonor, and that the influence of

Spain commences to harm the works of Corneille.

1. Liéby finds a struggle between love and duty in the heart of Emilie — between her duty of hatred and vengeance toward Auguste, and her love for Cinna. In this case, duty conquers love, and Emilie sacrifices her happiness for her vengeance. This vengeance, as Martinenche sees it, is typically Spanish, but as the writer sees it, it is not. The fury with which she pursues this vengeance resembles more the Roman heroine — such as Médée — than the Spanish. We do not know what opinion some of the French critics hold of the Spanish heroine. Their favorite and most frequently used name for her, however, appears to be that of a fury. But this is not true — the Spanish heroine is not a fury who pursues vengeance at any cost. It is absurd to attribute such characteristics to the literature of Spain, and base upon this a deteriorating influence.

2. Huszar cites one passage in regard to which agreement is possible with his idea that the influence of Spain is shown —

\[
\text{Tous les crimes d'Etat qu'on fait pour la couronne,} \\
\text{Le ciel nous absout alors qu'il nous la donne,} \\
\text{Et dans le sacré rang où sa faveur l'a mis,} \\
\text{Le passé devient juste et l'avenir permis.} \\
\text{Qui peut y parvenir ne peut être coupable;} 
\]

Quoi qu'il ait fait ou fasse, il est inviolable;  
Nous lui devons nos biens, nos jours sont en sa main, 
Et jamais on n'a droit sur ceux du souverain.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the Spain of the seventeenth century was its absolute loyalty to the sovereign, and its unswerving confidence in the idea that the king could do no wrong. Such an idea was also present with the Romans — but that of the Spaniards was perhaps more exalted. The elder Horace, who is a Roman character, for example, is he not seen to turn from the decision of the king and appeal to the people? The sovereignty of the Spanish king went absolutely unquestioned, and his divine right was regarded as a grant from Heaven.

What Spanish influence — if any — is present in Cinna, then, would come not through the characters and their ideas of duty and vengeance, but through the intrigue, the mainspring afforded the plot by the essentially Spanish conception of a conflict between love and duty.

The history of Polyeucte was first found in the works of Simeon Metaphraste, published a second time by Surius. Later, the edition of Surius was supplemented by Mosander — and it was here that Corneille procured the subject for his tragedy.

Polyeucte and Nearchus, history tells us, lived in 250, beneath the reign of Decius. Nearchus was a christian,

and Polyeucte a pagan — but with all the qualities worthy of a christian, and a desire to be one. An edict issued by the emperor against the christians, made Nearchus fear for his friendship with Polyeucte, but Polyeucte, having seen a vision of Christ, tore the edict to bits and shattered the pagan idols. Felix, his father-in-law, commissioned by Decius to persecute the christians, endeavored to make him abandon his new beliefs, but in vain. When at last the pleas of Polyeucte's wife, Pauline, left him unmoved, he was condemned and executed.

To the foundation offered by history, Corneille added a dream in which Pauline forsees danger; the return of the former lover of Pauline, Sévère; the baptism of Polyeucte; a sacrifice for the victory of the emperor; the death of Néarque, and the conversion of Félix and Pauline. He also added dignity to the character of Félix and made him governor of Armenia.

These additions contain elements which might show a possible influence of the *comedia*. The return of Sévère strengthens the love element; the baptism of Polyeucte forges more tightly the bonds of duty to his convictions. The added responsibility of Félix is but another barrier overcome by the firm belief of Polyeucte. The conflict between love and duty, spoken of so often in connection with the influence of the *comedia*, does not appear in this play particularly vital. But it is
present. Perhaps it might be said that the idea is to be found in history, but as has been shown, Corneille added to this idea. And the elements which he strengthened and which he added show in general the main tendencies of the Spanish development of plot.

Huszar mentions three of Calderón's comedias which he says undoubtedly influenced Corneille's Polyèuchte. These are El principe constante, El José de las mujeres, and Los dos amantes del cielo. The plot of the last mentioned play is very similar, in fact, to that of Corneille's tragedy, and the second comedía contains several similarities. In his catalogue, however, Hartsenbusch gives the date of these two plays as 1661. Huszar cites as proof of his theory a statement of Hartsenbusch given in his edition of Calderón's plays, that to his mind these two plays were products of Calderón's youth. The question of the exact dates of Calderón's plays is an extensive and much debated one. If these comedias were written before Corneille's tragedy, then they might have been the source of some influence, since the development and ideas are much the same. As to the Príncipe constante, the subject is somewhat the same as that of Polyèuchte, but scarcely enough similarity is shown to afford a basis of origin. The general idea upon which Huszar bases his claim is the great popularity of the subject of the christian martyr in Spanish literature at the time of Corneille's Polyèuchte.

This is true, and although Corneille mentions in his
Examen only the examples of Grotius, Buchanan and Heinsius, the presence of such a subject in a literature which at that period was so profitable to him, would scarcely escape his attention.

1

Martinet here expresses the opinion that Corneille probably conceived the idea of his tragedy in reading some of the Spanish comedias. In Liéby we find set forth a slight conflict in the heart of Pauline between her old love for Sévère and her love for Polyaute, which has grown out of her conception of duty. Of these two emotions, he says, the second grows until it finally excludes entirely the other, and reigns supreme. He then goes on to say that among the reasons for this evolution, the one which is of first importance is the idea of duty. The development of this conflict — though slight — is in a situation created by Corneille, and would accordingly serve to show the tendency of Corneille's ideas.

For Pompeée, Corneille, as he tells us in his Examen, drew his subject from Lucan's Pharsalia. Pompeée, coming with his wife, Cornélie, to Egypt — which is ruled by Ptolomée and his sister Cléopâtre — is met and killed by conspirators. This deed Ptolomée and his accomplices expect to be approved by César, but César on his arrival is indignant and takes up the cause of the widow of Pompeée. The conspirators, finding César against them, lay plans to take his life, but Cornélie discovers and warns César of these
plans. The conspirators are accordingly punished by death, and Cléopâtre receives the throne of Egypt.

Corneille, says Hémon, combines two very distinct things — the death of Pompée and the war of Alexandria. César, then, does not avenge himself, but Pompée, he continues. This serves to strengthen the character of César, although it alters somewhat the history. But Corneille was interested above all in developing the greatness of his hero, and this he succeeded in doing.

The same theory of the Spanish vengeance inculcated in Corneille's heroines is again offered for Cornélie. Far more does Cornélie resemble, to our mind, the Roman character, such as Médée, than the Spanish. Here we have again the undying hatred and determined vengeance in spite of all obstacles. Such an oath as Cornélie makes to the ashes of Pompée —

_Je jure donc par vous, o pitoyable reste —_

_—Par vous, qui seul ici pouvez me soulever._

_De n'éteindre jamais l'ardeur de le venger._

does not fit all the Spanish heroine. Nor do the words Cornélie addresses to César, after he has punished the murderers of Pompée —

_—j'obéis au vainqueur;
Maïs ne présume pas toucher par là mon coeur._

_La perte que j'ai faite est trop irréparable;_

_La source de ma haine est trop inépuisable:_

---

A l'égal de mes jours je la ferai durer;

Je veux vivre avec elle, avec elle expirer.

The love of César and Cléopâtre offered to Corneille a ressort dramatique of which he did not make use. Apparently he was wholly occupied in the strengthening and ennobling of the souls of his main characters. But Corneille did take advantage of this love, and to a certain extent used it in the development of his play. It is because of his love for Cléopâtre that César is so entirely magnanimous. Love softens his heart and broadens his character. In several instances, the prevalence of this love is shown. When Cornélie, who has come to demand vengeance for Pompée, is announced, he says —

Qu'elle entre. Ah! l'importune et fâcheuse nouvelle!
Qu'à mon impatience elle semble cruelle!
O ciel! et ne pourrai-je enfin à mon amour
Donner en liberté ce qui reste du jour?

Cornélie says of César —

Pour grand qu'en soit le prix, son péril en rabat;
Cette ombre qui la couvre en affaiblit l'éclat;
L'amour même s'y mêle, et la force à combattre:
Quand il venge Pompée, il défend Cléopâtre.

Corneille has added this love element. It is a great love and thoroughly unselfish. Cléopâtre loves César, yet she will not countenance the murder of his rival, and tries to prevent her brother and the conspirators from

carrying out their plan. Charmion says, wonderingly —

Ainsi donc de César l'amante et l'ennemie ---

and Cléopâtre replies —

Je lui garde ma flamme exempte d'infamie,

Un coeur digne de lui.

There is no doubt a struggle in Cléopâtre's heart between her idea of right and her desire to see the rival of César disposed of. But her better self triumphs, as it does later when she intercedes, though vainly, for the conspirators whom she hates. It would seem only natural also that a struggle take place with César, before he finally takes up the cause of his rival and punishes those who rid him of this rival.

Perhaps it would be going too far to say that this love as embodied here is typically Spanish and shows Spanish influence. But as we have seen, such a conception of love was not inherent in the French theater before the period of the Spanish influence, but was brought in by the Spanish comedia. It is in the plays of Corneille which are of known Spanish origin that this conception is at its best. The intrigue of Pompee is not as strong as that of the other plays studied, and does not present the same fierce conflict between love and duty. However, the germs of such a conflict are undeniably present, and are merely not developed. The writer makes no attempt to establish or to claim a direct connection between Pompee and

the Spanish comedia. But the conclusion is that the comedia, not in its characters or its scenes, but in its broader and more general ideas, had some influence here upon Corneille.

Cinna, Polyeucte and Pompee, as we have said, are in the very heart of the period during which the comedia of Spain exerted its influence over Corneille. It is only possible that these three plays should escape this influence. However, preceded as they were by the Cid and Horace, and followed by the Menteur and La Suite du Menteur, this possibility lessens. Corneille turned elsewhere than to Spain for the subjects of these three plays. But, to repeat, the general ideas, and the broader and more vital conceptions of the Spanish comedia still held their place in a corner of his mind, and let themselves be felt at times throughout the three plays.
Chapter V

With Le Menteur (1643-4) and La Suite du Menteur (1644-5), we enter a realm entirely different from the one through which we have just passed. It was in his tragedies that Corneille was most successful and it is as a tragedian that he is famous. But Le Menteur, although in an entirely different vein, by no means failed of success. Corneille made his début with comedies — which did not place among his plays of high rank. Le Menteur, however, marks a date in the history of the French stage. Just as Le Cid was the first real tragedy to be produced in France, Le Menteur was the first real French comedy.

Corneille utilized for his first great tragedy, as we have seen, a Spanish comedia, and for his first great comedy he found the source also in a Spanish comedia. This was the work of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón — La verdad sospechosa.

Don García, returning to Madrid from Salamanca, falls in love with Jacinta — whose name he is told is Lucrecia. García is not the most truthful of young men. His father, Don Beltrán, wishes him to marry Jacinta, but thinking Lucrecia the one he loves, García refuses. He tells his father that he is married, and relates the extremely exaggerated circumstances. He becomes confused, however, in his recital, as to names — Don Beltrán's suspicions are aroused and he reproaches García bitterly. These suspicions verified,
García soon finds that no one believes him, even when he tells the truth — which is seldom. Since García addresses his compliments to Jacinta, meanwhile talking continually of Lucrecia, the two suspect duplicity. They hold a conversation with him at night from their balcony, in which he swears eternal faithfulness to Lucrecia, and Jacinta declares she will have nothing more to do with him. The identity of the two girls is now made clear to García — since Don Beltrán has finally consented to ask for him the hand of Lucrecia. García declares it is Jacinta he loves, but she gives her hand to another lover, and the two irate fathers leave no doubt in García's mind as to the necessity of his taking the hand of Lucrecia.

The first three acts of the Spanish comedia and Corneille's comedy are, with the exception of a few minor details, practically the same. The last two acts, however, Corneille has changed in order to modify the ending. He has Dorante — the Spanish García — talk to the two girls and discover his mistake as to their identity, whereupon he asks for the hand of Lucrecia(Lucrecia), declaring she is the one he has loved all the time.

There are many instances throughout the play of direct taking over from the Spanish play, of the language itself. The following are examples:

García says to Jacinta ——
más de un año

Porque ocasión me ha faltado
De deciros lo que siento—
Y para amaros, me dad licencia.

and Jacinta replies —-

Para querer
No pienso que ha menester
Licencia, la voluntad.

Dorante, of Corneille's play, says to Clarice —-

—-depuis un an entier —-

Et je n'ai pu trouver que cette occasion
A vous entretenir de mon affection.
Cependant accordez à mes voeux innocents
La licence d'aimer des charmés si puissants.

and Clarice replies —-

Un coeur qui veut aimer, et qui sait comme on aime,
N'en demande jamais licence qu'à soi-même.

Jacinta's former lover, Juan, is extremely jealous
of García, and goes to Jacinta's house to reproach her for her
inconstancy —-

¿De noche estás con el hijo,
Y con el padre de día?
—Voíme; que tu tío sale.

Jacinta detains him —-

No sale. Escucha, que fío
Satisfacerte.

Don Juan ——

Es en vano,

Si aquí no me das la mano.

and Jacinta's quick reply —— 1

¿La mano? Sale mi tío.

We find the French Alcippe reproaching Clarice —

Tu passes, infidèle,

La nuit avec le fils, le jour avec le père!

---Ton père va à descendre---

She detains him —

Non, il ne descend point — et j'aurai tout loisir

De vous désabuser.

but he says haughtily —

Je ne t'écoute point, à moins que m'épouser —

---M'en donner ta parole, et deux baisers pour gage—

to which she replies hastily —

Je n'ai pas le loisir, mon père va descendre.

García's father, having been told of his marriage —

Que determino que vais

Vos en persona, a traer

Vuestra esposa, que es razón;

Porque pudiendo traella

Vos mismo, enviar por ella

Fuera poca estimación.

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The father of Dorante —

Que pour me l'amener tu t'en vas en personne.
Car enfin il le faut, et le devoir l'ordonne:
N'envoyer qu'un valet sentirait son mépris.

It is the development of the characters, says Liéby, that raises Le Menteur above Corneille's former comedies. This development, particularly of Dorante, Liéby appears to attribute to Corneille as original. The originality of Corneille's play, he says, consists in the verve du style comique, the tone so truly Corneilleian of the scene in which the father expresses his indignation at the lies told by his son. Just how this could be called original is not quite clear, since the scene in both Alarcon's and Corneille's comedies is practically identical. The following is a portion of the scene —

Beltrán — ¿Sois caballero?
García — Tengome por hijo vuestro.
Beltrán — ¿Y basta ser hijo mío
Para ser vos caballero?
García — Yo pienso, señor, que sí.
Beltrán — ¿Quién dio principio a las casas
Nobles? Los ilustres hechos
De sus primeros autores.
Sin mirar sus nacimientos,
Hazasnas de hombres humildes

Honraron sus herederos.
---Pues si honor puede ganar
Quien nació sin él; ¡no es cierto
Que, por el contrario, puede
Quien con él nació, perdello?
---Luego si vos
Obrais afrentosos hechos,
Aunque seas hijo mío,
Dejais de ser caballero.

The scene in Corneille——

Geronte — Étes-vous gentilhomme?
Dorante — Étant sorti de vous, la chose est peu douteuse.
Geronte — Croyez-vous qu'il suffit d'être sorti de moi?
Dorante — Avec toute la France sisiement je le croi.
Geronte — D'où ce titre d'honneur a tiré sa naissance,
Et que la vertu seule a mis en ce haut rang
Ceux qui l'ont jusqu'à moi fait passer dans leur sang?
---Où le sang a marqué, si la vertu l'acquiert,
Où le sang l'a donné, le vice aussi le perd.
Ce qui naît d'un moyen périr per son contraire:
Tout ce que l'un a fait, l'autre le peut défaire;
Et, dans la lâcheté du vice où je te voi,
Tu n'es plus gentilhomme, étant sorti de moi.

It can easily be seen from this that one scene is but
a replica of the other. The verve, the style, the spontaneity——

all are present in Alarcón. How then can this constitute originality on the part of Corneille? Alarcón's comedia is sparkling with cleverness and bright with spontaneity, and herein lies its greatest charm. This charm is not, to the present writer's mind, increased by Corneille. His comedy contains no more life, no more sparkle, no more zest than does its original. The question may even be asked — does it contain as much? Compare, for instance, the two replies of the son to the irate father who demands whether or not he is a gentleman —

Alarcón's hero replies — Tengo por hijo vuestro, and Corneille's answer — Étant sorti de vous, la chose est peu douteuse.

Which of the two contains the most force, the most vigor? In answering this question, we differ decidedly with M. Liebey. Pulsing through the veins of the Spanish García is a more red-blooded, unconquerable spirit, an unquenchable fire of impulse — which somehow we feel to be, in Corneille's Dorante, of a paler hue. Here again is to be found, as in the Cid, a subdued atmosphere. The hero is basically the same, but his attributes are modified to suit his surroundings. The vigorous, impulsive Spanish ideal becomes the more polished, smooth and cultured French gentleman of the seventeenth century. The true force, the true spirit, is not increased, but is toned down and diminished. This atmosphere, so essential to the Cid, is not so necessary
in *Le Menteur*. It forms a background for the Cid, an inherent element of his character, without which the picture is not complete. There is here no such far-reaching need for a like atmosphere, for it does not form an element of the character of the comedy. It shows itself, however, in the style and general tone, and it is in this that Alarcón's *comedia* seems superior.

Dorante, as has been said, is basically the same character in both plays. Corneille's Dorante, says Liéby, lies often without necessity, but never without reason. For that matter, neither does the García of Alarcón. The same lies that are told by one are told by the other, and under the same circumstances. Therefore the grounds for Liéby's claim for originality — based on the statement that this vivacity of invention would not be admirable had Dorante had time to prepare his lies — do not seem logical. Alarcón's García had no time in which to fabricate his excuses, and he was brought face to face with identically the same situations as Corneille's Dorante. The credit, then, for what vivacity is contained here, is due to Alarcón, not Corneille.

Martinenche finds some passages which he says recall the Cid, and show the true Corneille. Here, then, as elsewhere, Corneille shows himself to be at his best when inspired by Spanish sources. He is unquestionably

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superior as a tragedian, but when working in the sphere of the comic, he draws also his best ideas from Spain.

Le Menteur resolves itself into an adaptation of La verdad sospechosa. So closely is it taken over that it might be called a translation, were it not for the dénouement. Now comes the question as to the reason for the change which Corneille made in the dénouement. Liéby's theory is that Corneille liked so well the character of Dorante, that he did not wish to inflict upon him the punishment of a forced marriage. We find this idea criticized by others, who say that in thus removing the punishment, the entire moral of the play is destroyed. Apparently, however, the moral was not uppermost in Corneille's mind. The play appealed to him for its vivacity and its dramatic possibilities. Had the moral to him appeared of the most importance, he very likely would have emphasized it in some other way. In connection with the question of the ending, the theory mentioned previously of the psychology of the audience appears plausible. An ending such as that of Alarcón's play, to Corneille's audience would no doubt have been too violent, and such a forced marriage rather crude and unpleasing. Apparently Corneille recognized this difference in tastes, for he says in his Examen — Pour moi, j'ai trouvé cette manière de finir un peu dure, et cru qu'un mariage moins violenté serait plus au goûts de notre auditoire. 1

La Suite du Menteur is taken from Lope de Vega's Amar sin saber a quién. Don Juan has come upon Don Fernando and Don Pedro engaged in a duel. He descends from his mule to investigate, and Fernando springs on the mule and flees—leaving his opponent, Pedro, dead. Juan is arrested and imprisoned for the murder of Pedro. Fernando is suspected also and arrested, and Juan recognizes him, but declares that he is not the murderer. Fernando, very grateful, promises to aid him in gaining his freedom. Meanwhile, he has asked his sister, Leonarda, to do all she can for Juan—which results in many visits to the prison and an immediate and violent love affair between the two, and also between their two servants, Inés and Limón. Juan is freed through the efforts of Don Luis, and goes to the home of Leonarda. But when he finds she is loved by Luis, he leaves. Leonarda, however, declares to Luis her love for Juan, and he is brought back by Luis.

Corneille introduced a number of changes, the most of them minor. Various scenes and details are omitted or altered, but the main body of the play remains the same. We have here, as in Le Menteur, an adaptation. This fact is so well known and recognized, that it is scarcely necessary to give proofs of the great similarity. However, a few examples will serve to strengthen the assertion:

The letter of Leonarda to Juan—

Al ruido de la gente que os llevaba preso, me
puse a la ventana, y os vi galán, forastero, y de tan
gallardo talle, que me llevasteis los ojos más presos
que a vos los alguaciles. Dícnme que lo quieren estar
mientras vos lo estéis: servíos de ellos y de estos
doscientos escudos; que en la cárcel que estamos los
dos, vos los habréis menester, y a mí me quedan muchos.

Corneille's Mélisse writes to Dorante --

Au bruit du monde qui vous conduisait
prisonnier, j'ai mis les yeux à la fenêtre, et vous
ai trouvé de si bonne mine, que mon cœur est allé dans
la même prison que vous, et n'en veut point sortir tant
que vous y serez --- Cependant obligez-moi de vous servir
de ces cent pistoles que je vous envoie; vous en pouvez
avoir besoin en l'état où vous êtes, et il m'en demeure
assez d'autres à votre service.

Juan attempts to retain the photograph of Leonarda --

Dejádmele; que yo haré

Que le aderece un platero

Que está aquí preso en la cárcel.

The French Dorante --

Laisse-moi ce souci;

Nous avons un orfèvre arrêté pour ses dettes

Qui saura tout remettre au point que tu souhaites.

1. Lope's Amar sin saber a quién, Buchanan and Franzen-Swidelius.
Inés, the servant of Leonardo, brings to the prison her mistress' letter and the purse. She asks Limón if she shall give Juan the purse.

1

Limón — Tengo poder, aunque sea el tesoro veneciano.

Corneille's Cliton says to Lyse —

Donne, j'ai tout pouvoir,

Quand même ce serait le trésor de Venise.

The failure of La Étite du Menteur, following Le Menteur, is rather puzzling. It appears to be generally conceded that the plot is much more lively and interesting and contains better dramatic possibilities than that of Le Menteur. Corneille in his Examen says that it is better written. In what ways, then, did Corneille fail to accomplish what he accomplished at least in part in Le Menteur?

The root of the entire trouble appears to be found in the fact that he tried to make a sequel of the play and change the character of Dorante to fit. In attempting to crowd Lope's play into the measurements of a sequel to his former play, the alterations were so obvious as to detract from the effectiveness. Moreover, he was forced to make certain additions, which were equally unhappy. So we have neither a good adaptation nor an original play.

Why then did Corneille attempt to continue the character of Dorante in his second comedy? This question might have several answers. One of the most commonly

accepted is that Corneille had quite a fondness for the character of Dorante, which same idea is used as a reason for the dénouement of Le Menteur. According to this theory, then, Corneille disliked leaving a poor impression of Dorante, and sought to raise this opinion by making him an admirable character. This might serve to advance our opinion of Dorante — were it not for his desertion of Lucrèce on their wedding day, which he so coolly relates to Cliton in the first act. And in spite of his generosity in saving Cléandre from prison, and his refusal to remain when he finds that Luis, who has freed him, loves Mélisse, we cannot entirely rid ourselves of this first impression. Then too, such a swift change of character is scarcely natural, and the Dorante of Le Menteur lowers our estimation of the Dorante of La Suite.

Perhaps the many criticisms which Corneille received because, in changing the dénouement of Le Menteur he omitted the moral, led him to an attempt to justify himself, and show that the moral was sufficiently impressed upon Dorante to cause his character to change. We have here a possibility which arises once more from our theory of the psychology of audience. The comedia of Lope de Vega opens with the duel between Don Fernando and Don Pedro, which is witnessed by Juan. Corneille could not possibly have reproduced such a scene. As in previous cases, he was forced to incorporate the action into a recital. Forced to
do this, then, why not combine the one who was to describe this scene with the Dorante with whom he still had a desire to deal?

Corneille in his _Épitre_ makes a protest against the demands of his audience. He speaks of his idea that the object of art is to divert, but of his estimation also for those who combine pleasure with utility. Mais je dénie qu'ils faillent contre les règles, lorsqu'ils ne l'y mêlent pas, et les blâme seulement de ne s'être pas proposé un object assez digne d'eux — mais pourvu qu'ils aient trouvé le moyen de plaire, ils sont quittes envers leur art; et s'ils pèchent, ce n'est pas contre lui, c'est contre les bonnes moeurs et contre leur auditoire.

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We are now at the close of the period which we have assigned to the influence of Spain on Corneille. This period contains his masterpieces of tragedy and comedy. As Voltaire puts it — Il faut avouer que nous devons à L'Espagne la première tragédie et la première comédie de caractère qui aient illustré la France —— Ainsi Corneille a réformé la scène tragique et la scène comique par d'heureuses imitations.

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Chapter VI

The supposition has been made that the Spanish comedia still exerted its influence over Corneille in the four plays which made their appearance between that of La Suite du Menteur and Don Sanche d'Aragon. This supposition has as its main pillar of support the fact that Corneille in his Examen of Don Sanche d'Aragon speaks of his indebtedness to Spanish authors. This would offer grounds perhaps for a contention that Corneille did not lose sight of the Spanish comedia until after Don Sanche. Huszar even goes so far as to extend this indebtedness to the entirety of Corneille's plays. Such a theory, however, has no foundation. In regard to the first mentioned theory of the presence of Spanish influence between the years 1645 and 1650, we find here again the foundation insufficient. If this period were closed by a play in which Corneille made strong use of the comedia, either in adaptational form or in the resulting style or intrigue, the claim might be strengthened. But none of this is apparent in Don Sanche d'Aragon, and the only indebtedness which Corneille acknowledges is for the pomp of the first act, drawn from Lope de Vega's comedia - El palacio confuso; and the discovery of the identity of characters which terminates the fifth act, taken from one of the novels about Don Pelayo. Here again we find neither the traits of character nor the strong elements for the conflict of love and duty, which are the essentials
drawn by Corneille from the Spanish comedia.

In Rodogune (1645) the vengeful Roman heroine as typified earlier in Médée makes her appearance. Her deadly hatred directed against Rodogune because of her husband's love for the latter, Cléopâtre is ready to go to any lengths to satisfy this hatred. Her first deed is to kill her husband. Her two sons are rivals for the hand of Rodogune — she slays one, and feigning to consent to the marriage of the other with Rodogune, she prepares a poisoned drink for the bride and bridegroom. Her sentiments are expressed —

---Je hais, je règne encore ---

---De quel malheur suis-je encore capable?

Leur amour m'offensait, leur amitié m'accable,
Et contre mes fureurs je trouve en mes deux fils
Deux enfants révoltés et deux rivaux unis.
Allons chercher les temps d'immoler mes victimes,
Et de me rendre heureuse à force de grands crimes.

How then the claim could possibly be made of the similarity of such a spirit to that of the heroine or hero of the Spanish comedia, is incomprehensible. Huszar makes just such a claim, in this case attempting to identify the spirit by which Cléopâtre is animated with that of Gutierre in Calderón's El médico de su honra, and of Don Juan in

Calderón's *A secreto agravio, secreto venganza*. These two Spaniards avenge their honor, it is true, but to no such extent. The Spanish *pundonor* does not commonly include among its victims innocent persons, and it is a satisfaction of honor, not of personal hatred. On this basis also is Martinenche's contention founded.

Corneille had plenty of material from which to draw his subject. He quotes in his *Examen* an extract from the Roman historian Appian, from the latter part of whose account of the *Wars of Syria* he takes his story. There also appeared about the same time a play quite similar written by Gilbert. The authorship of the original is disputed by some, but Voltaire accords it to Gilbert.

The mainspring of the plot of *Rodogune* is neither love nor duty. It is vengeance — hatred pure and simple. This idea is not Spanish, the elements of love and duty inherent in the *comedia* are not present, the subject is avowedly Roman — what then could there be to show the influence of Spain?

Critics appear to be all of one accord in regard to the subject of *Théodore* (1646). No drama could ever hope to succeed when presenting to the eyes of the French public a heroine condemned to prostitution. No matter how skillfully handled, no matter what amount of well developed scenes and touches of art — the subject in itself would

spell the doom of such a play. And this is just what resulted with Théodore.

Some critics go so far as to condemn this play absolutely and irrevocably. Voltaire, for example, asks why some one could not be found to prevent the author of Cinna from dishonoring his talents by the shameful choice of such a subject, and by an execution as poor as the subject itself. To his mind the play does not even deserve comment — it sins by indecency of subject, by its execution, its coldness, its style. He denounces the language here used in speaking of love as insipid, bourgeois, disgusting. Thus, he says, does Corneille speak of love when not guided by Castro — in the style of his comedies and of the novels of his time.

Others do not carry their adverse criticism so far, although all are unanimous in their denunciation of the subject. Martinenehe speaks of the lack of profoundly human emotions. Théodore, he says, excites no admiration; she knows neither human nor divine love — nothing but the coldest pride. It is this lack which Rémond conceives as the basic cause of the impossibility of admiring the play in spite of its subject. Théodore is too utterly cold and immovable, her character has no human side. He speaks also of the conception of love expressed, even calling it laughable.

Now comes the assertion of Martinenehe that

Theodore is Spanish. The subject of which it treats, he says, would appear only natural in Spain. Lope and Tirso de Molina, he continues, never hesitated to combine upon the stage religion with the most coarse and brutal pleasantries — and such was the familiarity of the Spanish devotion, that it was never shocked by such contrasts. According to M. Martinenche, the Spanish race was indeed barbaric — evidently thought of as half civilized. It is probably from such opinions as this of the Spanish people that arose the various more or less wild ideas of the typical brutality and dominating fierceness of the hero or heroine of the Spanish comedia. Such ideas cannot be too severely criticized. Nothing is so unfair to a literature or to a people as such generalized impressions which are repeated and added to until they are accepted as facts. Calderón's Los dos amantes del cielo to which Martinenche attributes part credit for Corneille's play, is no more typical of Spanish literature than is Theodore of French literature. Even there be a similarity between the two as to subject, this would not make Theodore by any means Spanish. Such a similarity appears to be rather more exaggerated than is warranted, however. Corneille took his subject from Les Vierges of St. Ambrose. Of course there is always a possibility, and in reading Calderón's comedia, Corneille might have been influenced — according to Martinenche. But such a possibility is in this case too slight to form a basis
for argument.

The many complications and the mixture of all kinds of sentiments of which Martinenche also speaks, is not an essential aspect of the Spanish theater. Such things are merely incidental, and resulted only from the lack of any rules or regulations, such as bound the French dramatists. It is scarcely feasible that such a writer as Corneille should overlook the important and vital aspects of the drama of Spain, and, while endeavoring to accede to the demands of the three unities, let himself be influenced only by these minor points which were in direct opposition to the principles laid down in France.

We have spoken of the criticisms made of the conception of love evinced in Théodore. Martinenche makes this same criticism — yet he calls this play Spanish. Love was one of the motifs which the French stage acquired from the Spanish stage, and it is one of the essentials of the comedia. In all of the plays for which Corneille has received inspiration from Spain, it plays an important part. We find, if not always the struggle between love and duty, at least the elements. The element of love is there — always. And it is the love of the Spanish conception. No such element is found in Théodore — nothing but a cold and inhuman character. The very essentials of the Spanish comedia are utterly lacking, and with them any possible foundation for Spanish influence.
The main idea of Héraclius (1647) has been found to be similar to that of Calderón's *En esta vida todo es verdad y todo mentira.* The dispute as to whether or not Corneille copied from Calderón, or Calderón from Corneille, has waxed hot. The dates of Calderón's plays are so uncertain as to make any definite assertion almost impossible. Hartzenbusch gives the date as 1623. If this is true, it presents a possibility for discussion. Hémon gives his authority for the year 1664. If this is true, it of course excludes all question of copying or influence.

Both dramatists took their subject from history. The main idea upon which the action hinges is the uncertainty of Phocas as to the identity of the emperor's son, whom he has sworn to kill. In his absence, his own son has been substituted and has grown up as the son of the emperor. Phocas has just been told of this, and does not dare to strike for fear of killing his own son. In the one scene in which Phocas hesitates, endeavoring to discover which of the two is his and which the emperor's son, we find similarity. These words of Phocas, says Martinenche, could result only from an imitation. All the rest of the play has no connection whatsoever with that of Calderón. Which of the two, asks Martinenche, inspired the other? He quotes Vigué who gives the date of Calderón's

4. Vol. 5, Regnier Ed.
play as 1664. He also speaks of a volume of Calderón found with the date of 1637 — which volume he says might have contained *En esta vida*.

One theory appears to be as well sustained as another, and the question of dates remains unsettled. Granting the date of Calderón's play to be prior to that of Corneille's, the problem is then — did Corneille copy, and if so, to what extent. Corneille states in his *Avis au lecteur* that he changed the events and characters of his historical subject in order to accommodate his play. If Corneille were influenced greatly by Calderón, such changes would follow the trend of Calderón's ideas. But this is not the case. The two plays appear to be entirely different, aside from this one situation previously mentioned. Calderón's *comedia*, filled with weird happenings, magic and mystery, carries the reader to an entirely different world than does Corneille's rather cold and complicated tragedy. There are no scenes, no elements of the latter which remind us of the former. The conclusion is, then, not that Corneille copied Calderón's play, but that he tried to improve upon their common subject. Supposing the priority of the Spanish to the French version, Corneille did not apparently receive much inspiration from the former.

The treatment of the subject by Calderón may of itself have offered an incentive to Corneille. Such
a treatment would not appeal at all to the tastes of the French tragedian, and would to all appearances have an entirely opposite effect from that supposed by Martinencch. He points to the complication of the intrigue as comprising the merit of the play, and as showing the influence of En esta vida. This is another generality like that of the mixture of all kinds of elements, previously commented on. Corneille's taste for the extraordinary so often spoken of -- and conceded -- did not lead him to any such lengths as to copy only the less valuable features of a literature. Were there some other aspect present to show the influence of the more important side, then the matter of the intrigue might have some weight. But consider the plays known to contain Spanish influence -- the Cid, for example, in which this influence is apparent and undisputed. Do we find here the bizarre and the fantastic, the complicated intrigue? We do not. What we do find of importance is the struggle between two great passions, strength of character and clearness of style. One of Corneille's main alterations, when drawing from Spanish sources, was to cut out all unnecessary situations and eliminate all superfluous elements. His first plays, previous to the Cid, show complicated intrigue, and they cannot be accused of being Spanish. Such a trait, then, can scarcely be labeled as proving Spanish influence. From all appearances, the word of Corneille, given in his Examen, can be accepted -- that Héraclius is an original.
Andromède (1650), although called a tragedy, is rather a sort of libretto — much on the style of the 1 Italian musical dramas. Hémon speaks of the influence of Catherine de Médicis in promulgating the taste for these Italian fêtes. The play deals with the mythological legend of the necessity of sacrificing a fair young maiden to the terrible beast sent by Neptune to devour the Ethiopians, of the falling of the lot to Andromède and her rescue at the last moment by Perseus, mounted on his winged horse.

The influence of Italy is plainly to be seen in this play — but the influence of Spain is most conspicuously missing. Martinenche still clings to the idea that the variety of genres, verses and scenes of the Spanish comédia offers examples for Corneille to follow. There is present in this play absolutely no evidence of even a leaning toward Spanish subjects or ideas. Furthermore, the elements of essentiality of the comédia are lacking. There is no element of love (excepting that of Andromède's mother), no element of honor, nothing which attempts to touch the heart. It is simply a spectacle, conceived according to Italian taste, which is intended to appeal only to the eyes of the spectator. Corneille himself in his Argument classifies it as such —

Souffrez que la beauté de la représentation supplée au

The plays which came from Spain through Corneille did not present themselves merely to the eyes. They appealed to the heart and the emotions and dealt with great passions and conflicts. This was their chief raison d'être, and herein lay their value for imitation or reproduction, and their appeal to Corneille.

The character of the Spanish influence which appears in Don Sanche d'Aragon (1650) has been spoken of previously. Corneille in his Epître classifies this play as a comedy — Don Sanche est une véritable comédie, quoique tous les acteurs soient ou rois ou grands d'Espagne, puisqu'on n'y voit naître aucun péril par qui nous puissions être portés à la pitié ou à la crainte. Notre aventurier Carlos n'y court aucune risque. He speaks of his return to this genre because of the taste of his public for change. After the success of Le Menteur and the failure of La Suite, Corneille's desire was very probably to show his ability to produce another success. He turned, very naturally, to Spain for aid, since it was there that this genre was best developed. This time he did not limit himself to the comedia, but went also to the picaresque novel.

2. Id. p. 559.
The first act was inspired by *El palacio confuso*, the authorship of which is claimed for both Lope de Vega and Mira de Mesa; and the dénouement by one of the novels of Don Pelayo.

Martinenche regards Corneille's hero as Spanish also. The characters, he says, still speak of love and honor, but these two elements lack the humanity and the force which gave to the *Cid* its originality. Apparently then, this is where Corneille failed. In attempting to be original he departed too far from his model, and the result was not what he had intended. He tried to build a French comedy on a Spanish foundation, and his characters did not ring true. They lack in real feeling, true depth and strength — they are too artificial. They are neither French nor Spanish. The element of love is present, but it is not love as we find it in the true Spanish *comedia* nor in Corneille's plays which were born of the *comedia*. Martinenche makes the statement — *Si Corneille n'évite guère le romanesque espagnol, il ne se laisse point entraîner par ses folies, et, dans le cadre qu'il a emprunté, il glisse souvent des peintures qui sont bien à lui*. With this statement we are inclined to disagree. Corneille borrowed the frame — but he did not make his picture to fit, and herein lies the difficulty. Part of his coloring he took from Spain, but his tones were not true. His background of love and honor is

2. *Id.*, p. 287.
entirely overshadowed by the bright splotches of his coloring.

The Spanish influence makes its last appearance in Don Sanche d'Aragon. We feel sure that it made its appearance here because Corneille recognized what the *comedia* had furnished him. How could Voltaire ask such a question —

Le succès dépend presque toujours du sujet. Pourquoi Corneille choisit-il un roman espagnol, une comédie espagnole, pour son modèle, au lieu de choisir dans l'histoire romaine et dans la fable grecque? The answer to this question is apparent.

Consider Corneille's masterpieces — how many of them draw from Spanish sources, and how many from Greek and Roman? Where did Corneille obtain the ideas, the important elements which constituted the mainsprings of his greatest work? From Spain. And it is for this reason, and because he was cognizant of this fact, that Corneille turned once more to such sources. That this attempt did not meet with the same success as the others has been discussed, and assigned to the fact that in attempting originality, he did not use his foundation in the right way. The conclusion is then, that it was in the line of adaptation and reproduction of the Spanish *comedia* that Corneille's best efforts lay.

The division of his plays into two periods, which Corneille himself made, has been spoken of previously in connection with the first appearance of Spanish influence.

Corneille placed his first eight plays — including Médée and l'Illusion Comique in the first period; and in the second — Le Cid, Horace, Cinna, Polyeucte, Pompee, Le Menteur and La Suite du Menteur. Those of the second period he classifies as superior. The opinion of Emile Faguet on these two periods, which he divides in the same manner, upholds our theory. In the first period — 1629 - 36 — he says, Corneille sought for bizarre subjects, infinitely complicated intrigues, strange situations or frightful deeds. In the second and most glorious period — 1636 - 45 — he was uplifted more and more by emotions and the creation of true and simple grandeur — passing from the heroism of filial devotion, to the heroism of patriotism, the heroism of victory over self, to the highest heroism of religious belief. It is this second period, in which Corneille is at his best, which contains the plays of Spanish origin and inspiration. Very evidently, then, the plays just discussed do not belong to this period.

The influence of Spanish literature was first introduced into the French drama of the seventeenth century by Hardy, and was continued in the works of Pierre Corneille. The Spanish *comedia* supplied a crying need in the drama of France for elements of sufficient strength to constitute a true *ressort dramatique*. It was because of this lack of a true basis, that the French theater was superficial, lacking in force and vigor. Spain infused new life and power, with its strong conception of love and honor, and the conflict between the two as a powerful mainspring of plot.

These are the two elements which find their best expression in Corneille's productions. Corneille, because of his natural liking for the spontaneous and the extraordinary, turned to Spain for some of his subjects. He found here a wealth of material, a mass of life and color which offered splendid opportunity for reproduction. His problem was to tone down this mass of color and bring out in relief the main elements.

In just how many of Corneille's plays this influence is found is a far reaching and much debated question. But considering the matter from the point of view of the essential elements introduced by the Spanish *comedia* — love and honor, and their resulting conflict, and the broader ideas which so great a writer as Corneille
might adopt, we would assign this influence to his second period of production. This period lies between 1636 and 1645, and embraces Corneille's best productions. In the plays outside this period, to many of which has been attributed origin in the *comedia*, we find lacking these elements and ideals — the true spirit of the Spanish *comedia*.

Of the plays of this second period, a number show their Spanish source — others merely show Spanish influence. Among the first — *Le Cid*, *Horace*, *Le Menteur*, *La Suite du Menteur*; and among the latter — *Cinna*, *Polyeucte* and *Pompée*. The main point discussed in connection with the first group is whether or not Corneille has improved upon his Spanish originals. We find that he has eliminated the non-essential and erased all traces of the rude and bizarre — he has refined and polished. But in doing this and in acceding to the demands of the rules of the three unities, he has suppressed the spontaneity, the freedom and real spirit of the *comedia*. His characters, robbed of their essential atmosphere of heroism and chivalry, become polished figures of seventeenth century France. To all of these restrictions Corneille does not yield without a protest, but he shows his knowledge of the psychology of his audience, and the necessity of considering it. The presence of Spanish
influence in the last named group of three has been denied. But we find here the elements so characteristic of the Spanish *comedia* and introduced by it into French drama. The broader and more general ideas are here — the typical conception of love and honor and the dramatic possibilities afforded by their conflict. Forming the very heart of the period during which the literature of Spain was offering such a source of inspiration to Corneille, it is unlikely that these plays should escape its influence.

Corneille in attempting to be original did not sufficiently break away from his source of ideas to do himself justice, nor did he follow closely enough this source to do it justice. His masterpieces of tragedy and comedy show him following closely his Spanish original. Spain, then, offered Corneille his best foundations, and it is in the adaptation and reproduction of the Spanish *comedia* that he triumphs.
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