Pure Will and the Principal Works of Pierre Corneille

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PURE WILL AND THE PRINCIPAL WORKS OF PIERRE CORNEILLE

by

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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VITA

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CHAPTER I
THE CONDITIONS SINE QUÁ NON OF TRAGEDY

The present study is an investigation of the technique employed by Corneille in his effort to compose tragic drama. A related study has been made by Lessing. In a chapter of Hamburgische Dramaturgie he explains his findings concerning one of the plays of Corneille. The purpose, however, of the present investigation is to determine whether or not Cornelian technique is a solution of the problem of writing true drama about the pure will in all its force.

The sources of data have been chosen for their value as basic poetic theory. Their principles have been applied to the chief works of Corneille.

The scheme of the development of this investigation may be stated in a three-fold question:

1. What are the conditions sine qua non of tragedy?
2. Is an all powerful will dramatic material?
3. Has Corneille succeeded in making powerful will dramatic?

The tenets of Aristotelian theory concerning the conditions of tragedy will be the first consideration. The Poetics of Aristotle is, possibly, a series of notes taken by a student as he listened to the lectures of the critic. From these fragments scholars of later centuries have reconstructed the theory of tragedy which Aristotle outlined three hundred years before
the birth of Christ. The Plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: Character holds the second place. Thus Tragedy is the imitation of an action, and of the agents, mainly, with a view to the action.

Thus does Aristotle require that drama make μῦθος, timeless occurrence, and not character, its center of gravity.

Plot is brought into prominence in the opening words of the book, reasons are afterwards carefully stated for placing it first among the six constituent parts of Tragedy and the discussion of the feature of Plot is much more exhaustive than that bestowed upon any of the other parts. And in taking this view Aristotle is at one with himself, and his whole method coheres. Poetry is, in its operation, an appeal to the feelings; therefore Tragedy, which makes this appeal with most strength and condensation, is higher than the other kinds of poetry; therefore plot, which embodies the appeal in its most immediate form, is higher than the other parts of Tragedy.

Aristotle could scarcely have adopted any other opinion. The culture of the classical man had its own idea of time, and it is time that is the tragic. The resignation offered in the utterance of "it might have been" or "too late" forms the basis of the tragic. The world's most famous tragedy, Hamlet, lays terrifying emphasis upon the principle.


... adverse fate so times the rhythm of Hamlet's malady that at any given moment he is in the grip of the emotions which fit him least to deal with the situation confronting him. When the circumstances demand action, he finds himself so deeply depressed that he can do nothing but brood. When he needs his finest poise to wield the weapon of his reason, he is beaten by gusts of uncontrollable excitement. With each new revelation of this irrepressible conflict Hamlet's inner tension mounts until at the final catastrophe his tortured will explodes in a wild frenzy of unconsidered action.

By the end of the first act, the audience has been given a full view of both phases of Hamlet's emotional disturbance. But only the most discerning would catch so soon its inner rhythm. His malady must continue to fall to its ebb and mount to its crest before its regular configuration becomes unmistakable. The next time that Hamlet appears to any characters in the play, he is obviously under the spell of his depression.

From this new "low" in his depression Hamlet is rescued... Once his emotions are swept clean by the breath from his healthful past, he is able to plan and to act. But... he again becomes the slave of his malady, and his mood mounts quickly to emotional tumult.4

The rhythm of Hamlet's melancholy interprets the aesthetic movement of the action.

It explains, for example, why he could not kill the King when he came upon him at prayer. At that moment, a mood of depression darkened Hamlet's mind—the inevitable reaction to the excitement he had just felt at the success of his play in catching the conscience of the King. His will is paralyzed. Resolute action of any sort is beyond his power. So he cannot make use of the... opportunity to revenge his father's murder.

It is thus that the element of time charges the world's greatest tragedy with tragic irony.5

5Ibid., 32:316.
"Classical man's existence--Euclidean, relationless, point-formed--was wholly contained in the instant. Nothing must remind him of past or of future."  

The tragedy of the Greek is the "blind Casual of the moment."  

Aeschylus endeavored to make drama convey "a single impression of concentrated terror."  

Classic protagonists, as Oedipus and Antigone, stumble upon a situation.

A Greek tragedy, to be sure, depicts only the culmination of a disastrous series of circumstances, but Sophocles represents upon the stage more of the working out of the catastrophe than does Aeschylus.

With Aeschylus, characterization is not the determinative factor. His first concerns are well-nigh mathematical precision in the architecture of the plot, imaginative diction, the impressions of awe and grandeur, religious problems, and the like; and he constructs personages only so far as is required for the development of the action. I would not give the impression that he is not a master in the drawing of character; on the contrary, he seems to me supreme in this art and moreover consciously to exercise it. But though he himself has well-defined plastic conception of even the most insignificant of his creatures, he will never model the action merely in order to bring one of them into high relief. Engrossed with the plot, diction, and ethical problems, and building the drama so as to lend prominence to these elements, he stops over characterization only that he may give his personages reasonable motives for their actions.

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7 Ibid., p. 130.


9 Ibid., p. 115.

10 Ibid., p. 71.
The characters of the _Supplices_ have but typical traits. In the _Persae_ Aeschylus does not attempt to portray character. Sophocles' aesthetic inspired him to reject "the notion of a drama which depended for its proper understanding upon something which preceded or came after." This eminent critic regrets, however, that Sophocles discarded the trilocal system of composition: 

To a poet who possessed so deep an insight into human nature, it might have afforded, with its extended range of time, a splendid opportunity for delineating the gradual development of character. 

A French critic suggests:

... peut-être, que ni les moeurs grecques ne permettaient sur le théâtre ni la finesse des Athéniens ne réclamait la peinture préalable des amours d'Antigone et d'Hémon puis, qu'il est des sentiments si communs,—amour de deux fiancés, amour d'une mère,—que les démarches en peuvent être intelligibles et même émouvantes sans tant de 'préparations.'

Sophocles does engender curiosity as he builds up his plot in such a way as to afford himself an opportunity for such study; and whereas in Aeschylus other forces cooperate with character to effect the dénouement, he produces the issue from the entanglement wholly through the qualities of his personages. He

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12 Ibid., I, 15.


14 Loc. cit.

15 Jules Lemaître, _Impressions de théâtre_ (Paris: Bouvin et Cie; N.D.), VIII, 84.
even alters and manipulates the mythical material so that he may the more readily and brilliantly practise his hobby.16

With Sophocles, however, the change of character is usually that of purification.

The personalities are already formed in main outlines as they are to remain throughout the drama. Antigone in the prologue itself exhibits her strong will and devotion to her brother...17

Sophocles by producing dénouement by a predominance of the rôle of human character diminishes the emphasis of the rôle of the gods.18

Inside the general scheme of the plot Sophocles chooses certain types of scene to display character. The difference between the methods of Sophocles and Euripides may be broadly stated thus. Sophocles displays his characters by contrasting them with other characters, Euripides by the situations which he makes them face and the monologues which he makes them speak. A comparison will make the first point clear. When in the Coloneus Theseus welcomes Oedipus to Athens, Oedipus is won by the nobility and generosity of his host, and in the warmth of Theseus' welcome he becomes a wise and kindly old man. No one but Theseus or some one like Theseus could have this effect on Oedipus. But in the Alcestis Admetus' sense of hospitality is defined, not by contrasting him with Heracles, but by the situation—the arrival of a guest in the midst of his lamentations.19

Schadowaldt points out that when Aeschylus' characters soliloquize they usually address the gods,

16Post, op. cit., p. 72.
17Ibid., p. 108.
18Loc. cit.
Sophocles' characters address other men, but Euripides' address their own souls. Since a character in an emotional crisis naturally turns to whatever being seems nearest to him, we perceive that Euripides' characters no longer feel the nearness of the gods, and even that of other men is less real than the mysterious and un­dependable quality of their own soul; ... 20

How different the maturing of traits of the past existence of the Western tragic heroes, Lear, Macbeth! Herein lies the idea of time possessed by Western culture, the development of a whole life. 21

The argument that the classical man lived each day for itself is illustrated in Aristotle's favoring the tragedy of the moment, the Situation-Drama. Is there development of character in Greek tragedy?

When a character expresses view or adopts a course of action which we should not have expected from our first estimate of him, it is justifiable to speak of development of character. We can find such changes as early as Aeschylus. Eteocles in the Septem changes from the prudent ruler to the reckless son of Oedipus, who cannot be restrained from meeting Polynices. The change occurs suddenly and unexpectedly during the last of the messenger's seven speeches, and the chorus, when Eteocles leaves the stage, sing of the agency of the Curse. This change is credible to the audience because they know the story, and in so far as they allow with Aeschylus that a curse may enter a man's life and change his character. Aeschylus is more interested in the intervention of the curse than in the change of character in Eteocles.

Euripides has similar abrupt changes. Aristotle complains that in the Iphigenia in Aulis the character of Iphigenia is inconsistent; her supplication to


21 Spengler, op. cit., p. 130.
Agamemnon is in no way like her later heroism. But Euripides has represented, however abruptly, a credible change of outlook, to which Polyxena in the Hecuba provides a parallel. His object is not so much the representation of character as the dramatic situation, the heroic self-sacrifice of Polyxena, and Iphigenia.  22 Some scholars seriously doubt that the representation of Neoptolemus of Sophocles' play the Philoctetes offers a study in character drama. Can the Greek drama with its unity of time present a development of character? Neoptolemus's mood certainly undergoes transformation. He begins as the reluctant but submissive tool of Odysseus's stratagem to circumvent Philoctetes, but revolts and returns the bow of Hercules which he has got possession of by lies which, like his father Achilles in the Iliad, he hates worse than the gates of hell; and thus the dénouement and the reconciliation of Philoctetes must be effected by the appearance of Hercules as 'deus ex machina.' Is this a study of character development, or can we only say that the true character, after momentary eclipse, shines forth again?  23

The Ajax, one of Sophocles' closest approximations to character drama permits the spectator to see Ajax only at a crucial moment of his life.  24 Other students have concluded that Euripides' comprehension of an individuality is incomplete:

Such is Euripides' estimate of human character, mechanistic and diagnostic. He continually portrays the collapse of personality, Medea, Heracles or Phaedra, in the face of circumstance and psychological stress, until the individual is no longer anything but a bundle of contradictory impulses. Again, in accordance with sophistic notions, he adopts a certain externality of analysis: if persons are liable to dissolution, they

22 Webster, op. cit., pp. 94, 95.


can only be watched from without, they cannot be under­stood from within, as single persons. Here is the weak­ness of the sophistic method of trying to understand conduct by general laws: the individual somehow eludes us. All of us probably feel that Euripides analysis of Phaedra or Medea, searching as it is, fails to attain a complete comprehension of the soul. When the personali­ty dissolves, its ethical nature is disrupted. 25

But the great strength of Sophocles is his interior grasp of character, his sense of the dignity and integ­rity of a noble personality. Consequently, we must try to understand his dramas, not in terms of fate or tragic sin, but of honor and ἀρετή. 26

For Sophocles little plot is necessary. His subtle dramatic art and complete psychological analysis can develop a simple situation into a revelation of character and destiny. He subordinates the role of fate to the dominion of character and the unavoidable condition of life. He transforms tragic pathos into a "sense of the universal human fellowship in frailty and suffering." 27

The assertion is further supported by the fact that the Oracle concerned it­self with but the contemporary event, that the Dorian Greek chose a timber style of architecture rather than a selection of stone-technique. 28 The Greek historian Thucydides, furthermore, is a luminous example of the Class­ical man's interest in the self-explanatory event of the present. The his­tory of Thucydides does not provide perspective. 29

26Ibid., p. 59.
27Shorey, *op. cit.*, I, 95.
29Ibid., pp. 9, 10.
How does Aristotle analyze the structure of the incidents? He has determined,

But most important of all is the structure of the incidents. For tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality.30

Further, "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, ... A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end."31 The explanation of Aristotle is similar to that of his master.

You will allow that every discourse ought to be a living creature, having a body of its own and a head and feet; there should be a middle, beginning, and end, adapted to one another and to the whole?32

Aristotle amplifies the affirmation that, "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete and whole ... "33 He demonstrated that a writer may select from the infinitely various incidents in one man's life only those events which can be reduced to unity.34 Another expression of the same requisite is,

... the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed. For a thing whose presence or absence makes no visible difference, is not an organic part of the whole.35

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30 Poetics, vi. 9.
31 Ibid., vii. 3.
33 Poetics, vii. 2.
34 Poetics, viii. 1.
35 Ibid., viii. 4.
Second, the dramatic action is a coherent series of events. It is the function of the poet to relate "what may happen,—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity."36

It is therefore evident that the unravelling of the plot, no less than the complication, must arise out of the plot itself; it must not be brought about by the Deus ex Machina.37

Aristotle takes the Oedipus Tyrannus as the type of well-constructed play, and the effectiveness of modern performances bears out his judgment.38

The action moves from the very beginning straight to the goal, never diverted, never interrupted. . . No other tragedy shows such mastery in development of plot and character.39

Sophocles has awakened sympathetic curiosity:

It does in fact grip, as the phrase is. The way the effect is got illustrates an essential difference between Greek and modern plot-interest. Generally speaking, we expect to be puzzled, intrigued, surprised by the plot, and, generally speaking again, they knew the outcome, and were interested chiefly in seeing how it was brought about, and at what point the personages themselves would realize whither they were tending. In the Oedipus we observe a man and a woman as it were at Niagara, in a frail boat, unaware that they are drifting into the rapids that will sweep them over the falls. And we watch with breathless suspense to see when the quicker and better informed perception of the woman will first dawn upon the man, and then become a horrible certainty.40

36Ibid., ix. 1.
37Ibid., xv. 7.
38Shorey, op. cit., p. 67.
39Harry, op. cit., p. 147.
40Shorey, op. cit., pp. 67, 68.
Sophocles the tragedian subtly marks and defines "the very efforts of Oedipus to escape the conclusion which he begins to forebode." Tragic irony deepens the effect.

Irony in this sense refers to the sinister meaning which the spectator, who is in the secret, feels in words which have no such suggestion for the personages. Our modern irony of fate and nature, in Hardy's novels for example, is a similar feeling transferred from a particular plot to all life and existence by the author and the reader, who are supposed to know that the very nature of the world is ironically inimical to human hopes, desires, delusions, and happiness.

...the difference in technique of plot construction between the three tragedians, the difference is ultimately one of ends. Aeschylus' story is represented as an exemplification of the divine law, which is gorgeously enunciated in the choruses and its majesty sustained by music and spectacle. Euripides, in his later plays at least, shows the unpredictable workings of chance, and is always more interested in the elaboration of the particular scene, whether lyrical, emotional, or rhetorical, than in the structure of the play as a whole. Sophocles' careful craftsmanship, his choice of scenes, his construction of the plot, his use of music, spectacle, and dramatic irony are primarily directed to the presentation of character and the identification of the audience with the characters thus presented.

In the history of modern drama the plays of Eugène Scribe exemplify careful construction. These dramas are the most perfect modern example of *la pièce bien faite*. The fourth act of *Les Trois Maupins* provides an example of perfect dramatic technique. The act is

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41 Ibid., p. 68.

42 Loc. cit.

43 Webster, op. cit., p. 124.
dazzling and bewildering in its complexity, and in the
skill with which it is developed, supplies almost the
entire interest of the action. This act takes place in
a room which resembles the city of Thebes, with its
hundred doors: doors to the right, doors to the left,
visible doors and secret doors. It is here that Scribe's
dexterity triumphs.

Imagine a central point in a complicated railway system
which is crossed at intervals of a few moments by trains
starting from all points, north, east, south, and west;
suppose also that the departure of each train is so
calculated that it must reach this crossing absolutely
on time to the very second, as an inappreciable delay
or advance would be sufficient to cause a catastrophe,
or rather a number of them— as many catastrophes as
there are trains. Does this comparison suggest suf­
ciently the swiftness of the grouping and ordering
and the precision of the movement which, in the heat
of the action, make the scenes and the characters
follow each other with lightning rapidity? Only Scribe,
with his genius for combinations, his composure before
the glare of the footlights, could keep situations,
scenes, and actors from colliding as they circulate in
the limited space in which the dramatist has confined
them.44

Le Verre d'eau illustrates the orientation of a character, rather than an
individual, toward a definite objective; the placement of obstacles; the
removal of some or all of these obstacles by the employment of clever de-
vices. The conflict is usually one of situation, not of character. This is
consequent to the

breathless rush to a clever dénouement, through a
series of brilliant exhibitions of l'art de main
results in paleness of characterization; his char­
acters get their personality more from the actors' interpretation than from the play itself. 45

On the contrary Augier has created characters of marvelous reality.\(^{46}\)

Inanimate objects frequently effect the complication.\(^{47}\)

L'action de sa pièce est d'un bout à l'autre une œuvre de logique et de dextérité. Aussi, avec quelle attention on l'écoute! comme il s'élève à l'entrée de tel ou tel personnage un frémissement universel! C'est qu'il est en situation; c'est que par l'artifice de la composition, toute l'intrigue converge à ce moment sur lui, et qu'on ne sait comment il va se tirer du mauvais pas où il est engagé.\(^{48}\)

Third, the component parts of the dramatic action are significant. A plot with irrelevant incidents violates a fundamental principle of dramatic construction.\(^{49}\) "Of all plots and actions the episodic are the worst."\(^{50}\)

Fourth, the dramatic action tends toward a certain end. "... and to arouse this pity and fear in such a way as to effect that special purging off and relief (catharsis) of these two emotions. ..."\(^{51}\)

What is the meaning of the specific effect of tragedy? It is impressive to realize that the text of the Poetics contains approximately ten thousand words but that Castelvetro's "exposition" of it required three hundred eighty-


\(^{50}\)Poetics, ix. 10.

four thousand words. It is the catharsis clause which has been one of the passages most frequently discussed in the past three hundred years. For centuries the traditional belief had been the signification of a moral effect which tragedy produces through the "purification of the passions." It is pertinent to recall that Corneille assumed the purely ethical intention of the drama.52

No explanation concerning the function of tragedy could prove more helpful than a passage of Butcher's essay concerning the subject. In it the critic offers a logical exposition of the purpose of tragic action. He begins by referring to a passage of the Politics.

In the Politics after explaining the action of the musical catharsis he [Aristotle] adds that those who are liable to pity and fear, and, in general, persons of emotional temperament pass through a like experience; they all undergo a catharsis of some kind and feel a pleasurable relief.53

Aristotle had introduced the whole passage here referred to with: "What we mean by catharsis we will now state in general terms; hereafter we will explain it more clearly in our treatise on Poetry."54 There is, unfortunately, a lacuna at this point of the Poetics. Thus the critic may but refer to the Politics for the information so much desired. Butcher observes:

The tone of the passage and particular expressions show two things plainly; first, that there the term is consciously metaphorical; secondly, that though its

52 Butcher, "Essays," op. cit., pp. 243, 244.
54 Ibid., v. (viii) 7. 1341b 39.
technical use in medicine was familiar, the metaphorical application of it was novel and needed elucidation. Moreover, in the words last quoted, 'all undergo catharsis of some kind,' it is pretty plainly implied that the catharsis of pity and fear in tragedy is analogous to but not identical with, the catharsis of 'enthusiasm.'55

Fortunately Aristotle did analyze the catharsis of this form of religious ecstasy. Butcher remarks:

The persons subject to such transports were regarded as men possessed by a god, and were taken under the care of the priesthood. The treatment prescribed for them was so far homoeopathic in character, that it consisted in applying movement to cure movement, in soothing the internal trouble of the mind by a wild and restless music. The passage in the Politics (v. viii 7. 1341b 32-1342 a 15) in which Aristotle describes the operation of these tumultuous melodies is the key to the meaning of catharsis in the Poetics.56

Butcher continues his commentary with:

But the word, catharsis as taken up by Aristotle into his terminology of art, has probably a further meaning. It expresses not only a fact of psychology or of pathology, but a principle of art. The original metaphor is in itself a guide to the full aesthetic significance of the term. Applying this to tragedy we observe that the feelings of pity and fear in real life contain a morbid and disturbing element. In the process of tragic excitation they find relief and the morbid element is thrown off. As the tragic action progresses, when the tumult of the mind, first roused, has afterwards subsided, the lower forms of emotion are found to have been transmuted into higher and more refined forms. The painful element in the pity and fear of reality is purged away; the emotions themselves are purged. The curative and tranquilizing influence that tragedy exercises follows as an immediate accompaniment of the transformation of feeling. Tragedy,

56 Ibid., pp. 253-255.
then, does more than effect the homeopathic cure of certain passions. Its function on this view is not merely to provide an outlet for pity and fear, but to provide for them a distinctively aesthetic satisfaction, to purify and clarify them by passing them through the medium of art. 57

How does Aristotle define the emotions of pity and fear for which he requires tragic action to provide an outlet and aesthetic satisfaction?

Fear Aristotle defines to be a 'species of pain or disturbance arising from an impression of impending evil which is destructive or painful in its nature.' 58

Pity is a sort of pain at an evident evil of a destructive or painful kind in the case of somebody who does not deserve it, the evil being one which we might expect to happen to ourselves or to some of our friends, and this at a time when it is seen to be near at hand. 59

Aristotle correlates pity and fear in concluding, "Pity however, turns into fear where the object is so nearly related to us that the suffering seems to be our own." 60

In the dramatic representation of pity and fear there is no essential change in the emotion of pity. The object of the emotion remains the character who suffers more than he deserves to undergo. On the contrary, the emotion of fear is very considerably modified. It is no longer the pain arising from the thought of impending evil to one's own existence; psychic distance has been created. 61 It is the "sympathetic shudder" one feels for a man like

57 Ibid., pp. 253-255.
58 Ibid., p. 256, quoting Aristotle, Rhetoric, tr. Welldon, ii. 5. 1382 a 21.
60 Ibid., ii. 8. 1386a 17.
oneself who is undergoing misfortune. It is the impersonal emotion relieved and aesthetically satisfied by the dramatic action which is an image of human destiny. Wordsworth has reconstructed the thought of Aristotle:

Pleasing was the smart,
And the tear precious in compassion shed;62

"pity" and "fear"63 demonstrates that they are essential and that they must be allied for the achievement of the purpose of tragic action. Aristotelian theory does not admit of choice between, or substitution for, pity and fear.

In ancient times Euripides shared with Simonides the reputation for being most skilled in evoking pathos. Aristotle calls him "the most tragic of the poets," by which he meant that Euripides awakened the greatest pity and terror. (Poetics, ch. 13) It is almost as though the weakness of human beings added somewhat to their attractiveness, that the poet feels with such poignancy the painfulness of life. In Euripides there is no consolation for human sorrow; but if he cannot assuage these things he will at least soften them by the beauty of music and spectacle. This is the key note of Euripides' art--to seek restoration from sorrow and evil in the healing power of song.64

The Sophoclean Katharsis:

... tranquillizes, soothes, elevates, and restores to our distracted and dispersed souls their lost unity, and induces

That serene and blessed mood
In which the affections gently lead us on
Until... we are laid asleep
In body and become a living soul.
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony and deep power of joy
We see into the life of things.

63 Ibid., p. 17.
Sophocles is the supreme example of this service of poetry....He has always helped me to that quieting of restless will of which Dante speaks and that Schopenhauer says is the function of all true art—when the cup of Tantalus no longer teases the thirsting lips and the wheel of Ixion stands still. ... How does Sophocles do this for us? ... To exhibit this would require a detailed study of his dramatic art and style, showing its freedom from the irritating flaws and disconcerting incongruities that check and mar our delight in such even of the world's great art. It is the cumulative effect of this absence of all dissonance and all annoy that finally produces the sense of well being and happy security. This peculiar quality of Sophocles must, I think, be added to the analysis of a modern scholar, who attributes to all great poetry, even the exciting ..., a like influence which he identifies with the Aristotelian katharsis. "Poetry," he says, "shares with music the power ... of creating the inward peace which reigns when the whole personality dominates over its minor elements, and of producing the intense pleasure peculiar to this state of psychic equilibrium."55

This completes the analysis of four qualities of dramatic action. The action was described as: complete, coherent series of events, significant, and purposeful.66 The second consideration of the investigation will be that of dramatic conflict.

Brunetière emphasized the significance of conflict when he said,

... mais ce qui n'appartient bien qu'au théâtre, mais ce qui fait à travers les littératures, depuis les Grecs jusqu'à nous, l'unité permanente et continue de l'espace dramatique, c'est le spectacle d'une volonté qui se déploie. ...67

65Shorey, op. cit., pp. 92-94.
Hegel exposes the necessity of collision as the main tenet of his theory of tragedy.

The substance of ethical condition is, when viewed as concrete unity, a totality of different relations and forces, which however, only under the inactive condition of the gods in their blessedness achieve the works of the Spirit in enjoyment of an undisturbed life. There is implied in the notion of this totality itself an impulse to move forward from itself and transport itself in the real actuality of the phenomenal world. On account of the nature of this primitive obsession, it comes about that mere difference, if conceived on the basis of different conditions of individual personalities, must inevitably associate with contradiction and collision.68

Hebbel develops the Hegelian theory of the necessity of conflict. His aim is "to render the conflict truly tragic and significant by interpreting it as a clash between the individual and the idea."69

Nietzsche too emphasizes the necessity of discord in drama.

...and along with these we have the mystery doctrine of tragedy: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of all existing things, the consideration of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken, as the augury of a restored oneness.70

Brunetière has provided a succinct appraisal of the modes of collision:

"l'opposition du Moi et du Non-moi et la lutte d'une volonté contre elle-


Butcher has elaborated the first phrase interestingly with the thought that man is limited by the present moment. Fyfe similarly signals the necessity of there being something in the hero himself, which obstinately and ironically combines with adverse circumstance, so that at last even his good qualities co-operate with both to fatal issues.

Racine, in turn, offers a dramatic exposition of the second phrase of Brunetièrè's modes of collision, "la lutte d'une volonté contre elle-même." The Janenists praised the tragedian for having presented the division, the weakness of will.

Whatever be the mode of expression of conflict the fact of the major importance of conflict dominated the following consideration. The collision determines the dramatic progression. The turning point is inherent in the discord. First, there is a straining, a heightening of the intensity of contradiction; second there is the inevitability of resolution of the antagonistic forces. The moment of the collision, thus, is the prime moment of the dramatic progression.

71 Brunetièrè, op. cit., p. 393.
75 Hegel, op. cit., p. 262.
Although conflict is the soul of the drama, every conflict is not dramatic. A statement of Aristotle provides the principle on which this assertion is rooted. In it he explains that in real life every action does not express itself in external act, as, for example, the intense activity of speculative thought. This does not manifest itself in an external deed.

Butcher further stresses the dramatic quality of conflict.

But the action of the drama cannot consist in an inward activity that does not pass beyond the region of thought or emotion. Even where the main interest is centered in the internal conflict, this conflict must have its outward as well as its inward side; it must manifest itself in individual acts, in concrete relations with the world outside; it must bring the agent into collision with other personalities. We therefore exclude from the province of the drama purely mental conflicts action and reaction within the mind itself.

Hegel, too, declares that the action of the drama cannot consist in an inward activity that does not manifest itself in deed. He established in similar terms the requisites of the external act.

The drama, in short, does not take exclusive refuge in the lyric presence of soul-life, as such stands in contrast to an external world, but propounds such a life in and through its external realization.

However much, therefore, we may have as a centre of attraction the intimate soul-life of particular men and women, nevertheless dramatic composition cannot rest content with the purely lyrical conditions of the definite emotional life.

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76 Butcher, loc. cit.
77 Aristotle, Politics. iv. (vii.) 3. 1325b 16-23, cited by Butcher, loc. cit.
79 Hegel, op. cit., p. 251.
In contradistinction to the Aristotelian and Hegelian theory of dramatic conflict Maeterlinck devised the technique of the so-called genre, le drame intime. A study concerning the imaginative faculty of the Flemish suggests the source of Maeterlinck's so-called drama of the imagination.

Ses images ont des couleurs vives et des traits précis. Cette précision de la vision peut s'appliquer au monde des réalités ambiantes et comme tel, devient la source de son réalisme si frappant et si impitoyable.

Il y a tout un monde qui nous environne dont nous ne voyons que les signes. Il nous est révélé par la méditation, les pressentiments, les imponderables auréolant les objets les plus ordinaires d'un halo de mystère.

Maeterlinck formulated the ideal of the so-called genre, le drame intime on reading the Essays of Emerson.

D'après Emerson, les moindres actes de notre vie ordinaire ont un sens caché, intérieur, bien plus élevé que celui qu'ils paraissent avoir, et que nous ignorons. Dans un regard, derrière le geste le plus banal et la parole la plus insignifiante, nous manifestons à notre insu une grandeur de héros. Sans que nous le sachions, toutes les puissances de l'âme sont présentes.

Nevertheless, the critics do apply to the compositions of Maeterlinck the Aristotelian and Hegelian theories of dramatic conflict. One of their assertions is that in opposition to Hegelian principles Maeterlinck's com-

80 Times (London) Literary Supplement, May 23, 1902.  
positions do take refuge almost exclusively "in the lyric presence of soul life."  

Maeterlinck ... minimizes action, transferring the center of gravity from the outer to the inner world, rendering through suggestion certain moods.  

A second critic expresses the same thought adding the observation that Maeterlinck patterns symbolism according to the theories of Mallarme and of Charles Morice.

Nommer un objet, a écrit Stéphane Mallarmé, c'est supprimer les trois quarts de la jouissance du poème, qui est faite du bonheur de deviner peu à peu; le suggérer, voilà le rêve. C'est le parfait usage de ce mystère qui constitue le symbole: évoquer petit à petit un objet pour montrer un état d'âme, ou momentanément, choisir un objet, et en dégager un état d'âme par une série de déchiffrements.

Et Charles Morice: "Le symbole, c'est le mélange des objets qui ont éveillé notre sentiment, et de notre âme, en une fiction. Le moyen, c'est la suggestion: il s'agit de donner aux gens le souvenir de quelque chose qu'ils n'ont jamais vu."

A third critic inquires:

What is it which generates that inner excitement and delight in the theatre which springs into being as soon as the figures in a fine play begin to speak; or which will sometimes appear and disappear in the course of a play marking the ebb and flow of the dramatic inspiration? It is the true dramatic essence,

83 Hegel, loc. cit.
85 Solvay, loc. cit., quoting Mallarmé and Charles Morice.
86 Solvay, loc. cit.
something which can never come by effort, but is unmistakable in its presence. It is not in the least the same thing as verbal brilliance or idiosyncracy. There are some plays which live by their 'style' in this sense. The plays of Congreve or Oscar Wilde, for instance, have no life, outside theatrical situations, but the life of witty expression. Their world is the world of polished phrases, and sharp, clean hammer-blows of hitting the epigrammatic nail on the head over and over again. Or the plays of Maeterlinck or Synge's Riders to the Sea live entirely by a rhythmic speech which are all their own. But the true dramatic essence is something far deeper than these surface effects of patterned language.87

The same critic in analyzing the mournful music of Maeterlinck's plays concludes:

It certainly creates an atmosphere all its own, but it is an atmosphere which, instead of giving intensity to drama, seems to make it infinitely remote and artificial. It is all rather like the description of the sound of the tidal bore in Nasfield's Nan—'a-wammering and a-wammering.'

There is the same atmosphere of 'escape poetry' in the early poetic romances of Yeats, and in Stephen Phillips, whose Paolo and Francesca seemed great poetry to the theatregoing public of a generation ago, when Maeterlinckian melancholy was the fashion in tragedy. But it was all very bogus. When Giovanni sees the bodies of the lovers lying dead, he is overcome with their beauty, and Lucrezia cries 'What ails you now?' Giovanni replies,

She takes away my strength.
I did not know the dead could have such hair.
Hide them. They look like children fast asleep.

We have only to compare this with the scene of Ferdinand looking upon the body of the Duchess of Elbafi and her children, to feel immediately the difference between a

literary affectation and the voice of a dramatist.

Ferdinand. Is she dead? 
Bosola. She is what 
You' have her....Do you not weep? 
Ferdinand. Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle: she died young.

When drama reaches out to become as richly articulate as it can possibly be, and poetry reaches out to become richly human as it can possibly be, the result is true poetic drama. It is not an application of one art to another, it is a fusion of two worlds of artistic experience which become another entity. This entity, however, continues to exist in the worlds of its component parts. As we have said before, a play of Shakespeare, or any other poetic play, can be criticized at a variety of levels. It is a story; it is a picture of a group of characters; and it is a sequence of individual passages of poetry of different degrees of beauty, sound and sense. But it is also a dramatic poem. The poet and the dramatist become one. Of course, one or other may obviously predominate. Maxwell Anderson in Winterset, for instance, is a dramatist who has found himself driven towards poetry in order both to make his characters adequately articulate, and to create the necessary heightening of pitch which he feels his tragedy demands to set it away from all the associations which its environment inevitably suggest, and give it a larger reference. T. S. Eliot, on the other hand, is a poet who has found himself driven towards the theatre, to extend his scope, and completely to objectify his material. Anderson's drama is better than his poetry; Eliot's poetry is better than his drama; but neither uses one art simply as a trimming to the other; each is organic to the whole. Both Winterset and Murder in the Cathedral have been conceived as a unity in which the genius and method of drama have brought something to the essence of poetry, and the genius and method of poetry have brought something to the essence of drama, and they fuse and melt into each other and become indissoluble.

Solvay concludes,

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., pp. 213-215.
C'est sur cette manière de symbole, sur cette terreur vague et mystérieuse, que M. Maeterlinck a construit, dirais-je, toute son esthétique littéraire; ... 89

An imitator of the so-called statuesque drama is Anton Chekhov. His achievement is the negation of the Hegelian precept that the drama propound the soul-life "in and through its external realization." 90 A lecturer on Chekhovian technique remarks, "the theatre seems to demand that something should really happen." 91 Another critic of Chekhovian technique describes the...

"...totally different kind of plot, tissues of which, as in life, lie below the surface of events and, unobtrusive, shape our destiny. Thus he all but overlooks the event plot; more he deliberately lets it be as casual as it is in real life. 92

Chekhov's choice, may be analyzed as "spatial reality."

The 'spatial reality' of a play may appear in many ways. It can be apparent in a grouping of moods and emotions corresponding roughly to the arrangement of the plastic elements in a painting; or in a treatment of themes comparable to the same elements in a musical composition; or it may live in an atmosphere through which the temporal events are viewed; or in some symbolic or emotional flavor which gives the temporal events some special significance...

But the spatial element may predominate very greatly. In Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida it is purely his attitude towards the story, everything he uses is to illustrate, not the facts themselves, which interest us. Or in Webster's Duchess of Malfi, although there is an embarrassment of chaotic incident and accident in the plot, it is the grouping of moods

89 Solvay, loc. cit.
90 Hegel, loc. cit.
and personalities, the sense of the warp and woof of reflection and groping introspection which is going on all the time beneath the melodramatic action, which is the real life of the play. In *The Cherry Orchard*, Chekov dispenses with plot altogether as a vital element. The events in time, that little trickle of action which runs through it, are so tenuous as to be almost negligible. This does not mean that the characters are not so vividly individualized, but that it is their static relationships in which we are really interested. We know, as soon as we see what Madame Ranevsky is, that the cherry orchard will be lost, but what absorbs us is the theme of the interrelation of all that the cherry orchard stands for, with that group of characters and their moods and emotions. It is not the facts that they live through in the play which matters, it is the quality of their living which matter. It is the revelation of their charm, their inconsequence and incompetency; their mingling of genuine emotion with triviality of spirit, their infinite incapacity for action and gesture among material things--drinking a cup of coffee, kissing an old man, stroking a piece of furniture, hunting a pair of galoshes. It is all this which is the reality of the play—a spatial reality.93

The focus of the two areas of vision, the play as a series of events in a causal sequence and the play as a collection of abstract elements, a most interesting dramatic study presents itself. Ibsen has utilized it in *Hedda Gabler*:

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Tesman. But how could you do anything so unheard of? What put it into your head? What possessed you? Answer me that. Eh?

Hedda. (suppressing an almost imperceptible smile) I did it for your sake, George.

Tesman. For my sake!

Hedda. This morning, when you told me about what he had read to you—

Tesman. Yes, yes—what then?

Hedda. You acknowledged that you envied him his work.

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93 Drew, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-121.
Tesman. Oh, of course I didn't mean that literally.
Hedda. No matter—I couldn't bear the idea that anyone should throw you into the shade.
Tesman. (in an outburst of mingled doubt and joy) Hedda, Oh, is this true? But—but—I never knew you to show your love like that before. Fancy that!
Hedda. Well, I may as well tell you that—just at this time—(impatiently breaking off) No, no; you can ask Aunt Julia. She will tell you, fast enough.
Tesman. Oh, I almost think I understand you, Hedda! Great Heavens! do you really mean it! Eh?
Hedda. Don't shout so. The servant might hear.

Would it be possible to reveal and contrast and relate character, mood and emotion more vividly and economically than in the 'spatial rhythm'... [motivated by Ibsenian technique?]94

Brunetière infers that balance be sustained by interiorization and exteriorization:

Ces conditions sont-elles essentielles au théâtre? Oui et non, et il faut qu'on distingue. Pour l'intérieurité des mobiles d'action, oui: et tout drame où les personnages ont quelque chose de manifestement passif, où ils sont actionnés du dehors, esclaves enfin des circonstances, n'est pas un drame, mais un roman.95

To represent truly dramatic conflict, then there must be an expression of the conflict between individuals.96 In describing this action, Aristotle uses the verb, dram, the strongest possible word.97

This completes the analysis of the dramatic quality of conflict. The

94 Ibid., pp. 126-127.
95 Brunetière, Histoire de la littérature française (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1921), IV, 231.
96 Hegel, op. cit., p. 265.
97 Poetics, iii. 2.
third consideration of the investigation will be that of dramatic character.

Aristotle has determined that character depends upon two elements, ethos and dianoia.

Ethos is the moral element in character. It reveals a certain state or direction of the will. Dianoia is the thought, the intellectual element, which is implied in all rational conduct, through which alone ethos can find outward expression, and which is separable from ethos only by a process of abstraction.

The conditions of dramatic representation do not change ethos essentially for it reveals itself in word and act as it does in actuality. Dianoia, on the contrary, is definitely altered when it is transferred to the imaginary for it manifests itself only in speech.

Aristotle indicates the secondary importance of character in summarizing, "The Plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: Character holds the second place."

A writer condemns Greek drama for having occurrence, not character its centre of gravity. He develops the thought by illustrating that the Greek agent experiences struggle as coming from the outside. The decisive event comes upon-befalls Ajax and Philoctetes, Antigone and Electra. However, could Greek tragedy have been constructed otherwise? All the Greek tragedies seem to have had an Aition.

99 Ibid., pp. 340, 341.
100 Poetics, vi. 13, 14.
101 Spengler, op. cit., I, 318.
A second objection that the same critic makes is that what befalls an agent in the Greek drama comes upon him, brutally, as accident. The critic affirms that in this occurrence the "psychological antecedents (even supposing them to have any) play no part."\textsuperscript{103} Again his observation is correct, but for a second time one inquires, did not consecrated usage ordain it to be thus? Greek tragedy offered simple issues, situations which were not complicated by the qualities of an individual character.\textsuperscript{104} Hegel sketches the plan:

The genuine content of tragic action subject to the aims which arrest tragic characters is supplied by the world of those forces which carry in themselves their own justification and are realized substantively in the volitional activity of mankind. . . . Such are, further, the life of communities, the patriotism of citizens, the will of those in supreme power. . . . \textsuperscript{105}

The Hegelian requisites continue with a statement that renders the desired "psychological antecedents" of character untenable.

It is of a soundness and thoroughness consonant with these that the really tragical characters consist. They are throughout that which the essential notion of their character enables them and compels them to be.\textsuperscript{106}

Bywater expresses the truth similarly when he explains that the author makes the character, the ideal personalities, speak and act according to the law of character he has assumed for each.\textsuperscript{107}

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{103}Spengler, \textit{loc. cit.}
\item\textsuperscript{104}Butcher, "\textit{Essays,}" \textit{op. cit.}, p. 358.
\item\textsuperscript{105}Hegel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 295.
\item\textsuperscript{106}Loc. cit.
\item\textsuperscript{107}Bywater, \textit{op. cit.}, ix. 145b 7, p. 189.
\end{enumerate}
Aristotle is content, logically, to represent character with the broad
strokes that befit it for a drama which projects occurrence, not character,
as a center of gravity. Spengler, accordingly, is accurate in the third ob-
jection he makes to Greek drama.

Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon, Ares are simply "men,"
Hermes the "youth," Athene a maturer Aphrodite, . . .
And the same is true without reservation of the
figures of the Attic stage.108

Yet this criticism and the following corollary of the Hegelian theory of
tragedy are analogous.

...And this is so because the spiritual powers
which are exclusively distinct in the mythological
Epos, and which, by virtue of the many-sided as-
psects of actual individualization tend to lose the
clear definition of their significance. . . .109

The characters in the Greek drama are "universals." They are generic or
typical rather than individual.110 Aristotle asserted that "...poetry
tends to express the universal."111

The clause "...for poetry tends to express the universal" is rich in
connotation. In preparing to compose the Poetics Aristotle drew up a list of
the plays produced at Athens.112 The student of the twentieth century can
reconstruct some of the prize winning plays as he reads these lines. One of

109Hegel, op. cit., p. 255.
110Bywater, op. cit., p. 255.
111Poetics, ix. 3.
112Fyfe, op. cit., p. xiv.
the conditions of these dramas was the universal meaning and validity of the characters. Aristotle must have contemplated the artistic principle of structure that a modern critic has reconstructed.

\[\ldots\text{Apollo stands before me as the genius of enlightenment and of the principle of individuality, while at the joyous cry of Dionysus the bars of individuality are burst and the way is opened to the heart of being, to the innermost heart of things.}^{113}\]

The fact of freedom from the disturbing elements of individuality in the issues of the plot and in the dramatic characters is indicative of the triumph of action over emotion. A fragment of an account of the birth of tragedy suggests the issue of emotion into deeds.

The satyr as being the Dionysian chorist, lives in a religiously acknowledged reality under the sanction of the myth and cult. The tragedy begins with him; that the Dionysian wisdom of tragedy speaks through him, is just as surprising a phenomenon to us as, in general, the derivation of tragedy from the chorus.\(^{114}\)

The Greek drama is the first fusion of the epic and lyric elements.

Dionysian art therefore is wont to exercise two kinds of influences on the Apollonian art-faculty: music firstly incites to the symbolic intuition of Dionysian universality; and secondly, it causes the symbolic image to stand forth in its fullest significance. From these facts... I infer the capacity of music to give birth to myth, that is to say, tragic myth...

The dominance of the Apollonian image is the source of Situation-Drama; the Poetics but elaborates the fact of the triumph.\(^{115}\)

\(^{113}\text{Nietzsche, op. cit., p. 121.}\)

\(^{114}\text{Ibid., p. 60.}\)

\(^{115}\text{Poetics, vi. 14.}\)
The Plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were the soul of a tragedy. Character holds the second place. ... Thus Tragedy is the imitation of an action, and of the agents, mainly with a view to the action.\textsuperscript{116}

Thus does Aristotle consolidate the theory that Greek drama be Situation-Drama, not Character-Drama.

The Apollonian characters present from another angle an individuality that is overwhelming. "Their experiences lack not mass but relation; there is something atomic about them."\textsuperscript{117} "Thus it is the sense-actual person of Oedipus, his 'empirical ego' that is hunted and thrown by Destiny."\textsuperscript{118} His destiny is not of the analytical type as that of Lear.\textsuperscript{119} The Apollonian character is the chalk and line of a portrait; the Faustian is that of the most beautiful colors laid on harmoniously.

The Apollonian characters were distinguished by masks.\textsuperscript{120} The observation has been made that "The Greek tragic form flourished only among the Greeks; for the rest of the world it has been, and continues to be, an exotic."\textsuperscript{121} On the contrary, there was, for example, in the nineteenth century the \textit{Atalanta in Calydon} of Swinburne, which was a successful imitation

\textsuperscript{116} Loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{117} Spengler, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 316.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 129.
\textsuperscript{119} Loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{120} Haigh, \textit{The Tragic Drama of the Greeks}, pp. 29, 39, 68.
\textsuperscript{121} Arnold Smith, \textit{The Main Tendencies of Victorian Poetry} (Birmingham: The Saint George Press, Limited, 1907), p. 149.
of Greek drama. In his use of realistic masks--as distinct from the representative masks of old Greek tragedy--O'Neill plunged into a new and fascinating mode of extending the scope of emotion and spiritual contrast on the stage. His characters wear masks when talking to certain people--discard them when talking with others. As their speech and attitudes change, their faces change as well. It is a method of heightening, more completely than the facial muscles of actors can achieve, the range of emotions through which his characters charge and recoil.

The program notes of The Great God Brown announced that the masks were a "means of dramatizing a transfer of personality from one man to another."

The dramatist himself explained:

I realize that when a playwright takes to explaining he thereby automatically places himself "in the dock." But where an open-faced avowal by the play itself of the abstract theme underlying it is made impossible by the very nature of that hidden theme, then perhaps it is justifiable for the author to confess the mystical pattern which manifests itself as an overtone in The Great God Brown, dimly behind and beyond the words and actions of the characters.

Brown is the visionless demi-god of our new materialistic myth--a Success--building his life of exterior things, inwardly empty and resourceless, an uncreative creature of superficial preordained social grooves, a by-product forced aside into slack waters by the deep main current of life-desire.

122 Ibid., p. 149.
Dion's mask of Pan which he puts on as a boy is not only a defense against the world for the super-sensitive painter-poet underneath it, but also an integral part of his character as the artist. The world is not only blind to the man beneath, but it also sneers at and condemns the Pan-mask it sees.

Brown has always envied the creative life force in Dion—What he himself lacks. When he steals Dion's mask of Mephistopheles he thinks he is gaining the power to live creatively, while in reality he is only stealing that creative power made self-destructive by complete frustration. This devil of mocking doubt makes short work of him. It enters him, rending him apart, torturing and transfiguring him until he is even forced to wear a mask of his Success, William A. Brown, before the world, as well as Dion's mask toward wife and children. Thus Billy Brown becomes not himself to anyone.126

A critic considers the dramatist's own amplification of this explanation unsatisfactory. He finds O'Neill's self-analyses lacking in clarity. The dramatist's suggestion of the objectification of emotions is:127

And now for an explanation regarding this explanation. It was far from my idea in writing Brown that this background pattern of conflicting tides in the soul of Man should ever overshadow and thus throw out of proportion the living drama of the recognizable human beings, Dion, Brown, Margaret and Cybel. I meant it always to be mystically within and behind them, giving them a significance beyond themselves, forcing itself through them to expression in mysterious words, symbols, actions, they do not themselves comprehend. And that is as clearly as I wish an audience to comprehend it. It is a Mystery—the mystery any one man or woman can feel but not understand as the meaning of any event—or accident—in any life on earth. And it is this mystery I want

126Clark, op. cit., pp. 159-162.

to realize in the theater. The solution, if there ever be any, will probably have to be produced in a test tube and turn out to be discouragingly undramatic.\(^{128}\)

A critic of O'Neill ascribes the fascination which the characters of O'Neill exert upon their creator to their sense of futility:

They, to use the words of one of them, 'belong' to something, and the most tortured of his characters are those who, like Dion in *The Great God Brown*, have lost all sense either that they 'belong' to anything or that there is anything in the universe to which it is possible to belong.\(^{129}\)

A second critic believes that "simplicity of mind and an extreme plasticity of emotion" must predominate over "every shade of individual interpretation"\(^{130}\) in a successful representation of *The Great God Brown*.

A third critic has denied that the primary importance of *The Great God Brown* pertains to the device of masks. He affirms, rather, that the play is significant in its representing the "author's most direct attempt to expose in terms already more or less familiar in current literature the ultimate source of his tragic dilemma."\(^{131}\)

Another critic of O'Neill complains that although the characters struggle with fate the spectator realizes in the opening scenes that they will not conquer. "They are doomed from the start by the particular limitations of the mood under which they were originally conceived and never experience even

\(^{128}\)Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-162.

\(^{129}\)Krutch, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 83.

\(^{130}\)Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

\(^{131}\)Krutch, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
Which type of character is the ideal protagonist to excite tragic emotion? Aristotle, after warning against a choice of three inartistic representations states,

There remains, then, (4) the case of the man intermediate between these extremes: a man not superlatively good and just, nor yet one whose misfortunes come about through vice and depravity; but a man who is brought low through some error of judgment or shortcoming, one from the highly renowned and prosperous—such a person as Oedipus of the line of Thebes, Thyestes of Pelops' line, and the eminent men of other noted families. 133

Thus it is an ἀμαρτία that the tragic story turns.

No philological discussion of an ἀμαρτία could be more helpful than the one propounded in Butcher's essay. His language will be followed,

... As a synonym of ἀμάρτημα and as applied to a single act, it denoted an error due to inadequate knowledge of particular circumstances. According to strict usage we should add the qualification, that the circumstances are such as might have been known... But ἀμαρτία is also more laxly applied to an error due to unavoidable ignorance. ...

Distinct from this, but still limited in its reference to a single act, is the moral ἀμαρτία proper, a fault or error where the act is conscious and intentional, but not deliberate.

Lastly the word may denote a defect of character, distinct on the one hand, from an isolated error or fault, and, on the other, from the vice which has its seat in a depraved will... In our passage there is much to be said in favour of the last sense, as it is


133 Poetics. xiii, amplified by Cooper, Aristotle on the Art of Poetry, pp. 40.
here brought into relation with other words of purely moral significance, words moreover which describe not an isolated act, but a more permanent state.134

It was ἀμαχία in its three-fold meaning which blinded the intellect of Oedipus, the probable prototype of the Aristotelian tragic hero. In dramatic irony Oedipus, at last, puts out his eyes.135

This completes the analysis of dramatic character. The conclusions presented concerning the necessity of action, conflict and character as conditions of tragedy will gain further support in the consideration of the next chapter, "The All Powerful Will and Drama."


135 Ibid., p. 320.
CHAPTER II

THE ALL POWERFUL WILL AND DRAMA

Many brilliant scholars have analyzed the qualities of the all powerful will. One is justified however to pursue the inquiry further in order to cast more light upon the possibility or impossibility of relationship between the all powerful will and drama.

An illustration of the all powerful will is, obviously, that of le héroïc cornélien. It is the Will--and that alone--which is the activating principle of each of these characters. A play which elaborated the characteristic elements of the powerful will was offered by Corneille when he declared:

La tendresse et les passions, qui doivent être l'âme des tragédies, n'ont aucune part en celle-ci: la grandeur de courage y règne seule, et regarde son malheur d'un œil si dédaigneux qu'il n'en saurait arracher une plainte.¹

Thus Corneille exaggerated Will-Culture, the distinguishing mark of the Western drama.

It is not the notion of Will, but the circumstance that we possess it while the Greeks were entirely ignorant of it, that gives it high symbolical import.²


²Spengler, The Decline of the West, p. 310.
The designation of Western Culture as a Will-Culture is significant of the historical disposition of its soul. The expression of the first person distinguishes the idiom, *ego habeo factum* which replaced the less dynamic *fei*. The flying buttress is an _I_. Will identified itself with space in the exploration of the Westerner as, for example, in the act of Columbus. There is another illustration of the similarity between space-as-depth and will in the depth-perspective of oil painting. The artist conceived the space-field as infinite; the observer chooses his distance and thus defines his dominion. Similarly Baroque drama co-ordinates scenic representation and character. It is primarily a tragedy of willing. Life develops from within outward; in the Greek drama the tragic comes from the outside. Baroque architecture, too, is forceful and massive. "Vignola's facade of the Gesu in Rome is will become stone."  

In contrast to the dynamic of the Western culture is the static of life of the Classical soul. The Greek envisaged the soul "as an Olympus of little gods and to keep these at peace and in harmony with one another is the ideal."  

Logically the Western drama is a maximum of activity.  

A Baroque tragedy is nothing but this same directive character, man, as incarnate will brought into and developed in the light-world, and shown as a curve instead of as an equation, as kinetic instead of as poten-

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3Ibid., p. 311.  
4Ibid., p. 319.  
5Ibid., p. 313.  
6Loc. cit.
tial energy. The visible person is the character as potential, the action the character at work. 7

An inquiry into the intense Will-Culture of Corneille reveals:

Il n'est pas difficile de comprendre ce qu'il a représenté pour son créateur: une transcription de son propre élan interieur, certes, de sa volonté de dominer, mais aussi une pâle revanche sur le destin. Peut-être... Pierre Corneille trouve alors dans sa mythologie personnelle ce héros qui est maître de lui comme de l'univers et pour se venger, il en caresse longuement le dessin. 8

The critic has inquired concerning the dominance of the influence of the

Quarrel of Le Cid upon Corneille:

Ou y a-t-il plutôt, déjà, un refus de se lasser toucher, un désir de ne chercher dans l'art qu'une patrie idéale, sans amour, sans passion, un terrain vide pour luttes oratoires? 9

The student may not know his response according to the theory expressed in the "Examen" of Le Cid. Corneille reveals in the review that it is a retrospect dated many years after the presentation of Le Cid. 10 Nevertheless, the play itself manifests Corneille's avoidance of the choice of hero possessed of an hamartia. The poetic theory expressed in the "Examen" is identical with that employed in the composition of the play. A comparison of the French poetic theory with the Aristotelian emphasizes le héros cornélien, être de fer.

7Spengler, op. cit.


9 Ibid., pp. 184, 185.

There remains, then the character between these two extremes, that of a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity but by some error or frailty.\(^\text{11}\)

A critic has described the mécanisme cornélien which Corneille employed as an older writer but which he appropriated also though less frequently in constructing comedies.\(^\text{13}\)

Brasillach believes that Corneille's interpretation of character in serious plays is orientated by the trend of thought suggested in La Querelle du Cid. Thus after the first silence in the career of Corneille, Augustus is but the poet's idealization of the graduate of a college which emphasized mastery of the ego. The critic sees in the text of the play the mise-en-scène of the lessons of Corneille's masters:

\[\text{Mais désormais, après les conseils du silence dans une œuvre qui prend une direction assez différente de la direction de Clitandre et du Cid, on peut dire qu'on a vu naître un nouveau personnage . . . et qu'elle la postérité appellerà, avec sa manie simplificatrice, . . . le héro corinéien.}\(^\text{14}\)

Corneille's aim in a system of Will-Culture was a very powerful Will. He represented a protagonist shaping destiny with the instrument of will as a

\(^{\text{11}}\) Poetics. xiii. 3.

\(^{\text{12}}\) Corneille, loc. cit.

\(^{\text{13}}\) Brasillach, op. cit., p. 188, citing Jules Lemaitre.

\(^{\text{14}}\) Ibid., p. 186.
sculptor cuts away marble with a tool. His faith in the "imaginative will," is vivifying like Wordsworth's. He expressed confidence in its capability. "Qui veut mourir, ou vaincre, est vaincu rarement."\(^\text{15}\)

Brasillach complains of Corneille's choosing, for the theatre, characters endowed with very powerful will. He ventures:

\[
\text{Si cela était possible, Corneille montrerait l'acte volontaire en soi, hors, du monde des accidents, sans une matière où il s'applique, se prenant lui-même pour but.}\text{16}
\]

Corneille asserts that a plot for such characters should have for its theme a great affair of state or some passion more virile than that of love. While he does not fail to consider love as an interest he does definitely regard this emotion as a consideration of secondary importance.\(^\text{17}\)

To visualize the effect of his choice one may employ a metaphor of Mather. The reader may imagine the plaiting of a braid in the colors of Rubens' triad; azure, rose and corn yellow. Whichever tint of the triad be chosen for the beginning of the plaiting will not thus gain predominance. If a strand of a tint be doubled or tripled, however, what a difference will be effected.\(^\text{18}\) It is of consequence, too, when, of the choices Corneille had for theme, he doubled and tripled many times over the choice of "quelque passion . . . plus mâle que l'amour."

\(^{15}\)Horace, II, i, 382-385.

\(^{16}\)Brasillach, op. cit., p. 188.

\(^{17}\)Corneille, Discours du poème dramatique, I, 24.

If Corneille require of la haute vertu that she leave the emotions unmitigated in order that the triumph of the will be more glorious, so too does he demand that la haute vertu dominate its environment.\textsuperscript{19}

Each of the protagonists of Corneille's chief works is integer vitae despite inharmonious environment. The achievement is manifest amid the assaults of Rodrigue, Horace, Augustus, Polyestê, Rodogune, Héraclius and Nicomède and of other characters of the less familiar plays.

Corneille's desire of representation of the increasingly powerful will is seen by comparing the characters of Rodrigue and Nicomède. Although Rodrigue is capable of reasoning at the greatest intensity of emotion he experiences, he does have, momentarily, the discord of his own divided will.

\textldots; Allons, mon âme; et puisqu'il faut mourir, Mourons du moins sans offenser Chimène.

Mourir sans tirer ma raison!
Rechercher un trépas si mortel à ma gloire!
Endurer que l'Espagne impute à ma mémoire
D'avoir mal soutenu l'honneur de ma maison;
Respecter un amour dont mon âme égarée
Voit la perte assurée;
N'écoutez plus ce penser suborneur,
Qui ne sert qu'à ma peine.
Allons, mon bras, sauvons du moins l'honneur,
Puisqu'après tout il faut perdre Chimène.\textsuperscript{20}

On the contrary Nicomède does not know the discord of a divided will. Nicomède was composed about fifteen years after the presentation of Le Cid. It

\textsuperscript{19} "Examen," Nicomède, Oeuvres de P. Corneille, V, 507.

\textsuperscript{20} Le Cid, III, vi, 329-340.
is the play written the year which is the chronological center of Corneille's career as playwright. There is about Nicomède a certain raideur and artifice which distinguishes the later heroes of Corneille.

At the core of Nicomède is the powerful will's mastery of environment.

... la grandeur de courage y règne seule, et regarde son malheur d'un œil si dédaigneux qu'il n'en saurait arracher une plainte.

Corneille explains in the "Examen" of Nicomède his disregard of poetic theory concerning tragedy:

Voici une pièce d'une constitution assez extraordinaire: aussi est-ce la vingt et unième que j'ai mise sur le théâtre; et après y avoir fait réciter quarante mille vers, il est bien malaisé de trouver quelque chose de nouveau, sans s'écarter un peu du grand chemin, et se mettre au hasard de s'égarer.

The poet specifies the change he refers to by indicating:

La tendresse et les passions, qui doivent être l'âme des tragédies, n'ont aucune part en celle-ci: la grandeur de courage y règne seule, et regarde son malheur d'un œil si dédaigneux qu'il n'en saurait arracher une plainte.

Croce points to the simple truth when he observes that "... e non rendono possibile l'impossibile." The standard method of conveying the sense of character of Nicomède must be by the exhibition of objective acts. It would indeed be converting the impossible into the possible had Corneille

23 Loc. cit.
achieved a dramatic effect in his treatment of "la grandeur de courage in Nicomède."

Elle y est combattue par la politique, et n'oppose à ses artifices qu'une prudence généreuse, qui marche à visage découvert, qui prévoit le péril sans s'émouvoir, et qui ne veut point d'autre appui que celui de sa vertu et de l'amour qu'elle imprime dans les coeurs de tous les peuples. 25

Corneille, at the close of the "Examen" of the play, expressed his pleasure at the change he made in Aristotelian theory regarding the definition of tragic function:

Dans l'admiration qu'on a pour sa vertu, je trouve une manière de purger les passions dont n'a point parlé Aristote, et qui est peut-être plus sûre que celle qu'il prescrit à la tragédie par le moyen de la pitié et de la crainte. L'amour qu'elle nous donne pour cette vertu que nous admirons, nous imprime de la haine pour le vice contraire. La grandeur de courage de Nicomède nous laisse une aversion de la pusillanimité; et la généreuse reconnaissance d'Héraclius, qui expose sa vie pour Martian, à qui il est redevable de la sienne, nous jette dans l'horreur de l'ingratitude. 26

The spectator cannot but remark:

What is disastrous is that the writer should deliberately give rein to his "individuality," that he should even cultivate his differences from others; and that his readers should cherish the author of genius, not in spite of his deviations from the inherited wisdom of the race, but because of them. 27

The powerful will manifests itself. Its course is straight, unswerving, like

that of a mountain torrent. It is cold, ironic. The spectator looks about a world of intrigue, violence, and suspicion. A family is cleft by strife. The imagery is grim, belligerent.

Je vous vois à regret, tant mon coeur amoureux
Trouve la cour pour vous un séjour dangereux. 28

Préparez-vous à voir par toute votre terre
Ce qu'ont de plus affreux les fureurs de la guerre,
Des montagnes de morts, des rivières de sang. 29

Retourner à l'armée ah! sachez que la Reine
Le sème d'assassins achetés par sa haine. 30

The powerful will of Nicomède is self-poisoned. He has incurred paternal and royal displeasure by succeeding too well.

Te le dirai-je Araspe? il m'a trop bien servi;
Augmentant mon pouvoir, il me l'a tout ravi;
Il n'est plus mon sujet qu'autant qu'il le veut être;
Et qui me fait régner en effet est mon maître.
Pour paraître à mes yeux son mérite est trop grand:
On n'aime point à voir ceux à qui l'on doit tant.
Tout ce qu'il a fait parle au moment qu'il m'approche;
Et sa seule présence est un secret reproche:
Elle me dit toujours qu'il m'a fait trois fois roi;
Que je tiens plus de lui qu'il ne tiendra de moi;
Et que si je lui laisse un jour une couronne,
La tête en porte trois que sa valeur me donne.
J'en rougis dans mon âme... 31

The noun fer is typical of the play. Le héros cornélien possesses a

will of this metal.

28 Nicomède, I, i, 9-11.
29 Ibid., III, i, 783-785.
31 Ibid., II, i, 413-425.
Seigneur, si j'ai raison, qu'importe à qui je sois? Perd-elle de son prix pour emprunter ma voix?32

The iron fortitude of Nicomède clangs a protest against any discordant force.

A ce dernier moment la conscience presse; Pour rendre compte aux Dieux tout respect humain cesse. . . . 33

The opening line of the play sounds a keynote of triumph for powerful will:

Après tant de hauts faits, il m'est bien doux, Seigneur, . . . 34

The lines which end the play have the same tonality.

Prince, qu'à ce défaut vous aurez son estime, Telle que doit l'attendre un coeur si magnanime. 35

The first person singular which Nicomède employs to describe a military manoeuvre bespeaks his confidence in his will to power:

Je la défendrai seul, attaquez-la de même.36

Par mon dernier combat je voyois réunie La Cappadoce entière avec la Bithynie, . . . 37

The suggestion of resistlessness blends with the suggestion of the imperialism of Rome. There is frequent mention of her great power and her plan to annex Bithynia.

De quoi se mêle Rome, et d'où prend le sénat Vous vivant, vous raignant ce droit sur votre État?38

32 Ibid., I, ii, 189-191.  
33 Ibid., IV, ii, 1259-1262.  
34 Ibid., I, i, 1.  
35 Ibid., V, ix, 1847-1849.  
36 Ibid., I, iii, 271.  
37 Ibid., I, i, 27-29.  
38 Ibid., II, iii, 557-559.
The imagery of laurel introduces the triumph suggestion which will be emphasized throughout the play by the static of powerful will:

De voir, sous les lauriers qui vous couvrent la tête
Un si grand conquérant. . . .39

There is the suggestion of violent powerfulness in Prusias’ menace to the fiancée of Nicomède:

Préparez-vous à voir par toute votre terre
Ce qu’ont de plus affreux les fureurs de la guerre,
Des montagnes de morts, des rivières de sang.40

Nicomède promises a vengeance of blood:

L’offense une fois faite à ceux de notre rang
Ne se répare point que par des flots de sang.41

The imagery of imperial Rome is blended in the pure will theme of Nicomède:

Carthage étant détruite, Antiochus défait
Rien de nos volontés ne peut troubler l’effet:
Tout fléchit sur la terre, et tout tremble sur l’onde;
Et Rome est aujourd’hui la maîtresse du monde.42

The Prince endowed with the powerful will “marche . . . et ne veut point d’autre appui que celui de sa vertu, et de l’amour qu’elle imprime dans les coeurs de tous les peuples.”43 Thus does the will of le héros cornélien rival the imperial will of Rome:

. . . est ce d’avoir conquis
Trois sceptres, que ma perte expose à votre fils?

39 Ibid., I, i, 4-6.
40 Ibid., III, i, 783-788.
41 Ibid., IV, ii, 1225-1227.
42 Ibid., III, ii, 905-909.
D'avoir porté si loin vos armes dans l'Asie,
Que même votre Rome en a pris jalousie?44

The terse, frequent, laconic repartee in the dignified alexandrine is a fitting expression of the Nicomédian will:

Pure will distinctly silhouettes Nicomède as a Colossus in contrast to the conspirators of the palace intrigue. To the father who announced that the eldest son is to be sent to Rome as a hostage Nicomède's accent is that of scorn:

J'irai, j'irai, Seigneur, vous le voulez ainsi,
Et j'y serai plus roi que vous n'êtes ici.45

Nicomède expresses conscious superiority of the powerfulness of his will when he assures the king:

Tout est calme, Seigneur: un moment de ma vue
A soudain apaisé la populace émue.46

Nicomède seeks to reward himself for the realization of his will to power by frequent allusion to his achievements.

Et quand il forcera la nature à se taire,
Trois sceptres à son trône attachés par mon bras
Parleront au lieu d'elle, et ne se tairont pas.47

Par mon dernier combat je voyois réunie
La Cappadoce entière avec la Bithynie.48

The kinship of the minor character, Attale, with Nicomède serves to

44Nicomède, IV, i, 1153-1157.
46Ibid., V, ix, 1779-1781.
47Ibid., I, i, 104-107.
48Ibid., I, i, 27-29.
heighten the splendor of Nicomedian will:

Ah! laissez-moi toujours à cette digne marque
Reconnaître en mon sang un vrai sang de monarque.49

The strength of will of Nicomède is that which effects extension rather
than destruction:

Votre amour maternel veut voir règner mon frère;
Et je contribuerai moi-même à ce dessein, ... .
Oui, l'Asie à mon bras offre encore des conquêtes,
Et pour l'en couronner mes mains sont toutes prêtes.50

The father and stepmother of Nicomède try to cause the powerful will of Nico-
ède to be a barrier to membership in the unity of a family group. For exam-
ple Prusias declares:

Je ne suis plus ton père, obéis à ton roi.51

It is interesting to observe that reliance is placed in powers other than
the pure will of the main character. Laodice, the fiancée of Nicomède con-
nects the powerful will of her lover and his reign over the hearts of the
people. Nicomède satisfies the soldiers and the citizens:

Le peuple ici vous aime, et hait ces coeurs infâmes;
Et c'est être bien fort que règner sur tant d'âmes.52

Arsinœ, the stepmother of the Prince, is cautious because of the loyalty
Nicomède inspires:

Irriter un vainqueur en tête d'une armée

49 Ibid., V, ix, 1823-1825.
50 Ibid., V, ix, 1800-1805.
51 Ibid., IV, iii, 1330.
52 Ibid., I, i, 115-117.
Prête à suivre en tous lieux sa colère allumée
C’était trop hasarder; 53

Prusias reckons perforce:

Il est l’astre naissant qu’adorent mes États;
Il est le Dieu du peuple et celui des soldats. 54

Nicomède himself refers to the people’s revolt against his oppressors as an
dexpression of sympathy:

Pardonnez à ce peuple un peu trop de chaleur
Qu’à sa compassion a donné mon malheur; 55

It is the Prince who attributes the achievement of his will to power to the
supernatural:

Grâces aux immortels, l’effort de mon courage
Et ma grandeur future ont mis Rome en ombraje: 56

In the last scene of the play, which is basic for the study of Corneille’s
interpretation of powerful will, the spectator sees Nicomède as the brother of
the Prince would have him seen:

Pour voir votre vertu dans son plus haut éclat;
Pour la voir seule agir contre notre injustice,
Sans la préoccuper par ce foible service; 57

Thus does Corneille arrange that Nicomède forgive all his persecutors before
realizing the claim to clemency that one of them, his brother, merited. The
significance of Prusias’ identification of Nicomède’s volition and achievement

53 Ibid., I, v, 327-330.
54 Ibid., II, i, 449-451.
55 Ibid., V, ix, 1793-1795.
56 Ibid., II, iii, 658-661.
57 Ibid., V, ix, 1830-1833.
is realized:

Qu'il n'a qu'à l'entreprendre, et peut tout ce qu'il veut. 58

Conquest of self and mastery of environment characterize the static of the powerful will of le héros cornélien.

If Corneille represents the protagonist possessed of a powerful will mastering self and environment, Schopenhauer would have his will discordant, impactuous. Clearly he defines that tragedy is the strife of the will with itself, which here, completely unfolded at the highest grade of its objectivity comes into fearful prominence. 59

Schopenhauer differs from Corneille also in the means he proposes as suited for attaining peace for the protagonist. Corneille proposes that the character conquer; Schopenhauer that he surrender.

... in some single case, this knowledge, strife of the will with itself as the nature of the world and existence purified and heightened by suffering itself, reaches the point at which the phenomenon, the veil of Maya, no longer deceives it. It sees through the form of the phenomenon, the principium individuationis. The egoism which rests on this perishes with it, so that now the motives that were so powerful before have lost their might, and instead of them the complete knowledge of the nature of the world, which has a quieting effect on the will, produces resignation, the surrender not merely of life, but of the very will to live. Thus we see in tragedies the noblest men, after long conflict and suffering, at last renounce the ends they have so keenly followed, and all the pleasures of life forever, or else freely and joyfully surrender life itself. 60

58 Ibid., II, i, 429.


60 Ibid., 327.
With the powerful will superior to antagonistic forces the collateral problem is to determine the effect of this ascendancy upon dramatic action.

If it be true that it is only in reflection that to will and to act are different, that in reality they are one, the powerful will which has "de sa gloire fasse taire sa passion" is eccentric from the encircling requisite of Brunetièr:

Brunetièr's statement is in reality an amplification of:

in describing what the persons of tragedy do and suffer Aristotle uses the verb dran, the strongest possible word.

Hebbel, in agreement with Hegel and Nietzsche enriched the connotation of Aristotle's use of the verb dran. Hebbel considers art a revelation of reality. Like Tolstoi, moreover, he believed the great reality to be "the fundamental contradiction of life," the strife between egoism and altruism.

Reflection upon a phrase of Aristotle's definition of tragedy, "... an imitation of an action" suggests the inherent contradiction of the terms con-

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61 Ibid., 130.
63 Cooper, The Poetics of Aristotle Its Meaning and Influence, p. 32.
65 Ibid., p. 12.
flict and powerful will. Schopenhauer summarizes:

Thus it is that every epic and dramatic poem can only represent a struggle, an effort, a fight for happiness, never enduring and complete happiness itself. It conducts its heroes through a thousand difficulties and dangers to the goal; as soon as this is reached, it hastens to let the curtain fall; ... 67

The powerful will logically tends to minimize conflict.

An inquiry into the possibility of expression of powerful will through exterior dramatic action is another approach to the comprehension of their mutual exclusiveness. A representation of character which gives the will peculiar prominence subsumes cause as the center of interest rather than result. There will be the elaboration of interior rather than exterior action.

A study of Corneille's description of powerful will illustrates its dual force; conquest of self, mastery of environment; its dual effect; negation of conflict, non-utterance in deed.

Corneille's choice of diction, whether for Nicomede or the minor characters reveals the qualities of l'être de fer. The characterization of the Prince, the flawless hero, strong-willed, consciously superior, offers an iron-will association. The imagery of the laurel-crowned conqueror and imperial Rome are intertwined. Rhetoric, description of person and imagery are of interpretative value in forging the hard shape of powerful will, le héros cornélien.

66 Poetics, vi. 2.
67 Schopenhauer, op. cit., Vol. 1, Bk. 4, 508.
CHAPTER III

THE WILL IN TRAGEDIES OF CORNEILLE

It is a recognized aesthetic principle that the stronger the Will is, the less possibility there is for tragedy, action and conflict. Some of Corneille's chief works will now be analyzed in the light of this truth.

The question to be applied to the plays is: Has Corneille succeeded in making powerful will dramatic? The first consideration concerning the Cid is whether Corneille offers:

an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality.\(^1\)

In discussing the Cid it is helpful to consider Corneille's appreciation of the motivating force of the hero. In the dedicatory epistle of the play he wrote:

\[\text{Ladame,}
\text{Ce portrait vivant que je vous offre représente un héros assez reconnaissable aux lauriers dont il est couvert. Sa vie a été une suite continuelle de victoires; . . .} \]

In the "Examen" of the Cid he states:

\[\ldots\text{et la haute vertu . . . a quelque chose de plus touchant, de plus élevé et de plus aimable que cette médiocre bonté, capable d'une faiblesse, et même d'un crime, ou nos anciens étaient contraints d'arrêter le caractère le plus parfait des rois et des princes dont}\]

\(^1\)Poetics, vi. 9.

\(^2\)"Epitre," [dédicatoire], Le Cid, Œuvres de P. Corneille, III, 77.
ils faisoient leurs héros défigurant ce qu'ils leur laissoient de vertu, ... 3

In the text of the play it is pertinent to observe that to emphasize la haute vertu Corneille endows Rodrigue with complete knowledge concerning the ideal of honor which his father expects him to defend. The count is content with his son's comprehension of the magnitude of the offense perpetrated by Don Gomes:

Enfin tu sais l'affront, et tu tiens la vengeance! 4

Having been enlightened concerning a champion's duty Rodrigue avows the stress of combat:

Que je sens de rudes combats!
Contre mon propre honneur mon amour s'intéresse: ... 5

During the déliberation of three stanzas the rudes combats are elaborated in verses as:

Fer que causes ma peine,
M'es-tu donné pour venger mon honneur?
M'es-tu donné pour perdre ma Chimène? 6

The fifth stanza includes what is very probably the most significant line of the play since it affirms the resolution of the hero's will. He will sacrifice the love of Chimène.

N'écoutez plus ce penser suborneur, 7

4 Le Cid, I, v, 286.
5 Ibid., I, vi, 301-303.
6 Ibid., I, vi, 318-321.
7 Ibid., I, vi, 337.
Rodrigue, possessing a fixed will, acts immediately. Yet one gains knowledge of the action but through the speech of a minor character. It is Don Alonso who announces to the king that Rodrigue has vanquished the father of Chimène:

Sire, le Comte est mort:
Don Diégue, par son fils, a vengé son offense.8

Naturally the fact of Rodrigue's having taken the life of Don Gomes reacts forcibly upon Chimène. She pleads:

Il est juste, grand Roi, qu'un meurtrier périsse.9

For a second time Corneille endeavors to deny the static in the sphere of the strong willed hero. The complaint of Chimène is ordered to conjure the shape of another obstacle, the rapacity of the Moors. Rodrigue's father accordingly counsels:

... Ne borne pas ta gloire à venger un affront;
Porte-la plus avant; force par ta vaillance
Ce monarque au pardon, et Chimène au silence;10

Logically, with the conquest of the Moors the young captain gains the pardon of the king:

J'excuse ta chaleur à venger ton offense;
Et l'État défendu me parle en ta défense;
Crois que dorénavant Chimène a beau parler,
Je ne l'écoute plus que pour la consoler.11

Rodrigue's gallant service to his country does not dissuade Chimène from her resolve to have him punished for having wronged her. She insists:

8Ibid., II, vii, 633-635.
9Ibid., II, viii, 738.
10Ibid., III, vi, 1092-1095.
11Ibid., IV, iii, 1253-1257.
Puisque vous refusez la justice à mes larmes,
Sire, permettez-moi de recourir aux armes;
C'est par là seulement qu'il a su outrager,
Et c'est aussi par là que je me dois venger.
A tous vos cavaliers je demande sa tête:
Oui, qu'un d'eux me l'apporte, et je suis sa conquête;
Qu'ils le combattent, Sire; et le combat fini,
J'épouse le vainqueur, si Rodrigue est puni.\[12\]

Corneille now chooses a third obstacle to glance the firmness of the
will of the Cid. A minor character, Don Sanche, offers to avenge Chimène by
waging combat with Rodrigue:

Faites ouvrir le champ: vous voyez l'assaillant;
Je suis ce téméraire, ou plutôt ce vaillant.
Accordez cette grace à l'ardeur qui me presse,
Madame: vous savez quelle est votre promesse.\[13\]

The foregoing application of the principle of the inverse proportion
existent between powerful will and dramatic action reveals a significant fact.
Rodrigue expressed strong volition in the stance early in the play, specifically
in the sixth scene of the first act. By this strong volition Rodrigue made
the decision regarding preference for the defense of his father to love for
Chimène.

N'écoutez plus ce penser suborneur,\[14\]
The situations narrated in the remaining four acts of the play are inter-
penetrated repercussions of the reactions of minor characters against le fer
de la volonté cornélienne of the hero. It was found to be a thing of integ-

\[12\]Ibid., IV, v, 1397-1405.
\[13\]Ibid., IV, v, 1439-1443.
\[14\]Ibid., I, vi, 337.
The second condition of tragedy to which the relationship of will is to be compared is that of conflict. A collision is the theme of the first four stanzas of Rodrigue's soliloquy. D'Aubignac classifies the reflection as a discours pathétique rather than a délégation. His exposition of the character of such a discours is:

Vous y voyez des esprits agités par des mouvements contraires, poussez de différentes passions, emportez à des desseins extrêmes, dont le Spectateur ne sauroit prévoir l'événement, les discours y portent le caractère Théâtral; ils sont impétueux et par les raisonnements et par les figures; et c'est plutôt l'image d'une âme au milieu de ses Bourreaux, que d'un homme qui délibère au milieu de ses amis.15

The dissonance in Rodrigue's will is not prolonged, however. In the stance marked by six strophes the fifth strophe expresses his grave decision regarding the sacrifice of the love of Chimène. The stance is terminated with the end of the first act.

The second point of inquiry is whether there is exteriorization of the conflict in Rodrigue's will. One critic has described the poem as being a "commentary in Alexandrines."16 The struggle of the divided will of Rodrigue is assuredly a conflict in Alexandrines. Corneille is content to have Rodrigue's utterance in word substitute for that representation of inward activity which passes out of the sphere of emotion into the region of deed.

The spectator becomes familiar with the situations of the following four acts but through the medium of aural comprehension. Though the young captain


16Croce, op. cit., p. 265, quoting Klein.
is victorious in the battle with the Moors the great feat is revealed in a communication of Chimène's confidante. A detailed account of the attack is learned but through a narration of the hero himself:

Trois heures de combat laissent à nos guerriers
Une victoire entière et deux rois prisonniers.
La valeur de leur chef ne trouvait point d'obstacles.  

The last obstacle which Corneille proposes through the instrumentality of minor characters is, as has been indicated, Don Sanche's challenge to Rodrigue. The mode of representation parallels that of other situations—narration by a secondary personage. Don Fernand announces:

Chimène, sors d’erreur, ton amant n’est pas mort,
Et Don Sanche vaincu t’a fait un faux rapport.  

Yet "drama does not take exclusive refuge in the lyric presence of soul-life, as such stands in contrast to an external world, but propounds such a life in and through its external realization." Corneille's failure to propound "such a life in and through its external realization" contributes to the uneaesthetic movement of the piece.

The third condition of tragedy with which the relationship of strength of will is to be studied is that of character. The Aristotelian theory of construction of plot is interpenetrated with that of the ideal tragic character:

There remains, then, the character between these two extremes,—that of a man who is not eminently good

17Le Cid, IV, 1, 1107-1110.
18Ibid., V, vi, 1743-1745.
and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty. 20

In the "Examen" of the Cid Corneille rejects the theory of the ideal tragic hero tainted with a primal defect. 21

After the exclusively interior and therefore undramatic conflict of the instance, 22 Rodrigue is represented as integer vitae. Had his choice been otherwise regarding:

L'un m'anime le coeur, l'autre retient mon bras. 23

his character would have created dramatic interest.

Since it is axiomatic that the perfection of being is determined according to its achievement of its end, it is necessary to investigate whether the Cornelian hero, the Cid, inspires pity and fear, that "distinctive mark of tragic imitation." 24 Hegel explained the effect of vital sympathy. Lalo evaluates this tenet of Hegel's philosophy of fine art as being the basis of le sentimentalisme esthétique allemand. "Le but de l'homme dans l'art," disait déjà Hegel, "est de retrouver dans les objets extérieurs son propre moi. 25 But the spectator gropes in vain for this reflection in the hero of the Cid. Corneille's Cid does not represent Rodrigue as man is. To express the

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20 Poetics. xiii. 3.
22 Hegel, loc. cit.
23 Le Cid, I, vi, 304.
24 Poetics. xiii. 3.
cause of the spectator's disappointment differently one may say that in the Cid Corneille has failed to create a pure symbol of poetic vision.

If Corneille has failed to exteriorize the action of the Cid in a representation of conflict, it will be of interest to investigate the purposefulness of the kind of action he does narrate. It is intertwined with the history of the century in which he lived.

The life span of Corneille was three quarters of the seventeenth century. This era was dominated by the defense of the doctrine of free will, since the heretical teaching of predetermined will was being opposed to it. Corneille resolved to incorporate in his poetical works the doctrine of free will. 26 Racine, on the contrary, preferred to dramatize situations representing the heretical teaching regarding the will predetermined to defeat. The utter failure of a character of Racine to conquer self illustrates the false teaching concerning predetermined will. 27 The high success of the Cornelian character in controlling self exemplifies the true doctrine, freedom of the will.

In his poetic theory Corneille avows candidly the end which he believes the dramatic poet should achieve. He links it with an exposition of strong will:

Il est vrai qu'Aristote, dans tout son Traité de la Poétique, n'a jamais employé ce mot une seule fois; [l'utilité] qu'il attribue l'origine de la poésie au plaisir que nous prenons à voir imiter les actions des hommes; ... mais il n'est pas moins vrai qu'Horace nous apprend que nous ne saurions plaire à


27 Lanson, Histoire de la littérature française, p. 545.
Corneille details the method of effecting the desired end:

...en la naïve peinture des vices et des vertus, qui ne manque jamais à faire son effet, quand elle est bien achevée, et que les traits en sont si reconnaissables qu'on ne les peut confondre l'un dans l'autre, ni prendre le vice pour vertu. Celle-ci se fait alors toujours aimer, quoique malheureuse; et celui-là se fait toujours haïr, bien que triomphant.29

The decision to be deplored is—Corneille chose the material, pure will, for dramatic form. Are they not contradictory terms?

If the suggested interpolations are made in the following criticism one has a summary of the initial error of the Norman poet:

All the grandeur of subject matter, all the greatness and importance of theme is not what makes [dramatic] poetry. It helps, doubtless, but sometimes the significance of the theme so overpowers the poet that he forgets that he is a [dramatic] poet, turning himself into an apologist or a torch bearer.30

In classifying the poetry of Corneille it is interesting to study a plan which is comprehensive. A modern esthetician suggests a classification which transcends Volkelt's scheme. The more recent criticism describes "Corneille as rarely sublime, almost always heroic and at his worst merely grandiose."31

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28 Discours de l'utilité et des parties du poème dramatique, Oeuvres de P. Corneille, I, 17.
29 Ibid., I, 20.
31 Eather, Concerning Beauty, p. 280.
The Cid very probably may be placed in the category, "heroic."

In applying to the Cid the question whether or not Corneille has succeeded in making powerful will dramatic, one may outline the result of the analysis. Corneille in choosing powerful will as material inhibits the representation of dramatic action, conflict and character, the conditions sine qua non of tragedy.

The next investigation will be concerned with applying to Cinna the question: has Corneille succeeded in making powerful will dramatic? A superficial examination of the text would cause the reader to inquire whether numerous délégations could possibly permit its dramatic diction to conform to the principles of the Hegelian theory.

...But none the less this unveiling of the individual heart-life, if it is to remain dramatic, ought not merely to be the exploitation of a vague and variable cloud of emotions, memories, and visions; it should keep its relation to the action constant throughout, should make its result identical with that of the different phases of the same;32

In what does the action of Cinna consist with which the dramatic diction is to keep this strict relation? The first act is comprised of the délégations of Emilie, the entreaties of the confidante that Emilie take no part in the conspiracy against Auguste, the exposition of the scheme by Cinna, as well as shorter expressions of fear and courage when the chiefs of the conspiracy are summoned by the Emperor. Of the three hundred fifty-five lines of the act about two hundred fifty lines are narrative or expository in character. Yet the definition of soul-life in the drama passes into the sphere of impulse, 

32Hegel, op. cit., pp. 264, 265.
...in a word, effective action. The first act does not offer an actual presence of action. It does not provide a basis of comparison for compression or expansion of narration.

The consultation of Auguste, Cinna, Maxime, regarding the question of abdication monopolizes the second act of approximately three hundred fifty lines, about three hundred are those of délibération. Corneille has neglected "the aspect of positive external fact." Of the five scenes of the third act, the second, third, and fourth are composed almost exclusively of Cinna's délibération concerning whether or not he will execute the plan of the assassination of Auguste. The unveiling of the individual heart-life is undramatic if it be merely "the exploitation of a vague and variable cloud of emotions, memories..." Corneille contents himself with this sort of disclosure rather than with "the emotional equivalent of thought." Yet the essential function of poetry is not intellectual, but emotional. He does not permit the auditor to make any visual discovery of action in Cinna.

The fourth act of six scenes has two scenes devoted entirely to délibérations while the others but narrate the betrayal of the conspiracy and the supposed suicide of Maxime. This is an extreme interpretation of:

33 Ibid., p. 252.
34 Ibid., p. 265.
35 Loc. cit.
We may have the records of narrative. But these also, in general dramatic compression, ought to be marked with greater compression. .. 37

The fifth act is filled with discourses which elaborate mental suffering of Auguste in discovering the conspiracy of the ungrateful Cinna, Laxime, and Exilie. Yet:

we deduced from the fact of the drama's presenting an action distinct and independent in its actually visible development the conclusion that a fully complete sensuous reproduction is also essential. .. 38

The spectator of Cinna will agree that Corneille has not adapted the action to an external realization. An inquiry into Corneille's treatment of conflict, the second condition sine qua non of tragedy, reveals a beautiful study in the evolution of the character of Auguste. It affords, too, an interesting study of Christian principles for the governance of rulers. The investigator seeks the representation of dramatic conflict, however.

If the spectator assumes with a critic that "conflict is the soul of tragedy" 39 and with Schopenhauer that the important thing should be enacted, 40 he watches expectantly for an exteriorization of conflict in Cinna. Instead, as the play progresses he realizes that he can arrive at the conflict only by thought and not by vision. Corneille presents Auguste in the first scene of the second act.

37 Hegel, loc. cit.
38 Ibid., p. 293.
Cet empire absolu sur la terre et sur l'onde,
Ce pouvoir souverain que j'ai sur tout le monde,
Cette grandeur sans borne et cet illustre rang,
Qui m'a jadis couté tant de peine et de sang,
Enfin tout ce qu'adoire en ma haute fortune
D'un courtisan flatteur la présence impromptue,
L'est que de ces beautés dont l'éclat éblouit.
Et qu'on cesse d'aimer sitôt qu'on en jouit.\textsuperscript{41}

The undramatic action of the piece is orientated toward the Emperor's desire-contentment.

l'ille ennemis secrets, la mort à tous propos,
Point de plaisir sans trouble, et jamais de repos.\textsuperscript{42}

Cinna counsels Auguste to continue in power.

Vous la replongerez, en quittant cet empire,
Dans les maux dont à peine encore elle respire,
Et de ce peu, Seigneur, qui lui reste de sang
Une guerre nouvelle épuisera son flanc.
Que l'amour du pays, que la pitié vous touche;
Votre Rome à genoux vous parle par ma bouche.\textsuperscript{43}

Toward the end of the scene Auguste acting upon the advice proferred decides:

N'en déliberons plus, cette pitié l'emporte.
Mon repos m'est bien cher, mais Rome est la plus forte;\textsuperscript{44}

The treachery of Cinna and Maxime is made known off stage to the Emperor.

Schopenhauer requires, however, that only those historical subjects are to be chosen, the chief part of which can be actually represented...\textsuperscript{45} In the fourth act Auguste appears in the second and third scenes. He admits that he

\textsuperscript{41}Cinna, II, i, 357-365.
\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., II, i, 375-377.
\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., II, i, 601-607.
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., II, i, 621-623.
\textsuperscript{45}Schopenhauer, op. cit., Vol. I, BK. 3, p. 299.
deserves the death that the conspirators were about to inflict upon him.

Quoi! tu veux qu'on t'épargne, et n'as rien épargné!
Songe aux fleuves de sang où ton bras s'est baigné, 46

This sentiment is gradually displaced by regret at his own seeming helplessness to stem the tide of hate.

Rome a pour ma ruine une hydre trop fertile:
Une tête coupée en fait naître mille, 47

His sense of inefficacy, however, is shortly influenced by his deep rooted love of power. He exclaims:

Ou laissez-moi périr, ou laissez-moi régner. 48

In the third scene the Empress pleads, seemingly in vain, for at the close of the scene she remarks:

Il m'échappe: suivons, et forcez-le de voir
Qu'il peut, en faisant grâce, affermir son pouvoir,
Et qu'enfin la clémence est la plus belle marque
Qui fasse à l'univers connoître un vrai monarque. 49

In the discourse of the last act Auguste is first overwhelmed by the added knowledge that his friend Maxime and his adopted daughter are members of the conspiracy.

He then cries defiantly:

En est-ce assez, Ô ciel! et le sort, pour me nuire,
A-t-il quelqu'un des miens qu'il veuille encore séduire?
Qu'il joigne à ses efforts le secours des enfers:

46 Cinna, IV, ii, 1131-33.
47 Ibid., IV, ii, 1165-1167.
48 Ibid., IV, ii, 1192.
49 Ibid., IV, iii, 1263-1267.
Je suis maître de moi comme de l'univers; Je le suis, je veux l'être. O siècles, o mémoire, Conservez à jamais ma dernière victoire! Je triomphe aujourd'hui du plus juste courroux De qui le souvenir puisse aller jusqu'à vous.50

The thought enshrined in

Je suis maître de moi comme de l'univers; Je le suis, je veux l'être.51

confirms Auguste as le héros cornélien. He prefers to conquer his desire to punish the traitors.

The conflict, talked of but not displayed in Cinna, shows Auguste, from the dramatist's point of view, to be the static captain of his will. Corneille does not explain mental conflict through the imagery of physical action. The spectator looks longingly for an exteriorization of conflict that would involve the psychic state.

The third consideration relevant to treatment of pure will in Cinna is the medium of action, character. Regarding the ideal tragic hero Aristotle declared:

It follows plainly . . . that the change of fortune presented must not be the spectacle of a bad man passing from adversity to prosperity; for nothing can be more alien to the spirit of Tragedy; it possesses no single tragic quality; . . . 52

The lack of conformity of the character Auguste to this principle will logically conclude in the inherent inability of the character of Auguste to

50 Ibid., V, iii, 1693-1701.
51 Ibid., V, iii, 1696-1697.
52 Poetics, xiii, 2.
provoke tragic pity or fear.

The phrase "love of power" crystallizes the essential content of Auguste's feeling and mental activity. Yet neither the use nor abuse of hamartia as it storms through the heart of Auguste excites to dramatic action. Corneille has sounded the depths of the soul-life of Auguste without an external precipitation of action. Moreover, the consideration that Auguste had already committed the outrages which place his life in jeopardy before the play begins suggest that he is an operated figure rather than a character.

In the determination of whether or not the character of Auguste is a medium for actions which will achieve the aesthetic function of tragedy it is pertinent to study Auguste in an effective scene of Cinna.

Auguste's words afford a portrait of himself:

En est-ce assez, ô ciel! et le sort, pour me nuire,
A-t-il quelqu'un des miens qu'il veuille encore séduire?
Qu'il joigne à ses efforts le secours des enfers;
Je suis maître de moi comme de l'univers;
Je le suis, je veux l'être.53

Here is le héro cornélien, the possessor of strong will. He accentuates the trait with

Je triomphe aujourd'hui ... 54

Will in the Schopenhauerian sense is the antithesis of the aesthetic ... frame of mind.55 As an exposition of this definition Schopenhauer asserted that because of its effectiveness and its difficulty of achievement tragedy

53Cinna, V, iii, 1693-1697.
54Ibid., V, iii, 1699.
55Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, p. 54.
is at the apex of the art of poetry. Schopenhauer continues:

...the end of this highest poetical achievement ends with "life itself." 56

The spectator realizes the jagged contrast that Auguste presents with:

Je suis maitre de moi comme de l'univers;
Je le suis, je veux l'être. C siècles, o mémoire,
Conservez à jamais ma dernière victoire!
Je triomphe aujourd'hui du plus juste courroux
De qui le souvenir puisse aller jusqu'à vous. 57

A recent classification of thirty-six possible dramatic situations designates that of Horace as the thirty-third. It is entitled "Necessity of Sacrificing Loved Ones." 58

It is interesting to study an elaboration of this situation, Horace, in the light of the Aristotelian principle of division of a tragic unit:

Every tragedy falls into two parts,--Complication and Unravelling or Denouement. Incidents extraneous to the action are frequently combined with a portion of the action proper, to form the Complication; the rest is the Unravelling. By the Complication I mean all that extends from the beginning of the action and the part which marks the turning-point to good or bad fortune. The Unravelling is that which extends from the beginning of the change to the end. 59

Corneille wisely determined to have the introduction 60 to the dramatic

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57 Cinna, V, iii, 1696-1701.
58 Georges Polti, The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations, tr. Lucille Ray (Boston: The Writer, 1940), pp. 73, 74.
59 Poetics, XVIII, 1.
60 Gustav Freytag, Technik des Dramas (Leipzig: Berlag Von S. Hirzel, 1894) pp. 102, 103.
action focus on a situation relatively near to the crisis.

Mais aujourd'hui qu'il faut que l'une ou l'autre tombe,
Qu'Albe devienne esclave, ou que Rome succombe. 61

He constructs the rising action to emphasize the suffering of the prolonged warfare between Rome and Alba. Sabine the wife of Horace expresses the unrest that this war, much like a civil war causes:

J'aurais pour mon pays une cruelle haine,
Si je pouvais encore être toute Romaine,
Et si je demandois votre triomphe aux Dieux,
Au prix de tant de sang qui m'est si précieux.
Je m'attache un peu moins aux intérêts d'un homme:
Je ne suis point pour Albe, et ne suis plus pour Rome;
Je crains pour l'une et l'autre en ce dernier effort,
Et serai du parti qu'affligera le sort.
Égale à tous les deux jusques à la victoire,
Je prendrai part aux maux sans en prendre à la gloire;
Et je garde, au milieu de tant d'après rieurs,
Mes larmes aux vaincus, et ma haine aux vainqueurs. 62

Corneille offers an exciting force 63 which elaborates Sabine's reflection:

L'aurait-on jamais cru? Déjà les deux armées,
D'une égale chaleur au combat animées,
Si meancroient des yeux, et marchant fièrement,
N'attendonnaient, pour donner, que la commandement,
Quand notre dictateur devant les rangs s'avance,
Demande à votre prince un moment de silence,
Et l'ayant obtenu: "Que faisons-nous, Romains,
Dit-il, et quel démon nous fait venir aux mains?
Souffrons que la raison éclaire enfin nos âmes:
Nous sommes vos voisins, nos filles sont vos femmes,
Et l'hymen nous a joints par tant et tant de noeuds,
Qu'il est peu de nos fils qui ne soient vos neveux.
Nous ne sommes qu'un sang et qu'un peuple en deux villes:
Pourquoi nous déchirer par des guerres civiles,

61 Horace, I, i, 79-81.
62 Horace, I, i, 83-95.
63 Freytag, op. cit., p. 102.
Oh la mort des vaincus affaiblit les vainqueurs,
Et le plus beau triomphe est arrosé de pleurs?
Nos ennemis communs attendent avec joie
Qu'un des partis défait leur donne l'autre en proie.64

This plea of the dictator will be realized by the spectator to have been a
portentous dramatic moment.

The rising action65 is the proposition of the dictator that the officials
of each city choose three warriors to combat in the name of the government
which they represent:

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 foible parti prenne loi du plus fort;
Mais sans indignité pour des guerriers si braves,
Qu'ils deviennent sujets sans devenir esclaves,
Sans honte, sans tribut, et sans autre rigueur
Que de suivre en tous lieux les drapeaux du vainqueur.
Ainsi nos deux Etats ne feront qu'un empire."66

The climax is the appointment of Horace and his two brothers champions
of Rome and of Curiae and his brothers to defend Alba.

Five scenes in the second act, the whole of the third act which is
devoted to the farewell of the warriors, and the first scene of the fourth act
are forceful. Thus Corneille has attained magnitude in the construction of
the middle part of the dramatic movement, but the center is almost devoid of
dramatic interest. The sixth scene of the third act will provoke the sense
of irony. The confidante reports a false interpretation of the flight of

64 Ibid., I, iii, 279-297.
65 Freytag, loc. cit.
66 Ibid., I, iii, 307-317.
Horace. The second scene of the following act reveals Horace had fled but to enable himself the better to encounter Curiacé and his brothers.

Trop foible pour eux tous, trop fort pour chacun d'eux,
Il sait bien se tirer d'un pas si dangereux;
Il fuit pour mieux combattre, et cette prompte ruse
Divise adroitement trois frères qu'elle abuse.

The tragic force is the death of Curiacé:

Horace, les voyant l'un de l'autre écarts,
Se retourne, et déjà les croit demi-domptés:
Il attend le premier, et c'était votre gendre.
L'autre, tout indigne qu'il ait ose l'attendre,
En vain en l'attaquant fait paraître un grand cœur;
Le sang qu'il a perdu ralentit sa vigueur.
Albe à son tour commence à craindre un sort contraire;
Elle crie au second qu'il secoure son frère:
Il se hâte et s'épuise en efforts superflus;
Il trouve en les joignant que son frère n'est plus.

The tragic force is intensified by Camille's dismal cry:

Hélas!

The return of the action is begun by Camille's resolve to express her resentment to her brother for having taken the life of her fiancée:

Dégénérons, mon cœur, d'un si vertueux père;
Soyons indigne soeur d'un si généreux frère;
C'est gloire de passer pour un cœur abattu,
Quand on a tout perdu, que sauroit-on plus craindre?
Pour ce cruel vainqueur n'ayez point de respect;

67 Examens, op. cit., III, 278, 279.
68 Horace, IV, ii, 1105-1109.
69 Freytag, loc. cit.
70 Horace, IV, ii, 1113-1123.
71 Ibid., IV, ii, 1123.
72 Freytag, loc. cit.
Loin d'éviter ses yeux, croissez à son aspect; Offensez sa victoire, irritez sa colère, Et prenez, s'il se peut, plaisir à lui déplaire. Il vient: préparons-nous à montrer constamment Ce que doit une amante à la mort d’un amant.  

The final suspense is of untenable construction for the mind of the spectator. Corneille hastens to the catastrophe without an interruption.

Camille’s invocation of evil upon Rome provokes her brother:

C'est trop, ma patience à la raison fait place; Va dedans les enfers plaindre ton Curiace.

The fifth is unfavorably criticized by Corneille himself:

Tout ce cinquième est encore une des causes du peu de satisfaction que laisse cette tragédie: il est tout en plaïçoyers, et ce n’est pas là la place des harangues ni des longs discours; ils peuvent être supportés en un commencement de pièce, où l’action n’est pas encore échauffée; mais le cinquième acte doit plus agir que discourir. L’attention de l’auditeur, déjà lassée, se rebute de ces conclusions qui trainent et tirent la fin en longueur.

Horace provides but another illustration of Corneille’s skill in the construction of la pièce bien faite. The structure is but a frame. Corneille did not utilize it in this instance, however, solely as a support upon which to stretch the series of volitional situations. The character Camille ap-

73 Horace, IV, iv, 1239-1251.
74 Freytag, loc. cit.
75 Loc. cit.
76 Ibid., IV, v, 1319-1321.
77 “Examen,” Horace, Oeuvres de P. Corneille, III, 279.
78 Croce, op. cit., p. 244.
approaches the type of tragic character.

The second consideration is Corneille's treatment of conflict in Horace. The elaboration of the conflict of the play is the development of a tenet of Hegelian doctrine.

The genuine content of tragic action subject to the aims which arrest tragic characters is supplied by . . . the love of husband and wife, of parents, children and kinsfolk. Such are, further, the life of communities, the patriotism of citizens, the will of those in supreme power. 79

Hegel conceived the immediate individuality as the theme of tragedy, as, for example, the ethical substance of love, of patriotism. The Hegelian theory of the origin of conflict is the soldering of the ethical substance with the substance of concrete human life "realized as the determinate aim of a human pathos which passes into action, . . . within a collision of this kind both sides of the contradiction, if taken by themselves, are justified." 80

Hegel next states the tenet which underlies Corneille's resolution of the conflict embodied in Horace. Yet:

from a further point of view, they tend to carry into effect the true and positive content of their end---specific characterization merely as the negation and violation of the other equally legitimate power, and consequently in their ethical purport and relatively to this so far fall under condemnation. 81

One hears the distressing cry of specific characterization [Camille] in its

79 Hegel, op. cit., IV, 295.
80 Ibid., pp. 295, 296, 297.
81 Ibid., p. 297.
ethical purport as it falls under condemnation.32

Mais as-tu vu mon père, et peut-il endurer
Qu'ainsi dans sa maison tu t'oses retirer?
Ne préfère-t-il point l'État à sa famille?
Ne regarde-t-il point Rome plus que sa fille?
Enfin notre bonheur est-il bien affermi?
T'a-t-il vu comme gendre, ou bien comme ennemi?33

Hegel concludes by offering the tragic resolution of the divided ethical substance, "It is through this . . . result that Eternal Justice is [first] operative . . . [and finally conducive to] repose."34 He proposes two possible modes of abrogation of "the onesided particularity which was unable to accommodate itself to this harmony, and consequently . . . carry this out."35 The mode of abrogation selected by Corneille is, "the onesided particularity [the love of Camille for Curiale] which was unable to accommodate itself to this harmony . . . is committed in its entire totality to destruction."36 Horace was laconic in his description of this tragic resolution.

Horace, mettant la main à l'épée, et poursuivant sa soeur
qui s'enfuit.
C'est trop, ma patience à la raison fait place;
Va dedans les enfers plaindre ton Curiale.37

Throughout almost the entire play the spectator must depend upon narration of action rather than representation of it. The appearance of Curiale

32 Loc. cit.
33 Horace, I, iii, 252-259.
34 Hegel, op. cit., p. 298.
35 Loc. cit.
36 Loc. cit.
37 Horace, IV, V, 1319-1321.
on his leaving the battlefield suggests the latter however:

Cessez d'appréhender de voir rougir mes mains
Du poids honteux des fers ou du sang des Romains.88

The "Hélas!"89 of Camille on hearing of Curiace's death and her last exclamation, "Ah! Traître!"90 also approximates truly dramatic action. As an outcry of pure humanity they are effective.91

The third application of the question of Corneille's making powerful drama regards character. The Hegelian theory of dramatic character embodies the Aristotelian, "genuine dramatic art consists in the expression of individual...passions."92 The onesided particularly, the love of Camille for Curiace, which has wrought a division in the ethical substance causes Camille to be brought to naught, and the eternal life of93 the Will is not touched by her destruction. It is pertinent to observe in the study that it is the discordant factor of the will which affords material for conflict with other divisions of the substance; it is not pure will, the undivided ethical substance as Hegel employs the term which is dramatic material.

Enfin voilà un cri de nature un cri humain, le cri d'une femme qui met sa passion au-dessus des règles

88 Ibid., I, iii, 237-239.
89 Ibid., IV, ii, 1123.
90 Ibid., IV, V, 1321.
92 Hegel, op. cit., IV, 265.
93 Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, p. 127.
conventionnelles de l'honneur, au-dessus des préjugés, --disons le mot, au-dessus de l'affreux protocole! 54

Furthermore, Nietzsche establishes a fact of cardinal importance which connects the very achievement of tragic function with the abrogation of the one-sided particularity of the ethical substance. The concordance of love and patriotism as it exists abstractly was cancelled when love was particularized in the human life of Camille.

For in the particular example of such annihilation, only, is the external phenomenon of Dionysian art made clear to us, which gives expression to the will in its omnipotence, as it were, behind the principium individuationis, the eternal life beyond all phenomena, and in spite of all annihilation. The metaphysical delight in the tragic is a translation of the instinctively unconscious Dionysian wisdom into the language of the scene: the hero, the highest manifestation of the will, is disavowed for our pleasure, . . . because the eternal life of the will is not affected by his annihilation. "We believe in eternal life," tragedy exclaims; 95

In this relation of the individual to the Absolute or the "Idée," the individual always loses. This was the very essence of Hebbel's conception of tragic guilt. 96 The _hamartia_ existent in the character Camille is Corneille's essential contribution toward the realization requisite of the catharsis clause: "through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions." 97

94 Lucien Solvay, _L'Evolution, théâtrale_, I, 47.
95 Nietzsche, _op. cit._, p. 127.
97 _Poetics_, vi. 2.
The metaphysical delight of the spectator is limited, however, by the Hegelian tenet that necessity is the principle of the resolution. The character, Camille, is a medium for, "the imitation of an action . . . through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions." The spectator may define the appeal of the aesthetic pleasure of Horace as:

"Pity is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the human sufferer. Terror is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the secret cause." 99

In the light of the aesthetic principle that the stronger the will is, the less possibility there is for tragedy, action, and conflict the analysis of Horace is absorbing. The study indicates that the presence of these three conditions is ever in inverse proportion to the strength of will of the protagonist. Though Corneille did not construct truly dramatic action and conflict, his creation of Camille bears the hallmark of the tragic character—an hamartia.100

The next play to be analyzed is the Tragédie chrétienne. Has Corneille succeeded in making powerful will dramatic in the play, Polyeucte? It is illuminating to contrast Corneille's belief in his achievement of this end with the canons of basic poetic theory. The poet refers to Polyeucte as drama in the dedicatory epistle to the Queen Regent, Anne of Austria: "Ce n'est qu'une

98 Postics, vi, 2.

99 James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York: Random House, 1923), p. 239.

100 Postics, xiii, 3.
The first investigation of this apparently simple accomplishment regards whether the plot, the action, of the play Polyeucte fulfills the Aristotelian requisite:

The Plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: Character holds the second place... Thus Tragedy is the imitation of an action, and of the agents, mainly with a view to the action.102

The first scene represents the friend of Polyeucte entreatiing the nobleman to overcome repugnance to leave the palace. Polyeucte, however, remains fearful to depart to receive baptism lest his absence trouble his wife Pauline. The reiteration of Néarque's plea closes the first scene:

Il le faut:
Fuyez un ennemi qui sait votre défaut,
Qui le trouve aisément, qui blessé par la vue,
Et dont le coup mortel vous plaît quand il vous tue.103

Judged in the light of Polyeucte's immediate capitulation Néarque's last entreaty is more persuasive than is apparent. Without a manifest transition Polyeucte in the first line of the second scene repudiates his avowals of the first scene:

Fuyons, puisqu'il le faut. Adieu, Pauline, adieu.104

Thus in an opening scene of the play Polyeucte makes a momentous decision. He will become a Christian. Yet, this act, upon which the remainder of the

101 "Epître," [dédicatoire], Polyeucte, Œuvres de P. Corneille, III, 77.
102 Poetics, vi, 14.
103 Polyeucte, I, i, 104-106.
104 Ibid., I, i, 107.
plot depends, affords but psychological interest. It is not exteriorized. The spectator is informed of Polyeneute's abjuration of pagan belief through the conversation of the neophyte and l Sarque\textsuperscript{105} and by the announcement of stratonice, confidante of Pauline.\textsuperscript{106} The spectator is limited to the enjoyment of the accidental, the narrative. He must be content with the static rather than enjoy the vision of the dynamic-action.

The serious fault entailed in failing to represent this significant action is worthy of remark. This truth is emphasized by the repeated assumptions in poetic theory that dramatic action be exteriorized.

\ldots if it is true that painting and poetry in their imitations make use of entirely different means or symbols—the first, namely, of form and colour in space, the second of articulated sounds in time—if these symbols indisputably require a suitable relation to the whole thing symbolized, then it is clear that symbols arranged in juxtaposition can only express subjects of which the wholes or parts exist in juxtaposition; while consecutive symbols can only express subjects of which the wholes or parts are themselves consecutive.

Subjects whose wholes or parts exist in juxtaposition are called bodies. Consequently, bodies with their visible properties are the peculiar subjects of painting.

Subjects whose wholes or parts are consecutive are called actions. Consequently actions are the peculiar subject of poetry.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., II, vi, 649, 693.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., III, ii, 784.
\textsuperscript{107} Lessing, op. cit., p. 131.
After Polyeucte has affirmed his strong will by embracing Christianity he confides a daring resolve to Néarque.

Je les veux renverser,
Et mourir dans leur temple, ou les y terrasser.
Allons, mon cher Néarque, allons aux yeux des hommes
Braver l'idolâtrie, et montrer qui nous sommes:
C'est l'attente du ciel, il nous la faut remplir;
Je viens de le promettre, et je vais l'accomplir.
Je rends grâces au Dieu que tu m'as fait connaître
De cette occasion qu'il a sitôt fait naître,
Où déjà sa bonté prête à me couronner,
Daigne éprouver la foi qu'il vient de me donner. 108

Corneille fails to present in the mode of dramatic action this important act. The act of the breaking of the idols is the further projection of pure will first demonstrated by Polyeucte's accepting Christianity. The spectator is given "as if by chance all the threads requisite for understanding the whole." 109 The function of the confidante, Statonice, is the function of the deus ex machina. Statonice delays the disclosure. It is only in the ninthieth alexandrine of the conversation of the confidante and Pauline that the fact of Polyeucte's breaking the images is stated. 110

The third link in the succession of the demonstration of pure will is Polyeucte's choice of death, the penalty for abjuration of the pagan belief, rather than security through denial of his new faith.

Adore-les, te dis-je, ou renonce à la vie. Impie! 111

110Polyeucte, III, ii, 857-859.
111Ibid., V, 111, 1675.
Polyeucte chooses to die:

Je suis chrétien. 112

Again Corneille relies upon the undramatic deus ex machina. First there is the testimony of Pauline, then of her father, Félix:

Mon époux en mourant m'a laissé ses lumières;
Son sang, dont tes bourreaux viennent de me couvrir,
M'a dessillé les yeux, et me les vient d'ouvrir.
Je vois, je sais, je crois, je suis désabusée:
De ce bienheureux sang tu me vois baptisée;
Je suis chrétienne enfin, n'est-ce point assez dit?
Conserve en me perdant ton rang et ton crédit; 113

C'est lui, n'en doutez point, dont le sang innocent
Pour son persécuteur prie un Dieu tout-puissant;
Son amour épris de toute la famille
Tire après lui le père aussi bien que la fille. 114

One realizes the seriousness of the error of Corneille in the selection of the plot, Polyeucte; it is inherently undramatic. Could it be represented otherwise than by phantasiae? 115 The practical difficulty of actually enacting the incidents would be difficult, assuredly, if not impossible. An attempt to visualize them emphasizes the essential epical character.

The second point to be discussed regarding Polyeucte is the determination of duration of conflict in proportion to the force of the volition exerted. A critic suggests that Aristotle's statement that plot is the "soul of tragedy" be replaced by the requisite that dramatic conflict is the soul of tragedy. 116

112 Ibid., V, iii, 1676.
113 Ibid., V, v, 1724-1730.
114 Ibid., V, vi, 1773-1776.
115 Lessing, Laocoon, op. cit., p. 89.
The decision which Polyeucte makes regarding a change of religion is formulated, however, with little transition and without dramatic conflict. When Narque at the closing of the first scene counsels:

Fuyez. 117

Polyeucte responds, it seems definitively:

Je ne puis. 118

Narque reiterates the warning:

Il le faut

Fuyez un ennemi qui sait votre défaut,
Qui le trouve aisément, qui blessé par la vue,
Et dont le coup mortel vous plait quand il vous tue. 119

In the subsequent line of the play Polyeucte calmly utters the resolve which marks the crisis of his life:

Fuyons, puisqu'il le faut. Adieu, Pauline; adieu. 120

Thus does Corneille ignore the principle of the truly dramatic composition, "le spectacle d'une volonté qui se déploie." 121

In treating the second conflict undramatically Corneille very probably realized the practical impossibility of doing otherwise. The representation of the abuse of the idols would present an aesthetic difficulty.

The threatened persecution of the new convert fails also to introduce a

117 Polyeucte, I, i, 102.
118 Ibid., I, i, 103.
119 Ibid., I, ii, 104-107.
120 Ibid., I, ii, 107.
representation of dramatic discord. It is in lyrics that Polyeucte represents a highly interiorized conflict; in detaching himself from honors in this world:

J'ai de l'ambition, mais plus noble et plus belle;  
Cette grandeur pérît, j'en veux une immortelle,  
Un bonheur assuré, sans mesure et sans fin.  
Au-dessus de l'envie, au-dessus du destin.  

by entrusting Beline to Sévère:

Possesseur d'un trésor dont je n'étois pas digne,  
Souffrez avant ma mort que je vous le résigne...  

Corneille, in the last scene in which Polyeucte appears, invites the spectator to attend to the intensity of interior combat. Thus one may appreciate the cumulative force of the impact of the obstacles:

Que tout cet artifice est de mauvaise grâce!  
Après avoir deux fois essayé la menace,  
Après m'avoir fait voir Néarque dans la mort,  
Après avoir tenté l'amour et son effort,  
Après m'avoir montré cette soif du baptême,  
Pour opposer à Dieu l'intérêt de Dieu même,  
Vous vous joignez ensemble! Ah! ruses de l'enfer!  
Faut-il tant de fois vaincre avant que triompher?  
Vos résolutions usent trop de remise;  
Prenez la vôtre enfin, puisque la mienne est prise.  

The last three lines are significant in an explanation of the failure of Corneille to write a truly dramatic composition in the light of the principle they embody.  

The third subject for inquiry is whether Corneille has made powerful will

122 Polyeucte, IV, iii, 1191-1195.  
123 Ibid., IV, iv, 1299-1301.  
124 Ibid., V, iii, 1647-1657.  
125 Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, p. 54.
dramatic through the medium of character. Corneille begins his defense of the major character, Polyeucte, by quoting from the Poetics:

Il reste donc à trouver un milieu entre ces deux extrémités, par le choix d’un homme qui ne soit ni tout à fait bon, ni tout à fait méchant, et qui, par une faute, ou faiblesse humaine, tombe dans un malheur qu’il ne mérite pas.126

Corneille, although admitting that the character of Polyeucte does not effect the catharsis,127 the proper function of tragedy, states nevertheless:

Polyeucte y a réussi contre cette maxime... 128

The provocative question concerning the possibility of a truly Christian hero achieving the tragic function suggests itself:

But is such a drama possible? Is not the character of the true Christian the least dramatic that one can imagine? Do not the silent resignation, the constant serenity, which are the virtues of the Christian, inhibit the tragic function...?129

In this effort to determine whether Corneille has succeeded in making powerful will dramatic in Polyeucte, the analysis reveals the enormity of the task which the poet set before himself. The spectator leaves the theatre realizing that the effect depended...rather on the great rhetoro-lyric scenes; that Corneille had arranged much for pathos, not for action.130

126Discours de la Tragédie, Oeuvres de P. Corneille, I, 56, quoting Poetics. xiii. 3.

127Discours de la Tragédie, op. cit., I, 59.

128Loc. cit.


The omitting of exteriorized conflict suggests the inquiry, "How can the ugly and the discordant, the substance of tragic myth, excite and aesthetic pleasure?"

Here it is necessary to raise ourselves with a daring bound into a metaphysics of Art...it is precisely the function of tragic myth to convince us that even the Ugly and Discordant is an artistic game which the will, in the eternal fulness of its joy, plays with itself. But this not easily comprehensible proto-phenomenon of Dionysian Art becomes, in a direct way, singularly intelligible, and is immediately apprehended in the music alone, placed in contrast to the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. The joy that the tragic myth excites has the same origin as the joyful sensation of dissonance in music.131

Perhaps the key to the disappointment in Polyeucte lies in the fact that Corneille did not ponder the effective presentment of the major character:

Does not his [the character's] expectation of rewarding happiness after this life contradict the disinterestedness with which we wish to see all great and good actions undertaken and carried out on the stage?132

Certainly Corneille constructed a barrier to the dramatic when in the first line of the second scene of Polyeucte he crystallized pure will.133

However, Corneille was praised for constituting his theatre a medium for instruction and edification.134 Corneille's Polyeucte embodies a philosophy; it should have replaced the philosophy. Like Goethe "Corneille has not..."

131 Ibid., pp. 182, 183.
132 Lessing, loc. cit.
133 Polyeucte, I, ii, 107.
sacrificed or consecrated his thought to make the drama"; Corneille regarded
the drama as a means. Logiclally, then, Corneille could not nor did not
expect to achieve the aesthetic function proper to tragedy. Yet "art is the
human disposition of sensible or intelligible matter for an aesthetic end."

Despite the incompatibility of the conditions sine qua non of tragedy
and the projection of pure will in Rodogune Corneille favored this composition.
The French writer cited "la nouveauté des fictions" as one of the character-
istics which caused him to prefer it to any other of his works. A à
qui j’aurois volontiers donné mon suffrage, si je n’avais craint de manquer,
en quelque sorte, au respect que je devois à ceux que je voyois pencher d’un
autre côté.

A French critic employs Corneille’s very preference for l’extraordinaire
as an explanation of the inferiority of the plot of Rodogune. Corneille had
differentiated comedy from tragedy by defining: "La comédie diffère donc en
cela de la tragédie que celle-ci veut pour son sujet une action illustre, ex-
traordinaire, sérieuse; celle-là s’arrête à une action commence et enjouée;

A French critic comments upon the definition:

135Thomas Stearnes Eliot, The Sacred Wood (Methuen and Company, Limited, 934),
p. 66.
136Herbert Gorman, James Joyce (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inclusive,
1939), p. 98.
137"Examen," Rodogune, op. cit., IV, 421.
138Ibid., I, 420.
139"Discours du poème dramatique," Oeuvres de P. Corneille, I, 25.
Et que dirons-nous de Pertharite, de Rodogune ou d'Héraclus? Corneille a naturellement un faible pour ces situations compliquées ou bizarres; mais, de plus, elles sont nécessaires à ses héros, tels qu'il les conçoit et les aime, pour que la force surhumaine de leur volonté ait de quoi se déployer tout entière et pour qu'elles puissent se crèer des devoirs égaux à leur énergie morale. Ainsi la définition qui nous occupe, si elle n'est pas fort juste, est bien franchement cornélienne, et, du reste, comme elle ne vise que le "sujet" de la tragédie, elle ne conviendrait pas mal au drame romantique. 140

A German critic considered Corneille's complication of the historical theme of the revenge of Cléopatre unaesthetic. He asks that the theatre goer apply to Corneille's construction of the plot of Rodogune the axiom "das Genie liebt Einfal; der Witz, Verwicklung." 141 He traces Corneille's changes of historical narrative.

Kleopatra bringt, in der Geschichte, ihren Gemahle aus Eifersucht um. Aus Eifersucht? dachte Corneille: das wäre ja eine ganz gemeine Frau; nein, meine Kleopatra muss eine Heldin sein, die noch wohl ihren Mann gern verloren hätte, aber durchaus nicht den Thron; dass ihr Mann Rodogune liebt, musz sie nicht so sehr schmerzen, als dass Rodogune Königin sein soll wie sie; das ist weit erhabner. 142

In der Geschichte rächer sich Kleopatra blosz an ihrem Gemahle; an Rodogune konnte oder wollte sie nicht rächen. Bei dem Dichter ist jene Rache längst vorbei; Die Ermordung des Demetrius wird blosz erzählt, und alle Handlung des Stücks geht auf Rodogune. Corneille will seine Kleopatra nicht auf halbem Wege stehen lassen; sie muss sich noch gar-nicht gerächet zu haben.


141 Lessing, Hamburgische dramaturgie, s. 99.

142 Loc. cit.
glauben wenn sie sich nicht auch an Rodogunen rächen.143

Aber nicht genug, dass Kleopatra sich an Rodogunen rächen; Dichter will, dass sie es auf eine ganz ausnehmende Weise thun soll.144

...beide Prinzen sind in Rodogunen sterblich verliebt; wer von beiden seine Geliebte umbringen will, der soll regieren.145

Schön; aber könnten wir den Handel nicht noch mehr verwickeln?. Rodogune musz gerächet sein wollen; musz an der Mutter der Prinzen gerächet sein wollen; Rodogune musz ihnen erklären; wer mich von euch haben will, der ermorde seine Mutter!.146

Lemaitre's sharp criticism of Corneille reconstructs the French poet's denial of "Il n'y a de vraiment tragique que les luttes entre parents." Corneille remarked "Il y a quelque apparence que cette condition ne regarde que les tragédies parfaîtes." Yet he immediately adds, "Je n'entends pas dire que celles où elle ne se rencontre point soient imparfaites... Mais, par ce mot de tragédies parfaîtes, j'entends celles du genre le plus sublime et la plus touchant."147

Another consideration pertinent to the plot is whether or not the incidents are significant. Are they orientated toward the realization of the function of tragedy? "It [a perfect tragedy] should moreover imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imit-
The play opens by the excitation of curiosity concerning which of the prince brothers, Sélenus or Antiochus is the older. To the older their mother, Cléopatre, is to bequeath the kingdom and bestow the hand of Rodogune.

The fifth scene embellishes the pattern of suspense by Rodogune's avowal of a presentiment:

Et le trône et l'hymen, tout me devient suspect.  
L'hymen semble à mes yeux cacher quelque supplice,  
Le trône sous mes pas creuser un précipice;  
Je vois de nouveaux fers après les miens brisés,  
Et je prends tous ces biens pour des maux déguisés;  
En un mot, je crains tout de l'esprit de la Reine.149

Interest is further awakened by Rodogune's refusing to disclose which of the brothers she loves.

The second act begins with Corneille's further realization of the value of piquing curiosity. The Queen Regent exposes her desire of avenging herself upon Rodogune:

Vois jusqu' où m'emporta l'amour du diadème;  
Vois quel sang il me coûte, et tremble pour toi-même:  
Tremble, te dis-je; et songe, en dépit du traité,  
Que pour t'en faire un don je l'ai trop acheté.150

The weave of the play is reinforced by Cléopatre's declaration:

Entre deux fils que j'aime avec même tendresse,  
Embrasser ma querelle est le seul droit d'aïmesse:

148 Poetics, xiii, 2.  
149 Rodogune, I, v, 306-312.  
150 Ibid., II, i, 423-427.
La mort de Rodogune en nommera l'aïne. 151

The tension is prolonged by Rodogune's barbarous plan:

Appelez ce devoir haine, rigueur, colère;
Pour gagner Rodogune il faut venger un père;
Je me donne à ce prix: osez me mériter. 152

In proceeding to an examination of the incidents of the fourth act one continues to inquire whether they be significant forward movement toward the achievement of tragic effect. Cléopatre reveals in a soliloquy:

Que tu pénètreset mal le fond de mon courage;
Si je verse des pleurs, ce sont des pleurs de rage;
Et ma haine, qu'en vain tu crois s'évanouir,
Ne les a fait couler qu'afin de t'éblouir. 153

There is a last crescendo in Corneille's preparation for the dénouement in the closing scene of the fourth act. Cléopatre failing to destroy the fraternal love of Antiochus and Sélencous cries:

Sors de mon cœur, nature, ou fais qu'ils m'obéissent:
Fais-les servir ma haine, ou consens qu'ils périsssent.
Mais déjà l'un a vu que je les veux punir;
Souvent qui tarde trop se laisse prévenir.
Allons chercher le temps d'immoler mes victimes,
Et de me rendre heureuse à force de grands crimes. 154

Thus in four acts of the play Corneille is content to silhouette Cléopatre's ambitions to rule. He sketches with strokes which reveal. The etchings are: Cléopatre's determination to disregard the claim of her son to the throne by right of seniority and her consequent offering of the kingdom as a reward to

151 Ibid., II, iii, 643-646.
152 Ibid., III, iv, 1043-1046.
153 Ibid., IV, v, 1387-1391.
154 Ibid., IV, vii, 1491-1497.
whichever prince take the life of Rodogune; the resolution of Rodogune to
withhold the name of the prince she prefers to marry and rather to marry the
one who assassinates Cléopatre; the refusal of the princes to each; the vain
entreaty of Cléopatre that Antiochus murder his brother; the resolve of the
queen to murder both the sons that she may secure the throne.

The spectator searches in each of these incidents a preparation for the
excitation of pity and fear. Each incident seems however to contribute to a
construction of melodrama rather than drama.

As the movement of melodrama exists but to elaborate the melody, the music,
so do the incidents of Rodogune appear to have little significance as parts
in tragic action. Truly tragic action must "imitate actions which excite
pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation."155

The fifth act represents the wicked Cléopatre victim of the poisoned potion.
Regarding Corneille's disinterestedness in tragic function a critic applied
to the French poet the following:

Denn er weiss so wenig, worin eigentlich dieser Schrecken
und dieses Mitleid bestehet, dass er, um jenes hervorzubringen, nicht sonderbare, unerwartete, unglaubliche, un-
geheure Dinge genug häufiger zu können glaubt, und um dieses
zu erwecken, nur immer seine Zuflucht zu den ausserordent-
lichsten, grässlichsten Unglücksfällen und Freveltaten, 
nehmen zu müssen vermeinet.156

Concerning an inquiry of whether Corneille has exteriorized the action one
is deeply impressed by the interiority of the action of eighty per cent of
the play. Corneille very probably deliberately evoked curiosity by narrative,

155 Poetics. xiii, 2.
156 Lessing, Hamburgische Dramaturgie, pp. 109, 110.
by soliloquy, rather than by the imitation of action. 157 Cléopatre reveals
her true resolve after she has striven to dissimulate her intent to assassinate a rival. She is one of the actors which Corneille himself describes who
"énoncent simplement leurs sentiments." 158

Serments fallacieux, salutaire contrainte, ... 
C'est encor, c'est encor cette même ennemie. ... 
Vois quel sang il me coûte, et tremble pour toi-même: 
Tremble, te dis-je; et songe, en dépit du traité,
Que pour t'en faire un don je l'ai trop acheté. 159

It is by the narration of interior conflict also that Rodogune informs the
spectator. Corneille himself includes her in the group of characters which
"Appuient sur des maximes de morale ou de politique." 160

Mais aujourd'hui qu'on voit cette main parricide,
Des restes de ta vie insolemment avide,
Vouloir encore percer ce sein infortuné,
Pour y chercher le cœur que tu m'avois donné,
De la paix qu'elle rompt je ne suis plus le gage; 
Je brise avec honneur mon illustre esclavage;
J'ose reprendre un cœur pour aimer et haïr, ... 161

The spectator must seek no more than the recital of resolves or narration
of accomplishment. In his extensive preparation of the fifth act Corneille

157 Poetics. Vi. 5.
158 Discours du poème dramatique, Oeuvres de P. Corneille, I, 39.
159 Rodogune, II, i, 395, 415, 424-427.
160 Discours du poème dramatique, op. cit., I, 39.
161 Rodogune, III, iii, 875-882.
does not represent the actual execution of ideal intentions and aims.162

The analysis of character is particularly interesting in *Rodogune* since Corneille chose the major character of the type which Aristotle condemns:

Nor again should the downfall of the utter villain be exhibited. A plot of this kind would doubtless satisfy the moral sense, but it would inspire neither pity nor fear; for pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves.163

Another Aristotelian principle which Corneille modified was that regarding the first requisite of character. "First and most important it must be good."164

... et s'il m'est permis de dire mes conjectures sur ce qu'Aristote nous demande par là je crois que c'est le caractère brillant et élevé d'une habitude vertueuse ou criminelle, selon qu'elle est propre et convenable à la personne qu'on introduit. Cléopâtre, dans *Rodogune*, est très-méchante; il n'y a point de parricide qui lui fasse horreur, pourvu qu'il la puisse conserver sur un trône qu'elle préfère à toutes choses, tant son attachement à la domination est violent; mais tous ses crimes sont accompagnés d'une grandeur d'âme qui a quelque chose de si haut, qu'en même temps qu'on déteste ses actions, on admire la source dont elles partent.165

Lemaître adds:

Et Cléopâtre aussi s'admire; elle considère avec satisfaction l'énormité et la subtilité de ses propres forfaits; elle ... s'étale dans le sentiment de sa perversité. Jamais on n'a mis tant d'emphase et de

162Hegel, The Philosophy of Fine Art, IV, 252.
163Poetics, xiii. 2.
164Ibid., xiii. 1.
165Discours du poème dramatique, op. cit., I, 31, 32.
rhétorique dans le crime. Et le poète à son tour admire Cléopâtre, estime que sa scélératesse est "un beau cas," ... Il admire la vertueuse princesse Rodogune, au moment même où elle déclare à Antiochus et à Seleucus qu'elle épousera celui des deux qui tuera sa mère.

Another French critic censures Corneille for sinning against the intention of tragedy by confusing the admiration of which Lemaitre speaks with surprise. He says succinctly that surprise and admiration though frequently linked are, nevertheless, intrinsically different and that will which is powerful is by no means necessarily good will.

Has not, then, Corneille produced an effect which is not tragic, an effect which Aristotle foresaw as issue of a plot centered about the utter villain? Rather Corneille has illustrated his own transcendental interest in pure will. He preferred a demonstration of this in preference to excitation of pity and fear. Corneille crystallized the proof that Rodogune was to be a perfect representation of pure will when he wrote:

... mais tous ses crimes sont accompagnés d'une grandeur d'âme qui a quelque chose de si haut, qu'en même temps qu'on déteste ses actions, on admire la source dont elles partent.

Brunetièr urged his audience to admit:

... ce n'est proprement ni le devoir ni la passion qu'il s'est plu à nous représenter. C'est la volonté, quel qu'en fut d'ailleurs l'objet; et ce n'est ni la pitié, ni la terreur même qu'il s'est proposer d'exciter ou de

166Lemaitre, op. cit., pp. 24, 25.
167Brunetièr, Les Epoques du théâtre français, p. 76.
168Discours du poème dramatique, op. cit., I, 32.
remuer en nous, c'est l'admiration. 169

After the prolongation during four acts of static moments in Rodogune, Corneille represents the queen tasting poisoned wine. The representation of her immediate suffering illustrate the definition, "...ugliness is dynamic incoherence." 170

Any analysis of Héraclius is beset with a difficulty that the author himself foresaw:

Il y a des intrigues qui commencent dès la naissance du héro, comme celui d'Héraclius; mais ces grands efforts d'imagination en demandent un extraordinaire à l'attention du spectateur, et l'empêchent souvent de prendre un plaisir entier aux premières représentations, tant ils le fatiguent. 171

Boileau expressed the thought when he wrote:

Je me ris d'un auteur qui, lent à s'exprimer,
De ce qu'il veut d'abord ne sait pas m'informer,
Et qui débrouillant mal une pénible intrigue,
D'un divertissement me fait une fatigue. 172

Then too its Byzantine ambient is contradictory to the principle:

In order that a drama may be properly historical, it is necessary that it should be the history of the people to whom it is addressed. 173

169 Brunetière, Les Époques du théâtre français, p. 76.


171 Discours des trois unités, Œuvres de P. Corneille, I, 105.


The composition of the plot of Héraclius indicates divergence from Butcher's requisite that the action offer "a coherent series of events".  

Croce objects to such a plot being praised for "logical" perfection:  

"This structure of tragedy, with its antitheses and parallelisms, its expedients for accelerating and arresting and terminating the action has been qualified with praise or blame as possessing great "logical" perfection. Logic, however, which is the life of thought, has nothing to do with the balancing and counterbalancing of mechanical weights, whose life lies outside them, in the head and in the hand that has constructed and set them in motion."

He distinguishes between artistic and mechanical coherence:

"We have said exactly the same thing, without having recourse to logic or to architecture, when we noted that the structure of Corneille's tragedies did not derive from within, that is, from his true poetical inspiration, but rose up beside it, and was due to the unconscious practical need of making a canvas or a frame upon which to stretch the series of volitional situations desired by the imagination of the poet. Thus it was poetically a cold, incoherent, absurd thing, but practically rational and coherent, like every "mechanism.""

The scene of the play is laid in Constantinople in the year 610. Phocas, a usurper, has gained imperial power by murdering the emperor, Maurice, and the heirs to the throne. He spares the life of Pulchérie that he may give her in marriage to his son Martian. The difficulty which Corneille recognized in the plot arises from the act of the governess Léontine. She sacrifices her own son, Léonce, removes Martian from the palace to her own home and substitutes Héraclius for Martian. When the people begin to
speak of the survival of Heraclius, Phocas causes Léonce to be arrested. Heraclius in gratitude for Léonce’s having once saved his life reveals to Phocas the identity of Léonce. At the death of Phocas Heraclius is recognized as emperor and Martian and Pulchérie marry.

Héraclius is a composition offering deliberation rather than action. Although a modern critic states:

It used to be considered essential by dramatic theorists that the movement which is so important to the interest of a play should be built into some sort of central conflict which formed the heart and soul of the dramatic experience. But this is an exaggeration. The plays of Chekov alone are enough to prove that it is quite unnecessary to have any obvious conflict and struggle, involving a crisis and a catastrophe, such as was the rule in classical drama.177

She immediately modifies the statement by suggesting:

But since the basis of all enjoyable dramatic experience is the emergence of character in action, it is, I think, impossible to have drama unless the characters are concerned in some kind of complication, which must necessarily involve some kind of clash between individuals, or between opposing emotions or circumstances or ideas.178

The clash which a dramatist other than Corneille would probably have chosen would have represented the externalization of strife between the usurper and the heir. Corneille, however, preferred to present strong will deliberating rather than powerful will in the execution of exterior action.

... This was what Corneille truly loved: the spirit which deliberates calmly and serenely and having formed

177Drew, op. cit., pp. 27, 28.
178Loc. cit.
its resolution, adheres to it with unshakeable firmness, as to a position that has been won with difficulty and with difficulty strengthened.\textsuperscript{179}

However, the first appearance of Heraclius suggests the perfection of the deliberative will. Despite the ruthless Phocas' menace that Heraclius provoke him not to anger Heraclius replies:

\begin{quote}
Dussé-je mal user de cet amour de père, 
Etant ce que je suis, je me dois quelque effort
Pour vous dire, Seigneur, que c'est vous faire tort,
Et que c'est trop montrer d'injuste défiance
De ne pouvoir régner que par son alliance:
Sans prendre un nouveau droit du nom de son époux,
Ma naissance suffit pour régner après vous.
J'ai du coeur, et tiendrois l'empire même infrême,
S'il falloit le tenir de la main d'une femme.\textsuperscript{180}
\end{quote}

In the next scene Heraclius reiterates the firmness of his will when he encourages Pulchérie:

\begin{quote}
Résolu de périr pour vous sauver la vie,
Je sens tous mes respects céder à cette envie;
Je ne suis plus son fils, s'il en veut à vos jours,
Et mon coeur tout entier vole à votre secours.\textsuperscript{181}
\end{quote}

At the beginning of the second act further testimony is given that Heraclius has a fixed will:

\begin{quote}
Montrons Heraclius au peuple qui l'attend;
Évitons le hasard qu'un imposteur l'abuse.\textsuperscript{182}
\end{quote}

In the fourth act Heraclius dismisses even the fears of his fiancée Eudoxe with:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{179}] Croce, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 225.
\item[\textsuperscript{180}] Heraclius, \textit{op. cit.}, I, iii, 275-283.
\item[\textsuperscript{181}] Ibid., I, iv, 333-337.
\item[\textsuperscript{182}] Ibid., II, ii, 476-478.
\end{enumerate}
Soit qu'il faille régner, soit qu'il faille périr,
Au tombeau comme au trône on me verra courir.183

In the fourth act when Heraclius reveals his identity to Phocas he thus imperils himself.

It is interesting to observe that while Heraclius offers several proofs of strong will in the first four acts, he seems less confident during the soliloquy with which the fifth act begins:

Retiens, grande ombre de Maurice,
Mon âme au bord du précipice
Que cette obscurité lui fait,
Et m'aide à faire mieux connaître
Qu'en ton fils Dieu n'a pas fait naître
Un prince à ce point imparfait,
Ou que je méritois de l'être,
Si je ne le suis en effet.

Soutiens ma haine qui chancelle,
Et redoublant pour ta querelle
Cette noble ardeur de mourir,
Pais voir .. Mais il m'exauce; on vient me secourir.184

To inquire concerning the character of Heraclius as tragic character is to seek in vain for any act of his which reveals:

... a marked one-sidedness, a predisposition in some particular direction; a total incapacity, in certain circumstances, of resisting the force which draws in this direction; a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion, or habit of mind.185

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183Ibid., IV, i, 1197-1199.
184Ibid., V, i, 1543-1551.
The feelings of the spectator on seeing strong will sustain itself throughout several scenes waver momentarily and then be confirmed in its strength are not tragic feelings. 186

Perhaps the explanation of the failure of Corneille to have chosen tragic action, conflict and character lies in Croce's analysis of "questo il Corneille veramente amava." 187

Yet Coleridge realized that:

A second promise of genius is the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself. At least I have found, that where the subject is taken immediately from the author's personal sensations and experiences, the excellence of a particular poem is but an equivocal mark, and often a fallacious pledge, of genuine poetic power. 188

One might employ the same adjectives that a modern critic chose when referring to Strange Interlude: "discursive, novelistic." The incidents are merely commented upon by the characters. However, though Strange Interlude may "combine to a remarkable extent the vivid directness of the drama with the more intricate texture of the modern novel," 189 Héraclius is more of the discursive character. Yet, "La poesía, para ser grande y apreciada debe pensar y sentir, reflejar las ideas y pasiones dolores y alegrías de la sociedad en que vive; ..." 190

186 Poetics, xiii. 3.
187 Croce, loc. cit.
188 Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, op. cit., III, p. 376.
Corneille would have been more successful had he fulfilled a condition which a critic believes essential for an aesthetic accomplishment, "A second promise of genius is the choice of subjects very remote from private interests..."191

From the almost constant fixity of the strong will of Heraclius one realizes the logical sequence of the creation of the character Nicomède.

Corneille was content, then, to substitute the interiorization of action for its exteriorization. His practice was in sharp opposition to the theory investigated in the first chapter of this dissertation. Hegel, Butcher, Brunetièrè and Elton,192 for example, emphasize the Aristotelian interpretation of dramatic representation. "...the imitators may represent the whole story dramatically, as though they were actually doing the things described..."193 Lalo, Matthiessen, Schopenhauer, Croce, Lessing, Nietzsche, and Drew realized the implication of Aristotle's dictum.194

The inquiry concerning Corneille's technique suggests routines which were appropriate to undramatic action. In the Cid Corneille orders that a decisive choice of Rodrigue be communicated to the spectator by a minor character; that utterance in word on the part of Rodrigue be not extended to utterance in act. Cinna offers but elaboration of the mental sufferings of Auguste; even the treachery of Cinna and Maxime is enacted behind the scenes;

191Coleridge, loc. cit.
192Supra, pp. 24-32.
193Poetics. iii. 6.
194See pp. 54 ff.
similarly the Cid employs the device of the secondary character's communciation of the crisis. In this composition too, the lyric is preferred to the dramatic. Four-fifths of the play Rodogune must be classified as devoid of manifestation. Héraclius narrates the deliberation of a strong will; it does not present the execution of action. Nicomède, the exemplar of pure will all its force could not consequently afford a study of dramatic insuccess. 195

Corneille, however, was not the first to attempt to replace visual comprehension with aural. A critic signals Aeschylus' selection of non-dramatic material. Of the Supplices the investigator remarked that the little action there is has been planned for the chorus. 196 The Prometheus is a characterization of the adamantine Titan. 197 Approximately one-half of The Persæ is lyric, 198 with an additional one-fourth reproducing the speeches of Darius and the messenger. The Septem Contra Thebas is "a series of prolonged declamations separated by choral songs." 199 The Choephori withholds dramatic action till the second half of the play. On the contrary another critic praises Sophocles as:

... an exponent of his classical age, which laid stress upon the golden mean in action, and avoiding excess on one side and the other, exemplifies the virtue of moderation ... which was to the Greek

195Cf. pp. 54ff.
196Harry, Greek Tragedy, I, 3.
197Ibid., p. 23.
198Ibid., p. 15.
199Ibid., p. 41.
as charity to the Christian.200

An eminent commentator on the Poetics of Aristotle has elaborated the exposition of the demand for representation of action. His emphasis aids one to determine the seriousness of the failure of new dramatists as well as old in its regard.

4. There seems to be but one view in which Poetry can be considered as Imitation, in the strict and proper sense of the word. If we look for both immediate and obvious resemblance, we shall find it only in DRAMATIC --or to use a more general term--PERSONATIVE Poetry; that is, all Poetry in which, whether essentially or occasionally, the Poet personates; for here, speech is imitated by speech. The difference between this, and mere narration or description is obvious. When in common discourses we relate or describe, in our own persons, we imitate in no other sense, than as we raise ideas which resemble the things related or described. But when we speak as another person, we become mimics, and not only the ideas we convey, but the words, the discourse itself, in which we convey them are imitations; they resemble, or are supposed to resemble those of the person we represent. Now this is the case not only with the Tragic and Comic Poet, but also with the Epic Poet, and even the Historian, when either of these quits his own character, and writes a speech in the character of another person. He is then an imitator, in as strict a sense as the personal mimic.--In dramatic, and all personative Poetry, then, both the conditions of what is properly denominated Imitation are fulfilled.201

In the light of the exposition of this requisite it is interesting to study the disregard evinced by the modern dramatist. One inquirer attributes the

200 Supra, pp. 6, 9, 12.

201 Aristotle's Treatise on Poetry, Translated with notes on the translation, and on the original; and Two Dissertations on Poetical and Musical Imitation, trans. Thomas Twining (London: Payne and Son, 1878, pp. 21, 22.)
neglect of it to the preponderant influence of Sociology.

...It [the drama of the nineteenth century] is scientific, subjective, introspective, historical, archaeological:--full of vitality, versatility, and diligence:--intensely personal, defiant of all law, of standards, of convention:--laborious, exact, but often indifferent to grace, symmetry, or colour:--it is learned, critical, cultured:--with all its ambition and its fine feeling, it is unsympathetic to the highest forms of the imagination, and quite alien to the drama of action. 202

Extreme emphasis upon the scientific or the material does tend to check "the supreme imagination--as if its social earnestness produced a distaste for merely dramatic passion." 203 This trend however was discouraged by "... the preponderance of the 'subjective' over the 'objective' caused attention to swerve from the external event to the interior perplexity." 204 Another critic of nineteenth century remarked that the complexity of life of the nineteenth century was the proximate cause of the self-consciousness and consequent introspection. 205

It was Henrik Ibsen who orientated the modern drama 206 in which Aristotelian exteriorization of dramatic conflict began to go inward and disappear. It was but the application of a belief of his of which he wrote enthusiasti-


203 Ibid., p. 22.

204 Loc. cit.

205 Arnold Smith, The Main Tendencies of Victorian Poetry, p. 3.

cally; "...Men still call for special revolutions in politics, in externals; but all that sort of thing is trumpery. It is the human soul that must revolt."207 Logically a critic could but comment: "...It is by the revelation of states of soul rather than by the unfolding of an outer spectacle that they [Ibsen's dramas] compel our interest."208

Ibsen strives, then, to reveal the interior life of a character. He presents a person at the decisive moment of that person's life. The character is given the opportunity to express his own thoughts and emotions to another. It is thus that he reveals himself to the spectator. "The method of attacking the crisis in the middle or near the end enabled Ibsen to deal with a larger segment of human experience."209 The fertile imagination of a Hebbel or an Ibsen vivifies this style of exposition. Ibsenian exposition differs from Aristotlean technique which prescribes: "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, ...A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end."210

Again Ibsen imitates the gradual manner of exposition which Sophocles sometimes selected:

...Instead of revealing in the first scene, like Euripides in his typical prologue, and like so many modern dramatists, all the circumstances that have

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208 Ibid., p. 6.


210 Poetics, vii. 3.
preceded the events of the play, he distributes the elucidation throughout, revealing fact after fact, while the action advances, only as they are absolutely required for intelligibility. In Hedda Gabler Ibsen makes no explicit statement about the heroine's pristine relations with Eilert Løwborg until the second act when they begin to have a definite effect upon the denouement... It is necessary now to inform the audience that there has existed in the old days a very intimate connection between the two and that Hedda was unable to influence Eilert for good, since in this act she once again seeks to have her hands, as she says, in the man's destiny. 211

Frequently Ibsen placed the clarification of the Vorgeschichte toward the end of the play:


A second critic studying the Vorgeschichte observes "Man wählt den schwierigeren, aber lebenstreueren Weg, sie im Verlaufe der Handlung allmählich durchsickern zu lassen." The same critic suggests that Lessing's mastery of this style of exposition has been imitated by later dramatists. In Heimat Sudermann reserves till the fifth act the confession of Magda although it was a motivating force.

When Ibsen selects the gradual exposition, which is in reality the technique of the novel, does he not substitute narrative for the dramatic? This is the logical result of his rejection of the Aristotelian theory, "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole... A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end."

Thus the problem which confronts the dramatist who selects the gradual form of exposition arises from the limitations that time, place, and continuity of action place upon the facts of the exposition.

Very frequently the story is rich in dramatic potentialities. The concentration of the action of the drama, however, requires that it be but a part of the Vorgeschichte. In Rosmersholm the spectator realizes only in the third act that Rebecca was responsible for the murder of Beata. Moreover he is informed only in the last act of Rebecca's motive. The tragedy that preceded the play is an example of story that had possibilities for dramatic

213 Ibid., p. 17.
214 Loc. cit.
215 Poetics. vii. 3.
216 Cobb, op. cit., p. 20.
representation.

Ibsen has imitated Sophocles, too, in offering a discussion of the problem which is the theme of the play. Sophocles has the good and evil of the hero's constitution investigated in the latter half of the Ajax. In the third act of A Doll's House Ibsen has the proper relationship between husband and wife discussed.217

Ibsen étudie surtout des crises de conscience, des révolutions morales

... il s'est aperçu que la revendication de l'autonomie morale ... peut devenir malfaisante et grotesque chez une vaniteuse névrosée comme Hedda Gabler, et n'est plus que l'adoration prétentieuse, féroce,--et stérile, --du "moi."218

The same critic observes keenly: "Nous assistons à un drame, non pas de jalousie sensuelle et amoureuse, mais de jalousie cérébrale ou, mieux, d'égoisme démentiel."219

... Et elle est monstrueusement orgueilleuse. Elle se croit élevée au-dessus des lois divines et humaines par la prééminence et la distinction de sa nature...

Mais elle a beau se figurer que cet orgueil est de la grande espèce; il y a, dans sa superbe, beaucoup de snobisme, beaucoup de cabotinage, et pas mal de névrose.

Il y a du snobisme. Car elle se trompe tout à fait sur ce qui est "distingué" et sur ce qui ne l'est pas. Elle méprise les tantes de Tesman; leurs manies de vieilles demoiselles et la simplicité de leurs manières l'empêchent de voir la rare valeur morale de ces deux bonnes créatures. Elle croit, la malheureuse! qu'il

217 Post, The Dramatic Art of Sophocles, p. 118.
218 Lemaître, Jules, Impressions de théâtre, vi, 49, 50.
219 Ibid., vi, p. 52.
n'y a pas de vie distinguée sans chevaux, sans piano, sans luxe. Elle croit qu'il est distingué d'avoir un salon. Elle croit qu'il n'est pas distingué d'avoir des enfants. Bref, elle a sur ce qui fait "l'élégance, de la vie, des idées pitoyables.

Et il y a, dans son orgueil, du cabotinage. Elle est constamment préoccupée de l'effet qu'elle produit sur les autres; elle se regarde; même seule, elle pose pour une galerie invisible qu'elle porte partout en elle-même. Elle veut qu'il y ait dans toutes ses démarches un reflet de beauté; mais cette beauté des actes et des attitudes, elle en a une conception très convenue, théâtrale ou livresque, parfaitement niaise au fond. 220

Parmi ses rêves confus, il y en a un qu'elle formule avec précision: "Je veux, une fois dans ma vie, peser sur une destinée humaine." Cela, c'est la réduction du rêve de Napoléon et de tous les conquérants.

Mais sur qui agira-t-elle? Sur son mari? Elle ne daigne. Il n'y a rien à faire de ce gros nanneton inoffensif et distrait. Elle s'aperçoit alors que ce fou d'Eilert Lövborg vaut la peine, lui, d'être pris et dominé. Il a renoncé à ses vices, il a travaillé, il a publié un beau livre; il en a un autre tout prêt, en manuscrit, ou il a mis toute son âme et tout son génie. Et qui est-ce qui a opéré ce sauvetage et cette transformation? Une petite femme, très douce, très timide, qui s'est dévouée à Eilert, ... Oui, c'est ce petit mouton de Théa qui a changé la destinée de ce fou génial. Et elle se met à haïr Théa de toute son âme. 221

Thus when Hedda comes by chance into the possession of Eilert's precious manuscript she determines to withhold it from him. 222 Eilert makes his decision to commit suicide in his despair at having broken all his promises to Théa. Hedda, Iago-like, "... le sachant en tout cas perdu pour elle," en-

220 Ibid., vi, p. 53.
221 Ibid., vi, pp. 54, 55.
222 Supra p. 39
courages Eilert to destroy his own life. She gives her pistol to him. 223

After Eilert has departed:

...la femme simplement et atrocement jalouse éclate
un instant sous la comédienne, elle jette dans le
poids le cahier d'Eilert en criant: "Maintenant je
brûle ton enfant, Théa, la belle aux cheveux crépus!
L'enfant ... Maintenant je brûle, je brûle l'enfant!"

Dégagé du cabotinage qui le rend grotesque, cet
acte d'Hedda est abominable, car c'est un acte de
destruction égoïste, un acte purement méchant. Hedda
est méchante, parce que, aux âmes médiocres (et elle
en est une, et je vous supplie de ne point la coiffer
d'une auréole!) la méchanceté finit par paraître la
meilleure affirmation de la force. Il y a du némon-
isme dans cette sotte. 224

After the suicide of Eilert, Hedda is informed that since the weapon
which was used has been identified as hers she must appear at court. She ex-
claims to Judge Brack, "Je suis en votre pouvoir, je dépends de votre bon
plaisir! Esclave! je suis esclave!"

Hedda cannot endure the position in which she has been placed:

...Le sentiment de son isolement, de son impuissance,
et enfin de sa dépendance achève de l'affoler. Et,
dans un dernier accès de cabotinage furieux, singeant
son mari, raillant Théa, raillant l'assesseur, raillant
les deux vieilles tantes, --dont l'une vient de mourir,
--Hedda, après avoir joué sur le piano une valse en-
diablée, se tue d'un coup de pistolet et exhale dans un
éclat de rire son âme frénétique. 225

One agrees that the French critic is justified in selecting the appellation "le

223Lemaitre, Impressions du théâtre, VI, 57.
224Ibid., pp. 57, 58.
225Ibid., VI, 60.
scenario psychologique d'Hedda Gabler.²²⁶

Ibsen, then, deliberately chose his theatre to be the theatre of the soul. Consequently he proceeded to substitute concentrated action for the complications of the plot of la pièce bien faite. To achieve this simplification he relegated many elements of story to the antecedent, unseen part of the play. Other facts he revealed through the means of the gradual exposition. The investigator's interest is stimulated at a question that suggests itself. Can the composer of character drama fulfill the requirement of the Aristotelian theory of tragedy?

The Plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: Character holds the second place. . . . Thus Tragedy is the imitation of an action, and of the agents, mainly with a view to the action.²²⁷

A comparison of the action enacted on and off the stage of Ibsen's drama, Hedda Gabler²²⁸ will be helpful to determine the extent of Ibsenian divergence from the Aristotelian theory. The first column tabulates the action preceding the play in the order in which the play reveals it through conversation. The second column indicates the action behind the scenes; the third column the action on the stage.

²²⁶Ibid., VI, 51.

²²⁷Poetics. vi. 14.

George Tesman has married beautiful Hedda Gabler, very much recherchée. She has extravagant tastes. George's aunt, Miss Tesman, provides money for her nephew by mortgaging her annuity. George's rival, Eilert Lövborg, has written a remarkable book. Mrs. Elvsted has persuaded Eilert to reform his life and has aided him in writing the book. Mrs. Elvsted has come to the town in which Lövborg resides. Hedda has married Tesman since no one else has asked for her hand in marriage. She has continued a friendship with Judge Brack whom she knew in her youth. Lövborg was also a friend of Hedda.

Hedda Gabler

Mrs. Elvsted calls and leaves a bouquet.

Hedda is impolite to Miss Tesman.

Hedda threatens to shoot Judge Brack. Lövborg will not try to prevent Tesman’s success in their profession.

Hedda persuades Lövborg to drink. She gives him her pistol. Hedda burns Eilert's manuscript and deceives Tesman concerning her intention in destroying it.

Tesman and Lövborg are invited to a party by Judge Brack; Lövborg reads his manuscript. Lövborg drinks heavily and loses his manuscript. Tesman rescues it. Lövborg attends a soirée given by Mlle Diana. It is at this time Eilert realizes he has lost his manuscript. Later he is arrested. Tesman’s Aunt Rina dies. Lövborg commits suicide. Hedda shoots herself.

Brack informs Hedda that the pistol used by Lövborg has been identified as hers. The Judge threatens her.

It is obvious that Ibsen did not consider action to be the soul of his
tragedy. It is evident, rather, that Ibsen aimed primarily at an exposition of the very complex state of the mind of Hedda Gabler.

Another drama of Ibsen, The Wild Duck, also portrays a révolté with whom his creator does not sympathize. The Wild Duck affords an example of elaborate exposition by gradual revelation.

...L'exposition est longue: elle est confuse, ou plutôt diffuse. Ces détails, nous ne les apprenons que peu à peu, à mesure qu'ils se présentent dans le cours de lentes conversations; ils ne sont point groupés méthodiquement pour notre commodité; nous sommes obligés de les retenir au passage et, pour ainsi parler, d'en faire nous-mêmes le total. Cela exige de nous une assez grande tension d'esprit, et cela certes passerait pour un grave défaut sur une scène française. Mais en revanche, grâce à la lenteur même de ces causeries, à cette sorte d'insouciance où l'auteur paraît être de son objet principal, grâce à l'abondance des petits faits familiers et superflus, nous avons, à un degré extraordinaire, le sentiment de la réalité du milieu ou va se passer l'action; nous sommes vraiment "dépayés," nous avons vraiment vécu, pendant une heure ou deux, avec la famille Elkdal. 229

The following outline signals the preponderance of story over action.

The scheme is that employed for Hedda Gabler. 230

The Wild Duck

The elderly Elkdal has been in prison. Hialmar and Gregers were formerly classmates; they have not seen one another for sixteen years. Hialmar takes

229 Lemaître, Impressions du théâtre, VI, 34, 35.
care of his father. Unknown to Gregers, Hjalmar's father has received some help. Werle has provided the money for Hjalmar to begin photography. He has also put him in a position to marry Gina Hansen, a former servant in the Werle home. Gregers believes Werle was implicated in the decision regarding Elkdal's imprisonment. Werle was unfaithful to his wife. She thought he preferred Gina to her. There is little happiness in the Werle home. Gregers has not been on intimate terms with his father for years. Hedvig is losing her sight. She has received the wild duck from Werle. Hjalmar has neglected Hedvig's education. Gina is the person responsible for Hjalmar's business. Hjalmar makes an impractical invention.

Hialmar and Elkdal are shooting in the garret. Gregers tells Hjalmar of Gina's infidelity. Werle is going blind. Mrs. Soerby gives Werle's letter to Hedvig. Hialmar drinks heavily and dies. A shot is heard--Hedvig has killed herself.

Elkdal comes to Werle's home. Hialmar is ashamed to recognize him. Gregers refuses his father's offer and leaves his house. Elkdal and Hialmar return. Gregers comes to ask if he may lodge with Hialmar. He is shown the wild duck.

Werle tries in vain to persuade Gregers to return. Hialmar neglects his work; he reproaches Gina. He reads the letter and repudiates Hedvig. He returns and affirms his assertion. He takes food greedily. Hedvig's body is brought in.

The results of this analysis is deeper realization of how little action Ibsen represents on the stage. In comparing this tabulation with that of "le scenario psychologique d'Hedda Gabler" one recalls the implication of a familiar definition. A theorist has stated, "The exposition of passionate emotions
as such, is in the province of the lyric poet.  

Ibsen, like Corneille, chose a lyric pattern rather than dramatic material for his compositions.

\[231\] Freytag, Die Technik des Dramas, S. 7.

\[232\] Cf. ante pp. 44, 55, 56, pp. 57 et sqq.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this investigation has been to fit Corneille, as much as he will fit, into the conditions *sine qua non* of the Aristotelian theory of tragedy. Considering, then, the *Poetics* of Aristotle as basic theory the conditions were reaffirmed as conflict, action, and character.

Corneille, it appears, has failed to write tragedy. The reason for the failure is the endowing of the protagonist with a very powerful will—*le héron* corneélien. There is a recognized aesthetic principle that the stronger the will is, the less possibility there is for tragedy, action, conflict. The last is a necessity for all drama. This study reveals Corneille's varying degrees of failure in writing tragedy. This failure is illustrated in *Le Cid* Cinna, Horace, Polyeucte, Rodogune, and Héraclius. The evidence presented in this study seems to demonstrate that the intensity of action, the soul of drama, is ever in inverse proportion to the strength of will of the protagonist.

In a review of powerful will in *Nicomède* the study offers a negative answer to the problem, "Did Corneille write tragedy?" Corneille failed utterly to make of *Nicomède* a tragedy; the protagonist had a perfect will.

Some elements of Corneille's technique which the inquiry discloses are crystallized in the following statements.

1. Action is seldom represented for the spectator.
2. The plots are frequently complex.

3. The will—and that alone—is the activating principle behind each of the protagonists.

4. The plays are concerned with the exercise of will that approximates pure will.

5. The conflict is interior.

6. The characters are closely integrated and typical.

7. The traits of character are revealed through narration.

Corneille offered an exposition of dramatic theory in the Discours. They contribute nothing, or almost nothing to poetics. In the light of the following discussion they definitely imprint self-condemnation upon their author.


3. Aristoteles sagt: durch das Mitleid und die Furcht, welche die Tragödie erweckt, soll unser Mitleid und unsere Furcht, und was diesen anhängig, gereinigt werden.—Corneille weiss davon gar nichts und bildet sich ein, Aristoteles habe sagen wollen, die Tragödie erwecke unser Mitleid, um unsere Furcht zu erwecken, um durch diese Furcht die Leidenschaften in uns zu reinigen, durch die sich der bemitleidete Gegenstand sein Unglück zugezogen. Ich will von dem Werte dieser Absicht nicht sprechen; genug, dass es nicht die
Aristotelische ist, und dass, da Corneille seinen Tragödien eine ganz andere Absicht gab, auch notwendig keine Tragödien selbst ganz andere Werke werden mussten, als die waren, von welchen Aristoteles seine Absicht abstrahierte hatte; es mussten Tragödien werden, welches keine wahren Tragödien waren und das sind nicht allein seine sondern alle französischen Tragödien geworden, weil ihre Verfasser alle nicht die Absicht des Aristoteles, sondern die Absicht des Corneille sich vorsetzten.

4. Aristoteles sagt: man muss keinen ganz guten Mann ohne alle sein Verschulden in der Tragödie unglücklich werden lassen; denn so was sei grässlich. "Ganz recht," sagt Corneille, "ein solcher Ausgang erweckt mehr Unwillen und Hass gegen den, welcher das Leiden verursacht, als Mitleid für den, welchen es trifft. Jene Empfindung also, welche nicht die eigentliche Wirkung der Tragödie sein soll, würde, wenn sie nicht sehr fein behandelt wäre, diese ersticken, die doch eigentlich hervorgebracht werden sollte. Der Zuschauer würde missvergnügt weggehen, weil sich allzu viel Zorn mit dem Mitleiden vermisch, welches ihm gefallen hätte, wenn er es allein mit wegnnehmen könnte." "Aber,"--kommt Corneille hintennach; denn mit einem Aber muss er nachkommen, "aber wenn diese Ursache wegfällt, wenn es der Dichter so eingerichtet, dass der Tugendhafte, welcher leidet, mehr Mitleid für sich als Widerwillen gegen den erweckt, der ihn leiden lässt, alsdenn?"--"O, alsdenn," sagt Corneille, "halte ich dafür, dark man sich gar kein Bedenken machen, auch den tugendhaftesten Mann auf dem Theater im Unglücke zu zeigen." 1

With this demonstration of Corneille's assumption of la liberté dans l'art linked with the actual application of the same assumption a French critic's commentary on this freedom is incisive:

Pour la même raison, parce que le classicisme, sur la foi des Romains et des Grecs,--d'Aristote et de Quintilien, ou de Longin,--avait cru fermement à l'existence des genres, et des lois ou des règles

1Lessing, Hamburgische Dramaturgie, S. 367, 368.
de ces genres eux-mêmes, c'est pour cela que les romantiques les ont nées, les unes après les autres, et qu'ils ont proclamé le principe de la liberté dans l'art.  

The critic explains trenchantly that the phrase liberté dans l'art could not express a principle of art:

...Le droit que l'on revendique, c'est celui d'opposer sa manière de voir, de sentir, ou de penser à celle de tout le monde...ce que l'on exige de la critique ou de l'opinion, c'est la liberté de ne pas être troublé dans la manifestation de soi-même par des observations importunes. La liberté de l'art, c'est le droit pour l'artiste de n'avoir que lui pour juge de son oeuvre...  

The investigation reveals Corneille's approach to l'émancipation du moi par le principe de la liberté dans l'art. Corneille was a romantic—struggling between four walls.

Had the French poet but realized that Aristotle was constructing a dramatic theory for tragedy of the era immediately preceding the Birth of Christ he and his confrères of the French school might not have striven so vainly to fit themselves into a mold unsuited for them. Corneille was not equipped to elaborate the Poetics from a Greek text. Had Corneille been prepared he might have glimpsed the true pattern for which his intermediaries, "les interprètes latins" showed little insight.

Corneille was caught in fringe and never arrived at the central thought of poetic drama.  

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3 Ibid., 176.

4 Corneille, Discours du poème dramatique, p. 34.
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The thesis submitted by Mother Mary Fitzpatrick, R.S.C.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of French.

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