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Italian Influences on the French Tragi-Comedy

Helen M. Szymanski
Loyola University Chicago

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ITALIAN INFLUENCES ON THE FRENCH TRAGI-COMEDY

by

HELEN M. SZYMANSKI

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VITA

Helen M. Szymanski was born in Chicago, Illinois, on May 18, 1914. She was graduated from Tuley High School, Chicago, Illinois, June, 1928, and North Park Junior College, June, 1933.

The Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in French was conferred by the University of Chicago, June, 1936. The Master of Education degree with a major in Education was conferred by the Chicago Teachers College, June, 1940.

From 1936 to 1945 the writer has been engaged in teaching Social Science and English in the Chicago Public High Schools. During the past three years she has devoted her time to graduate study in French.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Toward the middle of the sixteenth century there developed in France a variety of the drame libre that represented, in a classical form, the essential qualities of the medieval drama. Under the term tragi-comedie it included types as various as the medieval genres from which they sprung, united by the common possession of a happy dénouement, a classical form and name. After a period of confusion, which lasted throughout the sixteenth century, came the predominance of the romanesque tragi-comedy, which grew to be not only the leading type of the genre, but the most popular dramatic kind at Paris, so continuing till succeeded in the public favor by the classical tragedy and comedy. The tragi-comedy continued for some years to be written, but toward 1672, after an existence of one hundred and twenty years, came to an end as an independent genre.

The name tragi-comoedia, taken from the prologue of Plautius' Amphitruo and first applied to a play by Verardi, spread to France and other European countries through these two works: Kitzsoher's Profectione and Roja's Celestina. While the idea of genre existed, limits were ill defined. Tragedy and tragi-comedy at times approached each other so closely that a play was given both classifications. During the sixteenth century, the

name could be applied to any play of medieval origin which possessed a happy
dénouement and a form that was at least partially classic. This usage con-
tinued sporadically throughout the period.

Actually the tragi-comedy had formed an integral part in the evolution
of the French drama, filling the stage between the sixteenth century
dramatists and Pierre Corneille. Since it was for forty years the chief
expression of the form of dramatic art that is popular in its appeal, it must
be studied for any complete history of the French people or their stage. By such study can be seen how the scholastic drama of the sixteenth century
became popularized and how the Italian writers played a definite part in its
successful development. Undoubtedly, it is of value to observe the contrib-
utions of Arioste, Cecchi, Cinthio, and Guarini to this genre. Of further
interest is the recognition of the assimilation of Italian ideas by the
leading French dramatists of the period.

In reality the French borrowed subject matter and procedures from the
Italians. The Italian dramatists were the masters of the French more than
Plaute or Terence. Moreover, the tragi-comedy, for its part, has done
everything to turn over any barriers. Spanish comedies, romances of
chivalry, Italian stories, all were acceptable. It enriched itself with
any invention that was at hand; it adopted all strange situations; and it
copied without scruples.

2 Ibid., 18.
3 E. Abry, C. Audio, and P. Crouzet, Histoire Illustrée de la Littérature
Française, Paris, Henri Didier, 1921, 91.
The principal French authors to whom Corneille may have looked for guidance were Garnier, Hardy, Rotrou, and Mairet. Hardy had led the way by regarding a play as primarily a composition that was to be acted and by his fixing the special characteristics of the tragi-comedy. Racau and Théophile had modernized dramatic style, and the latter had shown how emotion could be expressed. Mairet had begun the movement towards classical regulation.4 While these writers were developing classical ideas, Corneille was bringing out his early plays. These authors had, however, paid little attention to comedy. Tragi-comedy held too important a place in the public mind, and there was still a good deal to be done in giving meaning to the new rules and in writing plays that would have a long life at home and considerable influence abroad.5

In total, the tragi-comedy was a pleasant genre; it could have given some masterpieces. However, it did not have the luck. It actually left nothing for complete admiration for posterity.

5 Ibid., 84.
CHAPTER II

DEFINITION OF TRAGI-COMEDY

Desmartes, in the preface to his Scipion (1639), confesses that he would rather have entitled his play a tragedy which is very grave in nature, although somewhat bloody; but that he had to follow popular usage and call it a tragi-comedy, since everyone used this term pour exprimer une pièce dont les principaux personnages, et les accidents graves et funestes, mais dont la fin est heureuse, encore qu'il n'y ait rien de comique qui y soit mêlé. 1 It is difficult to define this mixed genre, the tragi-comedy which lasted till Racine's time. In reality the tragi-comedy is not a mixture of the tragic and comic. It is rather the character of the ending which determines what it is.

Critical observation has frequently noted the high rank of the leading personages in the tragi-comedy. Vaquelin mentions les plus grands et les rois. Desmartes declares that les principaux personnages sont princes. This aristocratic feature of the fully developed genre is not to be doubted, but in a number of non-romanesque tragi-comedies the aristocrats are omitted. The freedom from rule that characterizes the tragi-comedy allows it to mingle personages of various social classes at any period of its history. 2 There is a tendency, however, even in the sixteenth century

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1 de Julleville, 98.
2 Lancaster, xiii.
toward placing aristocrats in the leading roles, a usage that becomes the rule in the romanesque tragi-comedy of the seventeenth century, which is at that time the only important type of the genre. It should be noted, however, that the tragi-comedy does not have princes and princesses disguised as shepherds or shepherdesses, for, if such persons take part in a play, it is called tragi-comédie pastorale.

Little attention has been paid to the non-historic nature of the tragi-comedy, which seems, indeed, to be denied in Faguet's definition of the genre as a drame historique à dénouement heureux. Unless this is an attempt at differentiating the tragi-comedy from the comedy by pointing out the tendency of the former to historic imitation in the manner of the romance, the definition is certainly incorrect. According to Brunetière the tragi-comedy cannot be called truly historic.

If historic plot is not made the only difference between tragedy and tragi-comedy, this statement may be considered true of the romanesque type of the latter genre, for its members approach the historic plot only in the four plays that are based on mythology. Now the mythological plot was treated by the French classic dramatists along with subjects held to be matters of history, and, as far as the well-established

3 Ibid., xiv.

nature of the myth was concerned, it served equally well the classical end. On the other hand, the facts that mythological plots are non-historic and that certain of them lend themselves to romantic treatment made possible their use in four tragi-comedies: Proscris, Ariadne, Raine Alceste, and Les Travaux d'Ulysse. The authors of the non-romanesque tragi-comedies drew upon supposedly historic sources, when they based their plays on the Bible or lives of saints, while even contemporary history is represented in the tragi-comedy called L'union Belgique. The non-historic subject is, therefore a fixed characteristic of the fully developed tragi-comedy, but not of all its early or subordinate types.5

The two characteristics of the tragi-comedy that have given rise to the most varied opinions among critics are the happy dénouement and the mixing of the tragic and comic elements. It is especially worthy of note that the critics who knew the plays as contemporary products are unanimous in assigning to them a happy dénouement. Vauquelin objects to the use of the term, but at the same time testifies to the fact that it was applied in his day to those plays characterized by a happy ending. Moreover, D'Aubignac admits that plays which he would himself call tragedies are called tragi-comedies merely on account of their happy dénouement.6 There can be no doubt, therefore, that in the tragi-comedies with which he was acquainted this form of ending was an established fact.

An examination of the extant plays reveals with sufficient clearness the state of the case. For the period from 1552 to 1636 when, if ever, 

5 Lancaster, The French Tragi-Comedy, xv.
6 Ibid., xvi.
the tragi-comedy may be considered an independent kind, there are extant eighty-three romanesque tragi-comedies, all of which show a happy dénouement. In Philandre et Marisée, it is true, the leading characters die, but are depicted as arriving in heaven after a most unfortunate life, so this play is included in the list. 7

Modern ideas concerning the dénouement of the tragi-comedy appear to be largely based on two plays by Hardy, of which the classification is in doubt. The first of these, called Proscris ou la Jalousie Infortunée, is styled tragi-comedy on the title page and at the head of the argument, but tragedy at the top of subsequent pages, and in the argument itself, where the author writes catastrophe qui finit la Tragédie. Hardy seems to have looked on it from the standpoint of the murdered Proscris and so consequently styled it a tragedy. The term tragi-comedy, twice found and due, perhaps to the publisher, can, however, be justified from the point of view of Cephale, the hero, and his friend Aurore, whose loves were greatly expedited by the death of the former's wife. In Aristoclée, the second piece of uncertain classification, there is no doubt as to the unhappiness of the dénouement which induces Lombard to call it a tragedy. 3 Hardy does not use the term, tragedy, in the argument of any play whose dénouement is undoubtedly

7 Marsan, 245.

happy. It is perfectly possible that he considered Aristophanes a tragedy and called it so in his argument. No one would, indeed, doubt this were it not for the fact that tragi-comédie is written as the title and titre courant, where, however, its presence may be due to the printer. 9

Another point that has evoked critical discussion concerns the mixing of tragic and comic elements that appears to have given rise to the name tragi-comedy. During the seventeenth century the difference between the tragedy and tragi-comedy was based on four characteristics, which were perhaps external but served well enough to guide the pre-Cornelian dramatist. These were: the historic or non-historic subject, the high or low rank of the personages, the terrible or happy dénouement, the noble or familiar style. Now it has been shown that in respect to these qualities, the fully developed tragi-comedy occupied middle ground between the older genres. It is non-historic, but imitates history by a plot that savors of the romance rather than of the comedy of manners. The leading personages are of noble birth, but bourgeois and plebeians are allowed. 10 The dénouement is never tragic, but frequently threatens to become so in a manner foreign to the comedy. The style is serious in the main, seldom rising to tragic heights, yet sinking with no great frequency to comic familiarity and humor. From this point of view, it is


evident that there is a mixing of tragic and comic elements which justifies the name tragi-comedy.

While it approaches both classical genres in its form where the use of Alexandrines, division into five acts, and subdivision into scenes is the rule, the tragi-comedy is differentiated from them by its looseness of structure, which presents the story ab ovo with no regard for the unities of action, time, and place, and makes the tragi-comedy essentially a variety of the drame libre. Although the action in the tragi-comedy may spring from the will of the persons, it is more often produced, unlike that of the classical tragedy, by purely external causes. As psychological problems are seldom put, study of character and emotion is replaced by multiplicity of incident, cleverness of intrigue, and variety of personages and verse-forms. Mixing of opposing styles is freely employed so that concrete are found with abstract statements, humorous with grave dialogues, lyrical with narrative verse-forms.

The tragi-comedy, however, shows much greater liberty than the French classical tragedy with respect to its verse-forms. While the Alexandrine is the prevailing form employed, verses of eight or six syllables occur in lyric passages, letters, love dialogues and soliloquies. Echo rimes are found in a number of instances and sonnets are sometimes inserted. While the classic influence predominates in determining the use of the Alexandrine, shorter verses are employed with considerable freedom.

11 Ibid., xxiii.

12 Brunetiére, Études Critiques sur L'Histoire de la Littérature Française, 6.
In addition, startling stage effects are obtained by duels, murders, enlèvements and other romantic means, which classicists avoid or keep behind the scenes. Dramatic effort is directed towards arousing the curiosity, rather than the passions of the audience. In the more fully developed type genre the main spring of the action is love; marriage is the chief end; all that is romanesque the means. 13

The French tragi-comedy has been shown to derive its leading characteristics from the medieval drama, just as it takes its form and name from the classical Latin stage. These elements were united in French plays toward the middle of the sixteenth century after they had given rise to tragi-comedies in other lands. The question whether these older tragi-comedies did not exert an influence on the development of the genre in France may, therefore, be aptly put. Garnier's Bradamante, although the tenth French work called tragi-comedy, has been chosen as a conspicuous early example of the form that the genre ultimately took. 14

With its appearance the tragi-comedy won for itself so definite an existence that it is idle to look for forces that acted later in the creation of the genre.

If a tranquil love played too great a role in a play, if the tone and the style in it were too familiar, if the action was too scattered or took too much time and space, the author would attach the title of

13 Lancaster, The French Tragi-comedy, xxv.
14 Marsan, 247.
tragi-comedy, less imposing and less significant. The tragi-comedy was then a legal shelter to those who broke the coming rules; a sort of political compromise with acts of indiscipline from which one wished to take away the appearance of revolt; the tragi-comedy satisfied the need of variety, the desire to use a variety of curious subjects which se dérobaient aux classifications exclusives. 15

CHAPTER III

ITALIAN TRAGI-COMEDY

The Renascence, that great unsealing of the waters, had an immediate and decisive effect upon every form of creative thought, and upon the drama more than any other. In Italy, where the movement took its rise, tragedy and comedy of the ancient pattern, but often instinct with the spirit of religion and chivalry, were flourishing side by side with a force as indigenous to the soil as the Sotie was to that of France. Italy enjoyed all the authority which a nearly unequalled success in the arts of peace can confer. In painting and sculpture, poetry and prose, commerce and industry, she gave the law to the world.

With Italy there had been a reciprocity of influence ever since the thirteenth century, and with the expedition of Charles VIII the current had set strongly from Italy to France. This relationship between France and Italy naturally led to Italian being studied, and there were not a few persons in France who could write as well as speak Italian.¹

The first half of the sixteenth century is called by Italian writers the golden age of their literature, but by the year 1515, the year of the accession of Francis I, nearly all the works which render this period illustrious had already been written. The first complete

¹ Maurice N. Bernardin, La Comédie Italienne en France, Paris, Revue Bleue, 1902, 32.
edition of the Arcadia appeared in 1504; the Prince was written in 1513; the Cortegiano was probably completed in 1513. In 1515 Ariosto sent to press the great poem upon which he had been at work for ten years: the Orlando Furioso. A few years later the dictatorship of Italian literature passed into the hands of Pietro Bembo, a man of great industry and literary enthusiasm, but little genius or originality. His influence on literature was twofold. He was a jealous guardian of the purity of the language and a devoted admirer of Petrarch. It was largely owing to him that for some years to come Italian literature at any rate by its style made good the claim of the age to be one of gold. Thus the characteristics which French men of letters found dominant in Italy were a strong feeling for purity of style and a Petrarchist revival.

Of the great Italian writers who produced other masterpieces about the time that Francis I ascended the throne, the one who exercised the greatest influence in France was beyond all question Ariosto. A complete prose translation of the Orlando Furioso appeared in 1543, possibly by the hand of Jean Martin, and before long it was followed by numerous verse translations of particular episodes. This poem furnished Garnier with the plot of his tragi-comedy Bradamante. It also offered many valuable ideas to other French dramatists of that period.


3 Ibid., 48.
The first Italian tragi-commédia, The Cecaria, is a pastoral drama on the recovery of three men, struck blind by love. The name dialogo, applied to the early editions of it, might well have been retained. It is by no means a tragi-comedy in the French sense of this term, yet this is only Italian tragi-comedy composed before 1582 that was translated into French as a tragi-comédie. It also appeared in 1594 as Les Aveugles.

Another tragi-comedy, La Potenza d'Amore relates an unsuccessful lover's attempt at suicide. The leading personages appears to be bourgeois. Minor roles are played by Pedante, Zani and Collubrino, a magician. The play is a comedy of manners rather than a tragi-comedy in the French sense. 4

The greater number of early Italian tragi-comedies are based on classical narratives. Appolo e Lencotoe, Il Ratto d'Helena, and Il Gindizzio di Paride speak for themselves. La Gangenia may be added to these, as in it the author treats the conflict between the Carthagians and the Romans. Now, had these plays influenced the French genre it is impossible that the classical subject would not have been employed there as well. In reality, however, the first French tragi-comedies that show plots derived from classical authors were written by Hardy fifty years later. 5

5 Ibid., 29.
The only Italian tragi-comedy, in fact that is similar to the French form of the genre is the Quintilla (1567), a play which is romanesque in its love intrigue and in the discovery by a father of a long lost son; aristocratic in its personages, who belong to the court of Sicily, where the spectator is introduced by the ghost of the king; serious in the main, but comic in such subordinate character as Trulla, the court buffoon and Gallofria with his Bergamasco dialect. The play comes, however, rather late to influence the French tragi-comedy in its origin for not only had the genre name appeared in France four times before the Quintilla was published, but one of the plays to which the name was applied belongs to the romanesque type of tragi-comedy, typified by the Italian play, and it was acted as early as 1564. There is moreover, no evidence that the Quintilla was known in France during the formative period of the tragi-comedy. One sees here an example of parallel and independent development.

While the Italian tragi-comedy had no complete influence on the French play of the same genre name, an Italian comedy, the Amor Costante (1540) by Alessandro Piccolomini, is the source of Lucelle tragi-comédie de Louis Le Jars (1576). The latter play is, however, an exceptional variety of tragi-comedy, nearly approaching the comédie bourgeoise.

6 Ibid., 30.
and has small influence on other members of the genre. It shows the qualities that would have belonged to the tragi-comedy, had that form of the drama originated in Italian plays of the Renaissance rather than in the products of the medieval stage.

Italian influence is exerted on the Bradamante (1582) and the lost Geniève (1564), tragi-comédies that derive their plots from Orlando Furioso. As Garnier is known to have drawn his play directly from Ariosto, and as the author of Geniève seems to have done the same thing, there is no influence of the Italian drama on these plays, which followed their epic source, as the medieval mystère followed the Bible or a roman d'aventure. One sees here the same phenomenon that he observes in regard to the Spanish influence on the French drama. Just as the novelas of Cervantes furnished plots to Hardy in the first years of the seventeenth century, while the influence of the Spanish drama did not begin before to influence the formation of the French tragi-comedy, which seems, on the other hand, to have been one of the formative forces in the tragi-comédie pastorale. This latter genre, however, is but a variety of the pastoral and consequently lies outside the scope of this work.

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8 Lancaster, The French Tragi-Comedy, 30.
9 Bernardin, 34.
Especial importance is attached to this group of secular and romanesque plays, which furnished to the genre its best known sixteenth century examples and formed the type that became in the hands of Hardy, the tragi-comedy par-excellence. First among them chronologically is the lost play on Ariosto's story of Ginevra, performed at Fontainebleau in 1564. The loss of the play is unfortunate, as it would furnish an early example of a modern romanesque play, the appearance of which in France is due to no foreign dramatic influence. 10

La Polyxene, a romanesque play, that has been neglected by critics of the French stage, demands a somewhat careful study. The plot was taken from le docte Boisteau au premier livre des histoires Tragiques histoire 6. The latter writer translated it from the novella of Bandello called Amore di don Giovanni di Mendoza e della duchessa di Savoia. Though thus based directly on a collection of tales, the story goes back to the Marquise de la Gaudine from une ancienne chanson de geste qui nous est parvenue dans une rédaction française, italienisée, que M. Guesoard a publiée sous le titre de Macaire. 11

The structure of this piece is decidedly faulty, for the main plot is dramatized almost exclusively in the fourth and fifth acts, while the first three, following Bandello's narrative, are full of extraneous matter that serves merely to give the play sufficient length. The action takes place

10 Ibid., 36.

in both Spain and Italy during several months, at least. The story is ab
ovo, beginning with the causes of Irene's journey, which was itself the
dause of the love-affair between Polyxene and Mandosse. The preliminary
discourses are delivered at great length, while the important parts of the
plot are too quickly narrated, characteristics worthy of the didactic
author, a schoolmaster of Rouen, known by his Petit-Behourt, an abridgment
of Despautères' Rudiment. His pedantry is further shown by his use of
such names as Irenophile and Megalprepie. Classical influence is seen in
the courrier and confidantes, as well as in the use of the five choruses
and the recitation of certain events that should have been acted. 12

On the other hand, the abstract personages show the influence of the
moralité. This play is in one respect more dramatic than Bradamante
inasmuch as the duel is here acted on the stage, whereas in Garnier's
play the contest between Roger and Bradamante is described to the audience
by a third person.

Before the dramatic experience of the Histories bore its fruit in a
widening of tragedy, another sort of story enriched tragi-comedy.
Battista Guarini (1538-1612), professor of rhetoric and poetic at Ferrara,
spent years on his pastoral drama Il pastor fido. It was published in
Venice in 1590, and was called tragi-comedy. 13 It is a tragedy in its
crisis of life and death, comedy in its satyr and in its happy issue, it
is above all, in its persons, its scenes, its mythology, consistently

12 Ibid., 289.
13 Baldwin, 203.
pastoral. A prologue celebrating Arcadia as a blest retreat of peace, and Caterina d'Este as worthy of her illustrious house, is spoken by the river Alfeo. Besides this personification, and four choruses, there are eighteen personae. Of these, the majority are servants or companions serving merely as interlocutors. Three, the temple officiant Nicander, Corsica's lover Gorydon, and a messenger, are quite superfluous. No person is characterized except as a type; the hero Mirtillo as a devotedly faithful lover, the heroine Amaryllis as virtuous, Corsica as a plotter. All are duly paganized. The play is not moved by the actions of its persons. Complication, indeed, comes through Corsica, who is the only person carried through the play; but the solution is through persons brought in at the end solely for that purpose. As with Garnier, the persons are presented in separate groups; and they are on the stage to talk. The style is expertly careful. Guarini has learned from Tasso how to modulate his verse. The notes record constant reminiscences of the classics, both Greek and Latin, and many borrowings; but the surcharging, again after the example of Tasso, is discreetly harmonized.

Regular tragedy and comedy were both ever straining against the rules, especially that of decorum, which denied the prevailing taste for thrills. By spurning the rules, Giammaria Cecchi of Florence made himself the most genuinely popular playwright of his day. He composed genially in all kinds, from sacred mystery to profanest farce, even occasionally

14 Ibid., 204.
15 Ibid., 205.
penetrating into the academic camp, and adapting, after his own fashion, from the Roman comedy. Again, a little more of genius, and the independence and gay wit of Cecchi might have given Italian comedy its place in the sun. As it was, he wrote no notable piece. He did, however, as Symonds pointed out, presciently redefine the emancipated comedy or tragi-comedy. Symonds points out that Cecchi called it the farsa, farce, but the name does not matter. The Farsa is a new third species between tragedy and comedy. It enjoys the liberties of both, and shuns their limitations; for it receives into its ample boundaries great lords and princes, which comedy does not, and like a hospital or an inn, welcomes the vilest and most plebeian of the people, to whom Dame Tragedy has never stooped. It is not restricted to certain motives; for it accepts all subjects--grave and gay, profane and sacred, urbane and rude, sad and pleasant. It does not care for time or place. The scene may be laid in a church, or a public square, or where you will; and if one day is not long enough, two or three may be employed. Cecchi's notion that the modern mistress of the stage was to be born into a third estate between tragedy and comedy is also interesting in connection with the development of modern social drama from the pastoral, another third between tragedy and comedy.

It was Giraldie Cinthio who actually established the real meaning of the word in the Renaissance theatre. Having written a tragedy with a

16 Fletcher, 289.
17 Ibid., 290.
happy ending, Attila, he offered, if we agree that a tragedy should end unhappily, to name it tragi-comedy. 18

Cinthio, further, furnished the source of Phraarte, in which the son of the king of Macedon loves Philagnie, daughter of Cotys, King of Thrace. War is declared between these two countries because of an attempt made by two women, agents of Cotys, to poison Phillippe of Macedon. His son, Phraarte, by freeing the women from prison, secures their influence with Philagnie, who now allows him to possess her. Philippe, victorious over Cotys, takes from him all but one city, in which the latter is besieged by Phraarte, captured, and imprisoned for the supposed murder of Philagnie. She, however, with her new-born infant, has taken refuge at a peasant's home. On hearing of the Macedonian victory, she hastens to Phraarte, who receives her joyfully, frees her father and gives him back his kingdom. The lovers are married and Phraarte is acknowledged heir to the throne of Thrace. The events in this play are ordered as in a novel, with the story told from the beginning. The action is double, concerned with the courtship of Philagnie and her restoration to Phraarte. The time is a year or more. The scene is laid at various localities in Thrace and Macedon.

The destiny of the tragi-comedy was inevitable. In fact, it was condemned by the classical theories. 20 It was difficult, moreover, to


keep interest in these monotonous subjects, these childish conventional 
heroes, when it was professed that history alone is worthy to uphold the 
21 
majesty of dramatic poetry.

The cause for the irregular theatre was completely lost. From 1630 
to 1636, the public taste was changed. The task was to appeal to a public 
that favored doctrines. More than any other literary kind, the Italian 
Renaissance drama was dominated by rules supposedly laid down by the 
ancients. Nowhere else was there an enforcement of them so pedantically 
after the letter. Cramped by the so-called Aristotelian unities and 
gagged by Horatian decorum, Italian plays of the sixteenth century had 
small chance of life. Few indeed have lived; few did live even for their 
contemporaries. In spite of these drawbacks Italy has given France subject 
matter and certain intellectual manies. Moreover, it has revealed love 
to the French as an important topic in drama. In Tasso's work, in 
Guarini's tragi-comedy, in Montemayor's novel, and in other works, everyone 
deals with love. Everywhere it appears as the great motive of human 
actions, the only reason for life. 22

There had been a few Italian tragi-comedies, as we have seen, in the 
second half of the sixteenth century; but actually it did not develop well 
in Italy and did not distinguish itself enough from the tragedy. Italians 
actually tasted the real tragi-comedy form in the form of the pastoral

21 Henri Hauvette, Littérature Italiennne, Paris, Librairie Armand Colin, 
1906, 241.

22 Emile Gebhart, Les Origines de la Renaissance en Italie, Paris, 
Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1879, 343.
e.g., Guarini's Il Pastor Fido. In France, on the other hand, the tragi-comedy had a brilliant destiny.
CHAPTER IV

FRENCH TRAGI-COMEDY

Since the tragi-comedy in the sixteenth century might include any play of happy dénouement, which was derived from the medieval drama and showed in its form evidence of classical influence, there is no reason for calling the lost Genièvre, Lucelle, or Bradamante the first tragi-comedy. According to the conception of the genre in vogue at that time, L'Homme Justifié par Foy or Les Enfants dans La Fournaise were not only considered tragi-comedies, but belonged to divisions of the genre that left a larger number of examples than did the romanesque type, which later became the only form of tragi-comedy. To deny this fact is to attempt to force upon the tragi-comedy of the sixteenth century the meaning attached to it at a subsequent period. ¹

Although tragi-comedies of the sixteenth century vary more widely than they subsequently did, they have in common many characteristics which influenced the later composition of the genre. Their failure to observe the unities is definite. Many of the scenes of this genre do not grow logically out of those that precede, but follow one another largely by chance. Plays like La Gaule, Iokebed, Thobie include more than one important actions. The dénouement is accomplished by a deus

¹ Lancaster, The French Tragi-Comedy, 74.
ex machina in La Gaule, Lucelle, and Bradamante. The time of the action is not always clearly indicated, but appears to vary from a period of more than a year in Iob, Lucelle, Le Désespéré and Polyxene to one of a few days in Bradamante and Les Enfants dans la Fournaise. Though the scene is laid ordinarily within a limited locality, as in a city, it may represent places at some distance from one another. In La Nouvelle Tragicomique the action takes place within Paris and outside of it, while in Polyxene and Thobie it is found in more than one country. Instead of the classical unities, however, these tragi-comedies display a unity of interest in a single personage like Iokebed or Thobie, or in the accomplishment of some object, as in the case of La Gaule, Bradamante, and Polyxene.

The choice of subject is influenced by the author's purpose of instructing or amusing his audience. In the moralités the end is so essentially didactic that the events are largely neglected; the biblical plays, while painting a moral, introduce into the piece action that is frequently dramatic; the tragi-comédies of romanesque, or farcical plot reach the audience through the emotions without attempting instruction of any sort. So the plots are religious or historical in the didactic tragi-comédies and fictitious in the rest. The Bible is the source of L'Homme Justifié par Foy, Iob, and Thobie; La Gaule and Garnier Stoffacher are declared by their authors to be historical; although the history with which they are concerned is treated allegorically. On the other hand, the

2 Ibid., 74.
Romanesque tragi-comedies are based on obviously fictitious narratives, the Orlando Furioso, Amor Constante, a novella of Bandello, and the Jerusalemme Liberata.

In the Nouvelle Tragi-Comique, the main spring of the action is avarice, which appears subordinately in Lucelle, Bradamante, and Thobie. It is love in the romanesque plays, and religion in the biblical tragi-comedies and in the majority of moralities. Love enters subordinately into Thobie, as does religion into Polyxene. Religion struggles against pride in Les Enfants dans la Fournaise, hypocrisy in L'Homme Justifié par Foy, and Satan and his assistants in the latter play, Iob, Thobie and Garnier Stoffacher. Patriotism, which dominates religion, though working in unison with it, in La Gaule and Garnier Stoffacher, is seen in the intermède of Caresme prenant, touchant quelques abus de ce temps, in the frequent expression of desires for peace by personages in Polyxene, and in the prologue of Iob, where the author speaks of his theme. Particularly worthy of note are the expressions of patriotism and of admiration of France found in Bradamante; Leon adds a foreigner's praise by speaking of vostre France, en Chevaliers feconde, et feconde en vertus.

The tragi-comedy was, indeed, able to appeal to the patriotism of the audience to an extent denied the classical tragedy, by reason of the fact that the scene in the plays of the former genre could be laid in the country in which they were represented. In the biblical plays, it is

4 Ibid., 539.
6 Ibid., 26.
true, the Orient is naturally chosen for the scene of action, but in La Gaule, Lucelle, Bradamante, Le Désperé, Carême prenant, and La Nouvelle tragi comique the scene is laid in France, just as the action of L'Ombre de Garnier Stoffacher takes place in Switzerland, and that of Polyxene in Savoy and neighboring lands. That the audience responded to this feature of the tragi-comedy along with its other popular characteristics, is shown by the number of recorded representations of tragi-comedies, by the extensive geographical distribution of the genre in France, and by the variety of professions represented by its authors. The tragi-comedy was known in nearly all parts of France.\(^7\) That it appealed to various classes is shown by the fact that its authors included Barran, a preacher; Behourt, Heyns and Jean-Georges, schoolmasters; Du Chesne, a physician; Bonet and La Fons, lawyers; Le Jars, the King's Secretary of the Chamber; Papillon, a retired captain; Garnier, Saint-Marthe and Mlle. des Roches, who occupied themselves largely with literary pursuits.

Another characteristic of the tragi-comedy that gave it wide appeal was the varied rank of its characters. Contrary to subsequent usage, tragi-comedies might now be altogether bourgeois, as are Le Désesperé, Caresme prenant, La Nouvelle tragi comique, and Thobie. The principal personages are bourgeois in Lucelle and Iokebed, but persons of high rank are found in subordinate roles.\(^8\) Les Enfants dans la Fournaise, Le Gaule, Bradamante,

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7 Lancaster, The French Tragi-Comedy, 77.

and Polyxene are primarily aristocratic, though La Gaule admits the tiers état and soldiers, and the three other plays present attendants of inferior rank, as do classical tragedies.

As the dramatic art in France was not yet sufficiently developed to create roles thoroughly consistent with life, the study of character in these plays is, as a rule, crudely done. The personage often embodies only a single quality, after the manner of the abstractions that enter into many of these plays. He thus lacks a sufficient number of emotions to rouse a psychological struggle within himself. The audience sees in him the personification of a single virtue or vice, rather than the complex composition of the individual. Occasionally, however, a personage is found in such a situation that his action is dependent, not on external forces, but on the conflict of emotions that takes place within him. An eminent example of such a psychological struggle is seen in Roger's debate as to whether he should fight against Bradamante, where the hero hesitates between his love and his oath. In the same play, Beatrix displays in conversation with Bradamante a hesitation between the maternal love that prompts her to allow her daughter to marry Roger and her ambition that makes her prefer Leon as son-in-law.

In these plays a number of types are found. The protagonists of La Gaule and L'Homme Justifié par Foy have utterly weak characters, swayed by all those with whom they come into contact. The worthy hero, whose

9 Ibid., 291.
10 Ibid., 292.
virtues are bourgeois rather than warlike, is represented by Ascagne in Lucelle, Charles in Le Désespoiré, and Thobie in the play that bears his name. The invincible warrior is exemplified by Roger in Bradamante and Mandosse in Polyxene. To these two varieties of hero correspond the bourgeois class of heroines that includes Sarra, Lucelle, and Iokebed, and the aristocratic, represented by Bradamante and Polyxene. The villain is a rare type, except in such abstractions as Concupiscence, Volupté, Cruauté, Le fol amour, or such personages as Rabby and Bellone, abstractions under another name. The only true villains are Pancalier in Polyxene and Furcifer in La Nouvelle tragicalique who are seen little on the stage.

The bourgeois and his wife are usually well drawn. Carpony and Thobie, le père, are typical of their class, to which, on account of his love of money and desire for high rank, may be added Symon, father of Bradamante. Similarly, Beatrix, however aristocratic in origin, shows the family affection and lack of high ideal that characterizes the bourgeois.

Among other personages are to be noted Griffon, the lawyer, akin to Pathelin and Sganarelle; Magis, the magician who belongs to a type especially frequent in the tragi-comédie pastorale; Claude, the apothecary, restorer of Lucelle and Ascagne; Raguel, the divine agent, who may be compared to the abstract virtues. Attendants and messengers are also introduced into these plays. Of special importance among personages

11 Lancaster, The French Tragi-Comedy, 78.
12 Ibid., 79.
13 Ibid., 80.
are Phillipin, the irresistible wag, in Lucelle, who plays the part of the valet after Italian example; the scolding maid in Thobie; and the role of confidante that shows classical influence exemplified by Hippalque in Bradamante, Eubolie in Polyxene, and Marguerite in Lucelle. Other minor personages are added in many of the plays, so that the total number of characters is large in comparison with the usage of the classical stage. Thus Polyxene has nineteen persons besides the chorus while Caresme prernaut has twenty-nine in all. Usually, however, the number is smaller, amounting in Garnier Stoffacher to only four in addition to the three choruses. 14

While the subject of most of these tragi-comedies is essentially serious, comic elements are admitted into certain plays. The character of Aymon in Bradamante is distinctly humorous. The Satellites introduce a grim humor into Les Enfants dans la Fournaise. Caresme prernaut includes a farce. Several personages in Lucelle, particularly Philippin, show decided humor. In all of these, however, such passages are subordinate to the serious portions of the play. The only extant tragi-comedy that is an exception to this is La Nouvelle tragico.15

The dénouement in all these plays is happy for the persons principally concerned. L'Homme and Le Voluptueux in L'Homme Justifié and Caresme prernaut finally attain salvation; the three children escape from the furnace; La Gaule, Iob, and Iokebed are freed from their troubles; peace is brought by Garnier Stoffacher; Lucelle, Bradamante, Thobie, Polyxene, 14 Ibid., 81.

15 Edouard Fournier, Le Théâtre Français au XVIe et au XVIIe siècle, Paris, La Place, Sanchez et Cie., 1871, 75.
and Charles of Le Désespéré are fortunately married. Even in La Nouvelle
tragicomique the lawyer and his wife are reunited at the end.

In form the tragi-comedies show some variation from classical usage.
A marked division into five acts, with subdivisions into scenes, is the
rule. 16 The Alexandrine is the meter employed in Bradamante, Le
Desespere and La Nouvelle tragicomique, and in all but lyric portions of
Iob, La Gaule, Thobie, Polyxene. In L'Homme Justifié and Les Enfants dans
la Fournaise verses of ten and eight syllables are employed instead of
Alexandrines, except in the prologue and epilogue of the latter play. No
apparent distinction is made in the use of the two kinds of verse. Verses
of eight syllables are used in Caresme prenant. Lucelle and Iokebed
employ prose. Lyric passages in these plays occur in the choruses and in
cantiques, which are written in verses of six, seven, and eight syllables,
showing considerable variety in rime order. 17

The style of these verses, both lyric and dramatic, has been
frequently puerile and rarely imbued with poetic qualities. This fact,
coupled with weakness of dramatic conception, has prevented the tragi-
comedy of the sixteenth century from furnishing more than two plays of
literary pretensions. These are the Lucelle and Bradamante, plays that
compare favorably with the classical tragedies produced in France during
this century, however inferior they are to those of a later date. The
genre as a whole, furthermore, is shown to have appealed to the people by

16 Ibid., 76.
17 Lancaster, The French Tragi-Comedy, 81.
the comparatively large number of plays known to have been represented and by the fact that it was adopted by Alexander Hardy, whose work was written primarily for representation before a popular audience. 18

Another type of the tragi-comedy is seen in the farce. The few plays that belong to this genre are in a way survivals of the medieval stage and imitation of the Italian type. A good example is the light tragi-comedy La Subtilité de Fanfreluche et Gaudichon et comme il fut emporté par le Diable, a pur farce based on the Italian models, in which Fanfreluche plays the role of Pulcinella. 19

Under Italian influence the writers adopt the pastorale as illustrated by L'Aminte and Pastor Fido. The Pastoral is a tragi-comedy in the fact that it has as many romantic turns of adventure but action takes place in the conventional Arcadie where the characters are shepherds and shepherdesses whose loves are opposed by Cupid's caprices, the insensibility of beautiful women, or some exterior circumstances. For a short time the pastorale was the only genre, on the French stage, which took up the study of the human heart only. Consequently, in spite of its conventions and by virtue of its subject matter it had a great deal of reality. Because of this fact, it rose in importance as a literary genre. 20

19 E. Abry, C. Audio, and P. Crouzet, 162.
20 Gustave Lanson, Histoire de la Littérature Française, Paris, Librairie Hachette, 1894, 222.
The vogue of Arioste's Orlando Furioso made Garnier write his Bradamante which he named tragi-comédie; this hybrid work, with a happy ending, tragic and familiar, quicker, more direct in its development than other works of the poet, but a dangerous novelty, in sum total, because it tended to deviate from dramatic poetry to the bigarrure of exterior and romanesque action.\footnote{21}

Undoubtedly the best known tragi-comedy of the sixteenth century is the Bradamante, long considered the first example of the genre in France. It is the most thoroughly romanesque tragi-comedy before Hardy's Théagène et Carcicléès. Bradamante's plot, derived from cantos 44, 45, and 46 of the Orlando Furioso, concerns the marriage of Roger and Bradamante. Bradamante is hardly more than a division of certain parts of the Orlando into scenes which are far from being dramatic units. As in the earlier plays, the five acts are in effect three. Some characterization is achieved in the minor persons Aymon and Beatrix. Bradamante herself is chosen, of course, for those lyric tirades with which Ariosto had delighted the century.\footnote{22}

The romanesque elements of this non-historic plot, based on love, developed by a duel between two lovers, and concluded by the offer of a throne to the hero; the lofty rank of the personages, who include Charlemagne and the son of the Emperor of Constantinople; the serious subject and happy dénouement; the comic elements that appear, especially in the

\footnote{22} Ibid., 72.
character of Aymon; the violation of the unities; the use of Alexandrines, division into acts and scenes, and absence of the chorus; these qualities make this the tragi-comedy of the sixteenth century that most nearly approaches the type established for the genre by Hardy and his contemporaries. It differs, however, from subsequent tragi-comedies by the evidences of classic influence in the structure of the piece, for though it violates the unity of action by the arrival of the ambassadors, an event unconnected with the rest of the play, yet there is an obvious attempt at selecting for dramatization only those parts of Ariosto's tale that closely concern the love intrigue. Earlier incidents, such as Roger's display of prowess in Bulgaria, his capture by the Greeks and rescue by Leon are recited, not acted. The duel between Roger and Bradamante takes place behind the scenes, according to classical rule and contrary to the usage of later tragi-comedies. Classical again is the subordinate role of Hippalque, a typical confidante. Such elements were indeed to be expected from the pen of Garnier whose other plays were essentially classical. It is surprising that, despite the influences of his tragedies, he created the tragi-comedy that in many respects most closely resembles the type established in the seventeenth century.

Between the years 1600 and 1628, the romanesque type of tragi-comedy not only became the predominant form of the genre, but was raised by Hardy

23 Eugene Rigal, De Jodelle à Molière: Tragédie, Comédie, Tragi-Comédie, Paris, Librairie Hachette, 1911, 137.
24 Ibid., 138.
and his contemporaries to the position of the most popular and extensively written form of dramatic production in France. As Hardy wrote some seven hundred plays and about half his extant plays are called tragi-comedies, it is probable that between three and four hundred tragi-comedies came from his pen alone. 25 He was followed by several writers, Du Ryer, Mairet, Schelandre, and others, who, while not equaling his fertility, surpassed him in the excellence of individual plays and prepared the way.

Hardy took subject matter from Greek, Latin, Italian, and Spanish; nevertheless, it is not positive that he knew all these languages. It could be that he studied translations of the original works and benefited in this way. It is interesting to know that he did not imitate the foreign writers even though he did extract ideas from them. A number of novels imitated Roland Furieux, and it could be that Hardy used one of these as models for his works. 26

It is to the Italians like le Tasse, Sannagar, Guarini, that Hardy is indebted for certain elements in the pastorale. The basis for Gesippe and Phraarte is found in the works of Boccacce and Giraldi Cinthio. He has written twelve tragi-comedies imitated after the Italian style and dealing with ancient or modern subjects. Some of these tragi-comedies are: Cornélie, la Force du sang, Felisimène, La Belle Egyptienne.

In the disregard for the classical unities there is no appreciable difference between the usage of Hardy and that of his contemporaries. The

25 Rigal, Alexander Hardy, 247.

26 Firmin Roz, Vue Générale de la Littérature Française, Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1923, 41.
greatest freedom is evident in the tragi-comedies. Even the approach to
unity that is at times visible is due rather to the nature of the source
than to the dramatic theories of the author. To compensate this lack of
classical unity, there is ordinarily a unity of interest in the fortunes of
the protagonists, though this is at times obscured by digressions or
subsidiary plots.

The love of a man and a woman is the emotion upon which the action is
based in these tragi-comedies. Even Gesippe, whose friendship conquers his
love, is moved to his sacrifice by Tite's love of the woman. Then also
friendship is as important as love in Gesippe, Aloeste and Arsacome.

Romanesque elements are furnished by dreams, ghosts, disguises,
recognitions, duels, shipwrecks, captures by pirates, human sacrifices.
Such elements are at times introduced, when unnecessary to the development
of the plot, merely to appeal to the imagination of the audience. For
instance, two brothers are induced to fight a duel in Genève, though the
dénouement is not brought about by this event, but by the arrival of Renaud.

The happy ending is characteristic of these plays. In L'Innocence
Descouverte the happiness consists in the removal of obstacles to the
vindication of the hero. In other plays it is produced by the removal of
all obstacles to the marriage of the hero and heroine. In Gesippe, though

27 Francois Parfaitot, Histoire du Théâtre Français, Paris, P. G. Le Mercier,
1745, 277.

Flammarion, 1905, 273.

29 de Julleville, 71.
a marriage occurs at the end, the chief happiness lies in the restoration of Gesippe to his fortune and the friendship of Tite. 30

In most of these plays the comic element is of slight importance. Hardy neglects it altogether in seven tragi-comedies and gives it a subordinate place in the others. The small number of comic passages found in Hardy shows that such elements, spoken chiefly by subordinate personages, formed no integral part of his work. His example was followed by the majority of his contemporaries. Genève and Les Heureuses Infortunes show no humorous passages. In some plays humor occupies a larger, though always a subordinate place. Aysmée introduces a humorous valet, a role already seen in Le Jars' Lucelle and repeated in Duhamel's play on the same subject. Innocence Descouverte is also full of valets' jokes, which are usually coarse and often obscene. A similar vein of humorous vulgarity is seen in Alexandre et Annette. In Folies de Cardenio much fun is made out of the encounter between Cardenio, the curate, and the barber, and the sayings of Don Quixote and Sancho. 31 The coarse humor of such passages is in keeping with the freedom of speech used by lovers to express their desires and the scabrous scenes that occur in some of the plays.

The stylistic qualities of these plays are of a low order. Hardy's work, written hurriedly to meet a popular demand, is involved, exaggerated, and frequently obscure. There is a lack of taste in the speeches of his

personages, whose emotions are rarely expressed with accuracy. Although his contemporaries wrote with greater care, their style is rarely fluent. Lines are padded, sentiments concealed by a wealth of classical allusions, or refined under the influence of the rising précieux. However artificial the dialogue was, it showed a dramatic advance from the ponderous monologues that had been the bane of the French sixteenth-century tragedy, and were imitated by early tragi-comedies. In his later plays Hardy seems to have realized the superior dramatic qualities of the dialogue. The plays of his contemporaries show corresponding changes, from the lengthy monologues of Genève to the rapid dialogues of Du Ryer.

Another advance is in the suppression of the chorus, which survives only in L’Éthiopique, Genève, and Philandre et Marisse. Hardy’s tragi-comedies show a lyric chorus in the third act of Arsacome. Elsewhere Hardy’s chorus has become a non-lyric troupe, comparable to the Roman mob.

It is evident that Hardy’s greatest successes were scored in the hybrid tragi-comedy-happy in ending, popular in subject, classical in form, without obeying the unities of time and place. Tragi-comedy-with irregular tragedy is an important link between the Middle Ages and French classical drama; in the years just preceding Corneille’s Cid many such plays are known to have been acted.

32 Ibid., 239.
Hardy's contemporaries also helped in the development of the sixteenth century tragi-comedy. For example, Claude Bonet published the tragi-comedy Désespére de Carême Prenant and La Tasse. These were truly both carnival farces in tone, allure, and spirit. It is full of Italian and meridional jargon. After composing two successful plays that reflected the work of his older contemporaries and showed considerable skill in versification, Jean Mairet felt that he might go farther. Advised to look to Italy for guidance, he perceived that Tasso's Aminta had won more fame than Hardy's hundreds of plays. He found there attention to form that contrasted sharply with the increase in tragi-comedy that was taking place in France and with the popularity of the play in two journées. In 1629 Mairet had nearly applied the unities in Silvanire, the tragi-comédie pastorale. From it he formulates the classic theory in the preface of a new edition of this play in 1631.

In the infinite variety of theater plays which were seen at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it is important to notice the curious sample of drama where the tragic and comic were given in equal doses. Tyre et Sidon by Jean de Schelandre is an unimportant work today, but, nevertheless, very important in the history of literature. This play does not conform to the three unities, and unfortunately it is not a masterpiece. Taste and judgment are completely lacking in this work. Schelandre was carried away by classic and Italian influences definitely. In 1628

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35 Ibid., 143.

36 Petit de Julleville, Histoire de la Littérature Française, 239.
it was too late to found the théâtre libre with success. François Ogier wrote for this play, in the preface, the most vigorous defense that has been made in behalf of the irregular theatre. Jean Mairet replied that it is necessary to have unity of action and time. All action should take place within twenty-four hours, and the chief reason that he gave for it, c'est la vraisemblance, as Scaliger had already said it in the sixteenth century. 37

If Rotrou was stubborn in proud independence, Scudéry made honorable amends to the scholars; Pierre du Ryer, who hasn't written a single tragedy before 1638, wrote nothing after that date. The importance of the tragi-comedy faded. It disappeared gradually from prominence; it merged itself with the tragedy, a tragedy in which the subject is not taken from history, or even a play where the principal characters are princes and the accidents serious and furious, but the ending is happy, yet with no comic element present. 38

With the last publication of Hardy's plays (1628) the history of the tragi-comedy in France during its time of development is complete. Nearly two hundred plays were named tragi-comedies since Garnier's Bradamante, published in 1582, until la Pulcherie of Corneille, played in 1672. The latter was called, it is true, comédie heroique; but this title is Corneille's fantasy which he has given to several of his plays. Between the comédie heroique and the tragi-comédie there is no appreciable difference.

38 Ibid., 402.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

To show the influence exerted by the tragi-comédies of Hardy and his contemporaries on those that followed in the next period (1628-1636), a list of tragi-comédies, beginning with Rotron's first play (1628) and ending with Corneille's Cid (1636) can be made of them. From the eight years that lie between the representations of these two plays, fifty-three tragi-comédies are extant, a larger number than that of the extant tragi-comédies of the preceding twenty-eight years. That this genre had now become the most popular in France is shown by an examination of the Mémoire of Mahelot, a document that gives a list of plays acted at the Hotel de Bourgogne from about 1633 to 1636, some of which were written during this period, others in the preceding decade, or even earlier. Of the seventy-one plays listed twenty-two, including twelve assigned to Hardy are lost, so that it is not known to what genre they belonged. It seems, therefore, that at the Hotel de Bourgogne, the leading French theatre, more tragi-comédies were acted from 1633 to 1636 than plays belonging to all the other dramatic genres put together.1

The tragi-comedy was now written by the leading dramatists, Rotrow,  

1 Emile Faguet, A Literary History of France, London, T. F. Unwin, 1907, 357.
Du Ruyer, Mairct, and Scudctry. Corneille contributed Clitandre (1632) to the genre and called his Cid a tragi-comedy in its early editions, though its classical elements subsequently induced him to publish it as a tragedy. Their sources were much the same as those used by Hardy and his contemporaries. Orlando Furioso, The Amadis, Cervante's Novelas Exemplares, and others supplied the plots of many tragi-comedies. 2

As may be supposed, from such sources the plays are thoroughly romanesque, based on love and employing in detail disguises, resemblances, duels, poisonings, suicides, and other measures, with which the reader of earlier tragi-comedies is thoroughly familiar. So little regard is paid in these pieces to the unities that many of the plays have nearly the structural looseness of the romances from which they are derived. The personages represent various social ranks, with aristocrats in the leading roles. The division into five acts and subdivision into scenes continue throughout the period. The use of Alexandrines is the rule, to which exceptions occur, especially in L'Inconstance Punie, where the verse forms of the dialogues are repeatedly varied. 3

Similar dramatic qualities are found in the tragi-comedies that continued to appear, still in large numbers, after the representation of the Cid, at the end of 1636. Toward 1650, the number of tragi-comedies that appeared each year was decreasing and by 1660 had become very small, if one may judge by those of which the names have been preserved. The causes of

2 Eugene Lintilhac, Précis Historique de la Littérature Française, Paris, Librairie Classique de F. E. André-Guedon, 1895, 23.
3 Lancaster, The French Tragi-Comedy, 150.
this decay are not far to seek. 4

In the first place, the popular taste had reacted from the spirit of the early seventeenth century, which had found expression in the romanesque tragi-comedy. The parisian public, grown weary of the multiplicity of incident and exaggerated portrayal of character, found in the tragi-comedy, turned from that genre to the truer representations of life they found on the classical stage.

It is after the appearance of Horace and Polyeucte that the tragi-comedy begins to decline, not long after the successes of Molière and Racine that it ceases to exist. In addition to the change in the taste of the Parisian public and the increasing popularity of the classical stage, the tragi-comedy suffered from certain changes in its own composition and in the use of the terms, tragedy and comedy, which brought about its confusion with these genres. 5

As early as Mairet's Chriseide et Arimand (1625) tendencies toward unity of plot existed in tragi-comedies. At the same time psychological struggles, which had formerly held a distinctly subordinate place in tragi-comedies, became important in the dénouements of La Fidelle Tromperie and Agéclan de Colchos and formed the essence of the plot of Rayssiguier's Celidée. Thus it is that unity and psychology of the Cid did not prevent its being called a tragi-comedy, a title that fitted well its romanesque plot and happy dénouement. 6 Nevertheless, the more serious tragi-comedies,

6 Lancaster, The French Tragi-Comedy, 152.
which showed an approach to classical unity and psychology, came to be called tragedies, in spite of their happy dénouement. The Cid, first known as a tragi-comedy, was called a tragedy along with Polyèucte and Rodogune.

The term comédie, moreover, was now applied to translations of the Spanish comedia and related plays, which differed little in their essential qualities from the lighter forms of the tragi-comedy. Thus some tragi-comedies were confused with comedies, as others were with tragedies. The two terms that had the sanction of Greek and Latin usage were gradually extended to occupy the intermediate ground formerly held by the tragi-comedy. Thus French dramatists, answering the demands of their age, either ceased to write tragi-comedies or called them by another name. As an independent genre, the tragi-comedy ceased to exist.

Before the establishment of the classical tragedy this romanesque tragi-comedy became the most popular and extensively written dramatic genre in France. Its preeminence was brief, for, encroached upon by the closely related tragedy and comedy, and out of harmony with the classical spirit of the time, it fell into disuse, and, toward 1672, ceased to have a more than sporadic existence.

Unless the Cid be considered a tragi-comedy, the genre left behind no great literary monument, since it neglected the study of character and passion for the romanesque and the melodramatic, thus attaining a large

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8 Ibid., 51.
popularity, but making no permanent or universal appeal. However, the tragi-comedy holds an important position in the history of the French stage, serving as a connecting link between the theater of the Middle Ages and that of the classical period, and by its influence making it possible for Corneille's tragedy to succeed where Jodelle's had failed.\footnote{9} It preserved the popular qualities of the medieval and Italian drama, modernized them, and passed them to the classicists, thus establishing itself as an integral part of the most continuously excellent of national theaters.

\footnote{9} Lancaster, \textit{The French Tragi-Comedy}, 154.
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A. GENERAL


B. ITALIAN


The thesis submitted by Helen M. Szymanski has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Modern Languages.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

April 4, 1946

Date

Signature of Adviser