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T h e s i s,

"Romanticism Versus Classicism On The French Stage."

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Romanticism versus classicism! How many lances have been broken, figuratively speaking, in defense of one and the other of these two great principles. How much ink spilt, how many pages darkened. Yes, and in its wider aspect, how many lives embittered, how much blood shed. And the end is not yet. The conflict is not over, nor is it ever likely to be on this side of Jordan, so long as man is man, so long as those who have refuse to give, and those who want reach out to take. In effect it is the struggle between the old and the new; between conservatism and liberalism; between reaction and reform; between what has been and what is to come. The hour the first man left his tree for a cave, to be overwhelmed with opprobrium by his friends, these two great forces came into collision, and today, they are still at daggers drawn every where around us; in literature; in art; in science; in politics; and in society. In every case the fundamental difference is the same. That form, that custom, that spirit that dominated yesterday, today bitterly and defiantly refuses to yield so much as an inch to that influence, that idea that just as defiantly and opinionatively, declares itself to be the ruler of tomorrow. And often, who can tell where lies the right?

With regard to this conflict as it displays itself in the realm of literature, where we are more particularly concerned just now, Stendhal puts it thus:"Le Romanticisme est l'art de présenter aux differents peuples, les oeuvres littéraires qui dans l'état actuel de leurs habitudes et de leurs croyances, sont susceptibles de leur donner le plus de plaisir possible. Le Classicisme leur présente la littérature qui donnait le plus de plaisir à leurs arrière-grands pères". That is, generally speaking, Romanticism in literature means freedom for the author to appeal to the popular taste and to give the public anything they may feel inclined to demand. Classicism says,"No, authors must not cater to the public, they must obey the rules laid down by

great minds of the past, and as for the people, they ought to be, and must be satisfied with what is thus produced, and ask for no other."

French literature, far from being an exception to this general rule, was the scene of what was perhaps the most outstanding conflict of all. In general, we have those whose watchwords are, "Selon les réglés", and "Dans le goût", opposed to those who desire to follow the divine leading of genius, all the way from 1636, when Scudéry and D'Aubignac assailed Corneille, down to 1830 when the "prohibition successive des deux ministères Martignac et Polignac", and the"volonté formelle du roi Charles X., kept Hugo's "Marion De Lorme" from the stage for two years. Consequently, in dealing with such a subject as "Romanticism Versus Classicism", one could, like Prof. Deschanel, trace this strife down through the years to modern times, studying its various phases, and the plays typical of each; but the purpose of this essay is rather to consider a specific epoch, that of 1830 to 1850, and the type of tragedy produced at that time; to compare these works with those other famous dramas written by Corneille and Racine in the seventeenth century; and to come to a somewhat definite conclusion as to their respective merits.

Before making any definite comparisons, however, it might be well to take a brief survey of the situation, when in the third decade of the nineteenth century Victor Hugo led the cohorts of reform against the great stronghold of French classicism, the theatre. Here conservatism was most strongly entrenched. Ever since the second half of the seventeenth century Corneille's "Cid", and Racine's "Phèdre" had been the accepted models of all orthodox writers of French tragedy. Boileau had crystallized the rules of verse for all time to come , in his "Ars Poetique", and Richelieu had created "Les quarante ciés" to guard the capitol of French literature, with the result that by the end of the eighteenth century, French tragedy was,"reduced to something like the

state of a game in which every possible move or stroke is known and registered, and in which the sole novelty consists in contriving some permutation of these moves or strokes which shall be, if possible, not absolutely identical with any former combination". With the exception of Voltaire and Crébillion there are no tragic dramatists worth mentioning in the eighteenth century, and they are only more or less feeble imitations of Racine, though Voltaire did advocate more elaborate stage settings and more appropriate costumes. Against this ancient and formidable fastness of classicism the writers of 1830 hurled their attack. First, by way of articles published in the "Conservateur Litteraire", the "Annales Romantiques", and the "Globe"; and later by the transalation and production of Shakespeare's "Othello" by De Vigny. The real declaration of war, however, was Victor Hugo's "Préface De Cromwell" wherein he challenged the authority of the sacred unities of time and place, and boldly declared that tragedy and comedy should go hand in hand. The first and most sanguinary conflict was waged over the production of "Hernani", and it was only after the most determined, and repeated efforts of the poet's friends that the hissers were finally silenced. With the success of this play, and of "Marion De Lorme" in the following year, the battle was won and the way opened for the entrance of reform upon the boards of the theatre.

It is this victory, as was intimated above, or rather these victors we wish to consider, and to contrast their works with those of the old masters of tragedy, whom they sought to overthrow. We wish to look at the tragedies of both with a critical yet friendly eye; judge them briefly; and say frankly which, if either, seems superior.

One point must be made clear, however, before we pass on. It is tragedy that is to be considered in this comparison rather than comedy. It is around the altar of Melpomene rather than that of Clio that we

will gather. Why? Because it was primarily on behalf of the tragic muse that the 1830 attack on the stage was carried out. Comedy had never suffered so severely from the restrictions imposed upon it, as had tragedy. Molière himself, the father of French comedy, in at least one play, "Le Médecin Malgré Lui", ignores the unity of place, making each act take place in a different locality. In 1784 Beaumarchais has entirely discarded it. Molière too set the precedent of a freer vocabulary on the comic stage; and as it always had made use of contemporary subjects, there was only tragedy to be emancipated.

In considering, then, and weighing the work of the emancipators of French tragedy, along with that of its founders; in placing, let us say, Hugo's "Marion De Lorme", alongside of Racine's "Thèdre", we note a great difference on the very first page. In Racine's play at the end of the list of dramatis personae, we find these words, "La scène est à Trézène, ville du Peloponèse". On opening Hugo's play, on the other hand we find at the commencement of Act I. "Blois"., and a little lower, "Une chambre à coucher", followed by three long lines of stage directions. Here is one of the vast dissimilarities between the classic and the romantic drama. The former gives little or no thought to the stage setting of the piece, while the latter gives it meticulous care. All the action in the tragedies of Corneille and Racine takes place in an anteroom, hall, or tent, and the decorations may be what you will. In those of Hugo, De Vigny, and Dumas, the action changes its stamping ground as often as the author feels that reality demands, and each time the stage is carefully decorated so as to give as realistic an effect as possible.

This is largely the result of a most fundamental difference, if not the most fundamental difference of all, between these two types of drama. The classic tragedy is intensive, the romantic is extensive. The classic as Prof. Strachey well says is the "drama of crisis". In "Rodogune", for

example, Corneille has seized the moment of crisis when Queen Cléopatre must make the decision as to which of her twin sons is to have the kingdom and the hand of the Princess Rodogune. Heart-burnings and pleadings on the part of the two young men are intermingled with plotting and counterplotting on the part of the Queen and Rodogune, and just as soon as the fateful crisis is over, with the failure and death of Queen Cléopatre, the curtain falls. In Racine's "Phèdre" mentioned above, we find the same thing. The drama opens just at the point when Phèdre, no longer able to contain herself, confesses to her old nurse her unholy love for her step-son Hippolyte. The rumor of her husband's death arriving at that moment and necessitating an interview with Hippolyte regarding the fate of the kingdom, and the future of her own son, precipitates her confession to Hippolyte himself. The return of the king hastens the fatal dénouement. Then, as in Corneille's piece, the curtain falls just when the crisis has passes with the deaths of Phèdre and Hippolyte, and revelation of the truth to ~~Xmxxxx~~ King Thésée.

All the classic tragedies are built on this model, the elaboration of an hour of crisis and passion, even those less famous plays of the eighteenth century; but how different when we compare the plays of Hugo Dumas, and De Vigny. On studying these romantic tragedies we find not a crisis, but a series of crises. In each act of "Hernani" we find condensed an entire play such as the classicists conceived it. Take the third Act. Here we have Dona Sol and Don Ruy Gomez in the great hall of the Chateau De Silva, he gloating in anticipation over his imminent marriage with Dona Sol, she filled with gloomy forebodings. They are interrupted by a page who announces the arrival of a pilgrim at the castle gate and who relates at the same time, the news of the annihilation of the robber band led by the famous Hernani. Dona Sol departs on the request of the old Don to put on her bridal dress, and he greets the visit-

or. Dona Sol returns, and Hernani, for it is he, overcome with dispair on seeing his beloved in a wedding gown, declares his identity. The valets are overwhelmed, but the the old Don imperturbably declares that as a guest his person is inviolate, and goes to see that the castle gates are secured. Dona Sol returns and proves her love for Hernani who is imploring her pardon for his unjust suspicions when interrupted by the return of Don Ruy. The old Don's wrath is ~~xikmx~~ quiet but terrible The King is announced, and Hernani is hurried into a secret hiding place. Carlos demands Hernani, but Don Ruy Gomez in a most powerful scene in which he introduces the King to the paintings of eleven of his noble ancestors who have kept their honor unstained, refuses to betray his guest, choosing rather to risk the destruction of his castle and to give up his bride. Carlos stamps out and Hernani chooses death after they shall have rescued Dona Sol. All this is in one act with Victor Hugo, but elaborated in the hands of Corneille or Racine it would become a complete play, as would each of the other four acts; the dramatic meeting of all the chief caracters in Dona Sol's apartments, the abortive elopement, the drama in the tomb, and the fatal death act itself. The same is true in a lesser degree of Dumas' plays. With perhaps a little more ingenuity required than in the case of Hugo, the five acts of say, "La Cour De Henri III." would make five classical tragedies, as also those of De Vigny's "Marechale D'Ancre".

Now this very sweep and prodigality of the romantic drama, as compared with the intensity and simplicity of the classic type leads to another contrast that follows directly from the caracter of each as already indicated. Naturally in a class of drama which depicts the human heart in a detailed way just at the moment when it is torn by love, fear, and dispair, and all restraint gone, we would expect to find a more sensitive characterization than in a drama which deals with humanity in

such a large way as to be unable to give more than one act to a a set of circumstances to which the other devotes five. Such is indeed the case. Rodogune, Chimène, Phèdre, and Iphigénie, are living women pulsating with love, hate, and fear, and evincing that changeableness and charming inconsistency that characterizes every true woman. Marion De Lorme, Dona Sol, and Marie Tudor, are only partially filled in sketches, done in flamboyant colors, and depicting powerfully the passions of love and fear, but lacking in that subtlety and elusiveness, that individuality that makes a character live. Compare Iphigénie and Dona Sol. Both are sweet pure girls of noble birth and high character. But how much more delicate is the characterization of Iphigénie, and how much more complete. We see her as the daughter greeting her father after a long separation, as the jealous lover overwhelming her rival, as the outraged fiancée scorning her betrayer. Then, once more reconciled to Achille she is the gracious lady pleading a boon for her friend. In the next scene we see her struck to the heart by the news of the terrible fate planned for her by her father. Yet she remembers he is still her father and pleads for him , her heart torn between her love for him and her love for her lover. Then, in that wonderful scene in the final act where Agamemnon is confronted with his duplicity by an outraged family, she expresses her absolute obedience to his orders, and yet suggests that she would like to live. And when, at last, her escape is cut off by the soldiers stirred up to violence by Eriphile, she goes to meet her doom with true nobility. On the other hand what of Dona Sol? We find her throughout the embodiment of true love from the moment she throws herself into the arms of Hernani in the first act until she turns his lifeless face towards her in the hour death, in the last. We find her terrified in all of the five acts, and pleading both with and for her lover. We find her resigned in the presence of Don Ruy Gomez, and King

Carlos. But there is none of that variety, none of those finer shades that are found in the classic plays. When we have seen Dona Sol loving, terrified, pleading, and resigned, we have seen all. She is all love, there is no other side to her character. Where is she the loving daughter, the jealous mistress, the gracious friend, the martyr for a cause, as Iphigenie is shown to be by Racine; or where do we find in her the depth and intricacy of Rodogune, or the self-betrayal of Chimène?

In the depiction of men we find the same contrast as between the women of the two schools. Here again the classic dramatist has five acts in which to perfect the picture of his hero, in the same surroundings, and under the same conditions; whereas the romantic writer has to sketch in his hero ~~index~~ in five entirely different situations. In Racine's "Britannicus" Nero is depicted as plotter, hopeful and defeated lover, tormentor, deceiver, and murderer. His evil nature rapidly gets control of him aided by the skilful ministrations of Narcisse, until the crime is committed and he can deny it without the flicker of an eye-lid. In the case of Hugo's Hernani we see his love, his courage, his nobility, but he is incomplete. He lacks reality. He fails to accomplish anything but the fulfilment of his oath. Hugo portrays him only as a gigantic, cloudy figure swayed by mighty passions, and hurried on by a fate which he is incapable of resisting. De Vigny and Dumas succeed better here, even as in the portrayal of their women. We are presented with more detailed and life-like characters in Borgia, the Maréchal d'Ancre, the Duc de Guise and Saint-Mégrin. They are less in stature than Hernani, Didier, and Ruy Blas, but in that they approach the human the more closely, they appear all the more like living men. Truly in respect to character painting we must award the palm to the classics.

But in thus assigning the supremacy to Corneille and Racine in the delineation of character, all has not been said. What the romantic drama

lacks in fineness of touch, and smoothness of finish, it more than makes up in boldness of conception, and sweep of imagination. Through its pages there courses the hot blood of the Revolution, of Napoleon's epic advance across Europe. The classic heroes and heroines are those of the days when Athens and Sparta were in their glory, or when Rome held the sceptre of the civilized world; whereas Hugo, De Vigny, and Dumas place before our eyes men and women of the middle ages, their own compatriots; and more than that, in thus painting men and women with their heads unhaloed by the mythical aureoles of Greece and Rome, they give us souls filled with the fire and enthusiasm of youth, regardless of convention and custom. Imagine for a moment Hippolyte, or Britannicus, or Antiochus, or even Rodrigue entering his mistress's window by night, or attempting to carry her off by forte-main without the leave of her uncle. True it is that these young men of the romantic stage are not so well-balanced, so calculating, so in control of their passions as those of Corneille and Racine, but then, which of the those classic figures has the élan, the magnificent daring of Ruy Blas, of Saint-Mégrin? True again there is something depressing, something sinister about these Didiers, these Ruy Blas', outcasts as they are and cursed by destiny; yet they are so filled with that mighty unconquerable spirit of daring which advances even in the face of fate, that our hearts are won in spite of us.

It has been charged that these children of the brains of the great romantics are epic rather than dramatic; nor can this charge be refuted more especially, after what has been said in the preceding paragraph. But this is not a blemish. This is veritably a merit, the outstanding merit of the drama of 1830. It is this epic grandeur of Hernani, Ruy Blas, Borgia, Saint-Mégrin that makes them stand out from the mass of stage heroes, that makes the blood beat faster, and life seem a more

noble struggle, even though in the end a losing one.

But leaving the the consideration of the characters, as such, and coming to the study of the plays as a whole, we find a decided difference in tone between the classic tragedies, and those of 1830. There is a decided sense of inevitability about the former, while with regard to the latter, one feels very often that the play could have ended some other way, just as easily as not. That is, in reading the classic drama we feel that not the author but inexorable fate itself is guiding the action, and controlling the destinies of the personages; that the author merely records. But in reading the greater number of romantic tragedies one feels that it is not fate but the author who is pulling the strings that make the characters move, so unreal does the action seem at times.

Take Corneille's "Rodogune". Here we find a deep-seated and jealous hatred in the heart of the Queen-Mother, Cleopatre, on the one hand, linked with an overmastering love of power; on the other we have intense hatred and fear and a desire for revenge smouldering in the bosom of the fair prisoner Rodogune. Something must inevitably happen. The powder is there. All that is necessary is the match to set it off. This is supplied by the termination of the regency of Cleopatre through her twin sons, Antiochus and Seleucus, coming of age. She is thus compelled to assign the throne as well as the hand of the Princess Rodogune to one or the other of the young men, and in doing so and at the same time seeking to safeguard her own supremacy, and give vent to her hatred of Rodogune, the long impending hostilities break out follow-by the inevitable tragedy. Similarly nothing short of ~~kxxxxxxxxx~~ a tragic cutting of the gordian knot can loose the tangle in Racine's Andromaque. We have the age old triangle, two women and a man, and when has such a situation ever been settled without a tragedy either

visible or secret. So when the swords of Orestes' soldiers pierce the heart of Pyrrhus we feel that it had to be. If it had not been he it must inevitably have been Andromaque, or Hermione herself. Even had the fickle son of Ulysses returned to his first love, blood would have flowed, that of Astynax, in response to the demands of the Greeks. Further more had Hermione failed to bring about the death of her faithless lover, and refrained from taking her own life, Andromaque was sworn to take hers to preserve her troth with her dead husband. Thus there is no hope.

But in a tragedy such as Hugo's "Hernani" one cannot but feel that in such a towering, epic creation, as it is, no conclusion would be incredible. The author had but to choose a striking one. Hernani is strong enough, courageous enough, to overcome all obstacles, and he would have, had it not been for a rash oath sworn to Don Ruy Gomez in a moment of that dispondancy to which he was peculiarly subject. Had the bold bandit had only a little more faith in his own destiny, he could not have thus chosen death. Had he been but a little less impulsive he could not thus have sworn the fatal oath. With that same confidence and coolness he could not have brought Dona Sol out into the street in the second act, and then left her behind him. The same is true of De Vigny. With a little more daring Borgia might have saved the Marechale d'Ancre, for she had done nothing worthy of death. Nor is the death of Borgia himself absolutely necessary save to afford opportunity for a most lurid death scene. Again, we ask ourselves, why was Saint-Mégrin the victim? Why not the Duc de Guise? In a word in the classic plays of Corneille and Racine the action has been so shorn of all externals and possibilities that there is no escape for one or other of the conflicting parties; while the dramas of Hugo, De Vigny, and Dumas are so tinged with the fanciful and the melodramatic,

that we feel ready for anything, and why not a triumphant dénouement?

If, however, there is a greater sense of inevitability in the classic plays; there is, on the other hand, a greater sense of freedom in those of the romantic school. This is true not only in the nature of the plays themselves, as we have just seen, but also in the wider range of language, in the greater opportunity afforded the dramatist for the use of varied incident, and for greater variety in the types of character introduced.

In the realm of language, as a direct result of the efforts of the romanticists, there was an immense influx of new words into the vocabulary permitted to the dramatist. In fact the door was thrown open to every word in the french language. As Prof. Strachey put it, "French literature came out of a little, ceremonious, antiquated drawing-room into the open air". No longer was there the "bas" and the "noble" among the words any more than among the people of France. This was especially true of the stage, for there the censorship over the language had been notably severe. Racine's use of"chien" instead of a more aristocratic locution had caused the critics of his day to give tongue long and loudly. Now this prudish barrier was to go down. De Vigny opened the struggle in October 1829 by using in his translation of "Othello" the word "mouchoir" instead of a dainty locution . This caused an uproar in the theatre, but Victor Hugo continued the good work with his,"C'était d'un impudent, Seigneur Roi de Castille, et d'un lâche!" which shocked still further the supporters of caste, and when the smoke of the conflict had cleared away it was found that the impious romantists had thrown open the stage door to the language of the nation.

Also with regard to freedom in the use of varied and striking incident, we find the bars thrown down. In the tragedies of the classic masters one finds few or no incidents. The personages all meet in the

same hall or court attended by their"amis", "gouverneurs","confidantes", or "suivantes", as the case may be; make known the passions that fill their bosoms; and plead with, or plot against their adversaries. In the "Cid" Corneille did change the scene from the king's palace to the street and back again, but never again in any of his other tragedies. Racine in his "Iphigénie" brings his characters together in Agamennon's tent, but the principle is the same. Furthermore when a tragedy takes place either the blow is struck,off the stage, of if poison is taken, the dying person like Corneille's Cleopatre, staggers off the stage in the arms of his or her faithful retainers. This is as near to a "violent exhibition" as classic tragedy ever comes,the usual method is to have the painful scene described by a witness to an interested person who has not been present; as in Iphigénie Ulysses returns and describes the scene at the altar to Clytemnestre. "Le goût français du XVIIe siècle ne s'accommodait pas d'exhibitions aussi violents et préférait en toutes choses, aux sensations materielles les sensations morales". But Victor Hugo and the others of 1830 had no hesitation in accommodating themselves to violent exhibitions. In the very first act of "Hernani" we have a masked stranger entering by a secret door , and after intimidating the maid secreting himself in a closet. Then a few minutes later another man appears by the same secret door. Dona Sol enters and a fervid love scene is changed into one of drawn swords, on the masked man issuing from his hiding place. This again is interrupted by the arrival of the owner of the house. Again in "Marion De Lorme" we have Didier entering his mistress' chamber by the window, only to spring out again to engage in a street brawl the sounds of which can be plainly heard. And in "Ruy Blas" we have in the fourth act when the real Don Cesar enters his double's apartments, a scene worthy of Molière. How much more freedom to the author in all these plays than in the classic type, even though Ruy

Blas does take Don Salluste out to kill him, and Don Cesar, and Borgia both lead their antagonists out to fight.

Finally, in the type of character presented there is a vast difference between these two theatres. In the classic, as we have seen, everything must be "dans le goût", and so, as you would expect, there are no characters who are obviously of doubtful morality, no rakes, no loose women. Nero is a demon but a well-polished, smooth-spoken one who offends not the slightest rule of taste. Queen Cléopatre, too, is entirely "selon les régles" although one does experience a slight twinge of conscience, when one learns that she has done her son to death. Titus has a paramour but sends her away; Roxane the sultana is jealous of her brother-in- law Bajazet who loves Atalide, even as Phèdre is jealous of the love of Hippolyte for Aricie. But, nowhere do we find a married woman loved as well as loving, as in the case of Ruy Blas and the Queen; a woman with a past, as in "Marion De Lorme"; a girl seduced, as in "Marie Tudor; or even the hint of it as in "La Cour De Henri III." Truly the romantic drama broke down the bars, and as we see opened the way for the problem plays of the modern era. Leaving the question of morals, however, even obscure parentage in the title roll would have been unthinkable in a seventeenth century tragedy. What classic dramatist would have depicted a valet doing his master to death, as Hugo does, or a high-born lady loving a man of plebian blood, even though wearing the title and cloak of a nobleman. Victor Hugo outdistances even his immediate contemporaries, De Vigny and Dumas, in this direction. Yes, the romanticists, and above all Victor Hugo were nothing if not true to their watchword, freedom.

Yet, at the same time, if these two types of tragic drama differ in so many ways, in style, in power of characterization, in language, in freedom of conception, and in subject matter; they resemble one another in almost as many respects. They are both french, the children of the

brain of frenchmen. Though outward conditions had changed since Corneille and Racine wrote their masterpieces, and men's thoughts no longer flowed in the same channels, yet french genius was ~~which~~ french genius still in 1830, as in 1660, and the romantic drama is as truly the offspring of France as the "Cid" itself.

Let us consider this point of similarity. The classic drama was the product of its age. For when Corneille produced his "Cid" in 1636 France was convalescing after one of the most cataclysmic periods in her history, that of the religious wars. That era when Catherine de Medici plotted against the Duke of Guise, as well as against the protestant party, and when more recently Marie of the same name was engaged in a struggle "à outrance" with Richelieu. The echoes of these mighty conflicts were still ringing in men's ears. The heroic blood of the fathers coursed in the veins of their sons. As a result the drama of the early seventeenth century breathes the spirit of intrigue and war. Corneille's pages are filled with strong-minded much contriving women like Queen Cléopatre; and stern, indomitable men like Horace; all exemplifying the supremacy of the human will, and all monarchs or nobles, because that was the stuff out of which society, as they conceived it, was composed. Racines tragedies are of a slightly different type. But between 1644 and 1665 twenty-one years had elapsed, the nobility had been hived at Versailles, and with no more political opponents to pull down, nor governments to overthrow, we find them ~~now~~ engaged in besieging the heart of a mistress, or undermining the efforts of a rival lover. Just such are the personages of Racine's theatre. Hermione is intriguing for the love of Pyrrhus, Nero for the hand of Junie. In a generation inspired by ideals of high intrigue and struggle for power, we find machievellian plotting on the stage; and in a time of idleness and sexual passion we find the stage given up to the making of love, with its

attendant jealousy and intrigue. The classic tragedies were, "conditioned by the sophisticated taste of the playgoers before whom they were performed". The age was refined and artificial in the extreme. The men and women of the "classes" who ruled the stage loved, hated, strove together, and died, "selon les réglés" and "dans le goût", so their prototypes on the stage did likewise.

The romantic drama, though so different is yet the same in that it also, is a product of its age. In 1830 the spirit of the Revolution had broken out again in the "July Days" and swept the last of the Bourbons from the throne forever. Jena and Austerlitz had not been forgotten. Nay their memory burned strongly in the hearts of France. As a result we have those towering tragedies of Hugo and his confrères which smote on the visor the ancient rules, and in a lesser degree the ancient taste. That same iconoclastic zeal that animated the mob in 1793 filled the breasts of the romantic dramatists of 1830, and we see them entering the palace and dragging forth their Kings and Queens to expose them to the vulgar gaze of the "parterre". On their pages marquises fight dukes of the blood, and even brigands cross swords with the Lord's annointed. Like begets like. Tinsel and show, allied with blue blood and ancient right begat a noble and exalted stage. So, in 1830 revolution, victory, and conquest brought forth a red blooded, revolutionary, and epic theatre.

If these two genres are indeed products of the generations that saw their birth it is only to be expected that they should bear on their outward parts the features of that which brought them forth. In fact this reproduction of the language and etiquette of St. Germain and Versailles is French classic tragedy's one redeeming feature in the eyes of those who hold it insipid and dead. Queen Cléopatre might be Catherine de Medici, and Agrippine, Marie of that name. Iphigénie is a true marquise from versailles in her unhesitating obedience to her father,

though pathetically hinting that she would like to live. Who but a courtier of St. Germain could be so uniformly courteous in the face of the horrible demands of Cléopatre, as Antiochus, or Seleuchus. Even Achille, splendid courtier that he is, does not in his rage, forget that Agamemnon is after all the father of his bethrothed, and braves him in true Versaillian manner, bowing himself out just at the precise moment.

The tragedies of Victor Hugo and his followers in like manner afford a complete picture of the age in which they lived. Just as the men and women of the classic stage breathe the air of the French court; so the heroes and heroines of the dramatists of 1830 breathe the air of the barricades. Dona Sol is a nineteenth century Charlotte Corday, without the daring spirit. Marion de Lorme has the courage and devotion of the women of the"July Revolution" . Chatterton is DeVigny himself, the rejected romantic poet with heart on fire. Hernani and Ruy Blas are of the family of the young soldier who announced the victory of Ratisbon to the Emperor and died at his feet. If, as Lanson has put it, the personages of Corneille are,"tous français, contemporains du poète et bons sujets du Roi Louis XIII", as those of Racine are subjects of the Grand Monarque; those of Victor Hugo, De Vigny, and Dumas, are soldiers of the Emperor Napoleon I. who, each and all, carry a marshal's baton in his knapsack.

In yet a third way do these far separated types of tragedy stand on an equal footing. They are animated by the same intoxicating breath of inspiration. Take a speech like that of Rodrigue where he relates to the king the story of his achievements against the moors during the night. What an epic roll there is to it from the moment when he begins,

"Sous moi donc, cette troupe s'avance
Et porte sur le front une mâle assurance".

till with laconic brevity he concludes,

"Et le combat cesse faut de combattants".

A piece worthy of Victor Hugo. Or again, what more soul-shaking than that out burst of Cléopatre, at the end of the fourth act where screwing her courage up to the sticking point she concludes with these terrible words,

"Sors de mon coeur nature, ou fais qu'ils m'obéissent.
Fais-les servir ma haine, ou consens qu'ils périssent.
- -
Allons chercher le temps d'immoler nos victimes
Et de me rendre heureuse à force de grands crimes."

Racine too, in his less tumultuous way, reaches the sublime. He plumbs the depths of horror in that rending of Phedre's soul in thefourth Act, where abhorring life she turns her eyes towards death only to be appalled by terrifying visions of the lower world. Covering her eyes she groans

"Où me cacher? Fuyons dans la nuit infernale?
Mais que dis-je? Mon père y tient l'urne fatale!"

And in that other scene where Oreshes , his mind destroyed, greets with demoniac laughter his victim and his dead sweetheart. Racine also soars to the empyrean in that epic exortation of the High-priest Joad to the levites in the fourth act of "Athalie", and in Athalie's last speech where at last brought to her knees she acknowledges,"Dieu des Juifs Tu l'emportes!"

Can the romantic poets surpass this? No, but they can equal it. Consider that noble outburst of King Carlos in the tomb of Charlemagne.

"Electeurs de drap d'or, cardinaux d'écarlate,
Double sénat sacré dont la terre s'émeut"

he cries and then he pours out his soul until brought back to terrestrial things by approaching footsteps, he stammers,

"Ah! j'oubliais! Ce sont mes assassins!"

Or that beautiful rhapsody of Dona Sol in the closing act which ends:

"Je me sentais joyeuse et calme, ô mon amant,

Et j'aurais bien voulu mourir en ce moment!"

De Vigny's Chatterton, too, reaches the high standard set by Hugo and the classics in his soliloquies first when he finds his powers have failed him, and later when he reads the mayor's note. Even Saint-Mégrin, flippant courtier as he is, attains almost to the sublimity of Hamlet as he leans out of the window and communes with his soul, ere he setshis face to go to the fatal rendez-vous. G. Larroumet says of the classic masters, "Chacun des deux hommes est l'expression de son age; Corneille de la force; Racine de la finesse de la cour et de l'amour". One can say too of the great romanticists, "Chacun de ces hommes est l'expression de son age"; Victor Hugo of the crushing immensity of life and the power of love; De Vigny of the swan song of the romantic poets, and the inevitable end; Dumas of intrigue and fatalistic courage. Above all classics and Romantic tragedies alike they,"nous prennent par les entrailles".

Lastly both "genres" are true to life. Soulier says of Racine,and the same is true in kind of Corneille, "On lui a reproche de n'avoir fait que des Grecs de Versailles. Mh! que voulait-on qu'il fait sinon ce qu'il avait sous les yeux? Mais il a fait des hommes, et surtout des femmes!" In Corneille's Cléopatre one sees the mother wickedly jealous of her future daughter-in law, combined with the masterful woman of the "rolling-pin" type. In Phèdre we have the woman who has been overcome by a guilty love. In Don Diègue, to turn to the men, is the old die-hard, who fails to realize that he is not the man he was, and cannot stand to see honors go to younger men. Horace is the fierce, quick-tempered young man who domineers over his women folk, who even as the twentieth century Warren, prefers to be right to being a gentlemen. All these are"close-ups" having consequently little or no background, and leaving,indeed, little room for any.

The romantic heroes and heroines are just as true to life , but

instead of being cabinet photos, full length, like those of the classics, are enlargements which consequently appear at a disadvantage when seen from too close, but which when viewed from the proper distance show all the charm and beauty of the others. Such is Ruy Blas with his very human affection for the lady of his heart, and his love of rich clothes, rank, and power. Such is Didier with his desire for purity in the woman he would love, and his own contrasting lack of it; with his wrong-headed jealousy and very human confession on the eve of death. Chatterton is a real young man in his weakness and hunger, in his love, in his pride, and in his impulsiveness to end it all. True also is the Duc de Guise in his arrogance and his cruelty; and Saint-Mégrin in his youth and courage. Dona Sol is true to life in her purity and ethereality as is Marion de Lorme with her guilty past and her self-sacrificing love. They are all men and women. The ones small, carefully drawn, complete; the others large, broadly sketched, distressingly unfinished except at a distance. The ones a group, an"image"; the others a landscape, a "tableau".

The romantic drama, taking it by and large, is not the antithesis of the classic but rather its complement. They agree on the most important points, namely: they are each what its age made it; each portrays its age fully and clearly; both are inspiring; and they both are remarkably true to life. Where they disagree, on the other hand, in content, treatment, setting, time of duration, and taste, the romantic is just the specific required to restore life to the bloodless limbs of French tragedy as it was at the close of the eighteenth century. Mediocre dramatists could not soar impeded by the shackles imposed by a limited vocabulary, the unities of time and place, and the classic tradition. One had to be a genius, a Corneille or a Racine. Voltaire himself was far from being either. Something had to be done, and action came from within French tragedy itself. Romanticism was no parasitic growth but a new

branch thrown off from the parent trunk of French tragedy which gave it new life and thus enabled it to overcome , and none too soon, the dry rot that was eating out its heart.

Romanticism revived moribund French tragedy in a number of ways. One, as we saw above was the bursting of the flood-gates and letting loose of the full torrent of the french language into the parched fields of the stage. In a second way it struck off the fetters that had bound classic tragedy to the past. Even Racine sought to evade this convention once in his career, when he laid the scene of his "Bajazet in the Constantinople of his own day, and raised a formidable storm of criticism. Voltaire, more than half a century later openly seeks a foreign strand in order to avoid going to the past. His "Zaire" taking place at Jerusalem, and "Alzire", in South America, and both mediaeval in time. Victor Hugo and his co-adjutors took the final step and laid the scenes of their plays, not in a foreign land but in France itself; and Kings and queens of France, marquises and marchionesses of the french court are now jostled on the boards of the tragic theatre by valets, poets, noble bandits, and even by sinister characters of unknown antecedents. So that when the the classic revival took place under Ponsard we find that he is willing to follow in the footsteps of the men of 1830 in this respect that his "Charlotte Corday", and his "Agnes de Méranie" take place on French soil,and the chief personages are the men and women of middle class lineage who led the revolution.

Again, the yoke of the unities is broken forever. Up to 1830 when Victor Hugo commenced his attack , with his "Préface De Cromwell", every action must be over inside of twenty-four hours, and must not budge from the spot where the first actors entered. Corneille and Racine managed to succeed in spite of these handicaps, being geniuses, but alas the mediocres of the eighteenth century killed their plays.

In Voltaire's "Zaire" we find the heroine recovering her long-lost father, losing him, again, becoming a christian, and losing her lover and her life all in the space of twenty-four hours. "Alzire" is more incredible still. Momba is freed from prison, returns to his people, foments and causes to be carried out a formidable revolt, is re-arrested, is aided to escape, assassinates his enemy, and commits suicide all in one short day; and all this takes place before the gates of the castle. The romanticists put and end to such absurdities. We find Ruy Blas appearing in his master's house, in the palace, and in his own comfortable quaters, just as the play requires, and at least six months elapse before it is ended. From that day to this Melpomene has never returned to the ante-room and the corridor, and though not forced to extend her operations beyond the first day, may yet feel free to do so if the occasion requires it.

Lastly, as a result of this overthrow of the unity of place the Romanticists established firmly the importance of the stage setting. In the classic tragedies, as we have said, everything happens in the one spot, and any action that cannot be staged there, such as the scene at the altar, in Iphigenie, and the combat scene in Horace, is reported by a kind hearted friend to one chief characters who very conveniently has not been present at the activities in question. Consequently there was little real need for elaborate stage setting, one room would do as well as another. But when the romanticists began shifting the the scene from one place to another, changing as in Marion de Lorme, from Marion's chamber to the village square; from the village square to the lawn before the Chateau de Nangis, from there to the King's ante-room, and from the King's ante-room to the court yard of the castle of Beaugency, it became imperative that these changes be made apparent. So from Ronsard down to the problem plays of today we find a paragraph at least

at the beginning of each act, devoted to matter of the arrangement of the stage.

In conclusion, classic tragedy, as we have seen, is the expression of that peculiar trait of french character that makes them love rules and regulations,-they have had ten different constitutions,-and yet feel that providing the letter of the law is kept the spirit of it may be overlooked. That is why the unities of time and place obtained so long, and why Victor Hugo himself has Didier fight in the street and Dumas makes Borgia and the Maréchal d'Ancre fight in the dark. The romantic tragedy is the expression of that iconoclastic and daring spirit that overthrew the old régime and made Napoleon ruler of Europe. In a very real sense both made their contribution not only to the literature of France but to the literature of the world, and are the direct progenitors of the present day drama of France. Neither is perfect. Both have their faults. Each completes the other. Without romanticism, classic tragedy would have died of malnutrition, and without the restraining influence of classicism the romantics would have carried French tragedy over into melodrama. Both are the parents of the present day realistic drama which couples the closely knit action and detailed characterization of the classics with the freedom in language, subject matter and treatment of the romantic plays.

In a word, then, let us not effect to dispise the one and exalt the other. Let us not condemn the classic tragedy for its woodenness and bareness, nor censure the romantic drama for its unrealness and melodramatic coups de main; but let us rather seek in both for that "enivrant mélange du réel et de l'idéal", which marks all true literary work, for in the words of Émile Deschanel, writing five years after the death of the great leader of romanticism, "Si nous admirons vivement les trois grands siècles précédents nous avons de bonnes raisons aussi d'admirer le nôtre qui n'est certes pas moins grand."

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