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MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES.

Baltimore, January, 1895.

UNITY OF PLACE IN *LE CID*.

THIS heading may be considered begging the question at issue, since *le Cid* is generally supposed to disregard unity of place, and in fact does so in the performances given by the Comédie française at the present day. Still the critics are by no means agreed that the stage managers are right in their conclusions, though they themselves are uncertain as to what the original setting really was. Voltaire—to cite one of the most eminent among them—thinks that unity of place would be evident to the spectator, if *le Cid* were only produced with scenery worthy of its author, in other words if it used the multiplex stage decoration.

So the first point to be settled would be the kind of scenery which Corneille found ready at hand, the scenery he inherited from his predecessors; and the second to ascertain how he adapted this scenery to his own ends. Rigal, in his important work on Alexandre Hardy, has discussed the first question at length, and has given his conclusions regarding the second. He shows beyond a doubt that, at the time when Corneille began to solicit popular applause at the Marais theater, the multiplex scenery was the usual form of stage setting, though movable scenery was often employed. The multiplex form of decoration had been handed down from the open-air stage of the Fraternity of the Passion to the more restricted stage of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. In it the various settings for the different localities were juxtaposed on the stage—centered around the street or square in the middle—and remained there throughout the entire play, the changes being indicated by the actors going from one to the other as occasion demanded. For instance, in a tragicomedy of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, the centre of the stage might be an open space representing a square in Rome, the right a series of houses extending from Rome to Jerusalem, and the left, perhaps, the Mediterranean sea. A curtain in the background of

the open space might rise at the opportune moment to reveal another house or street of the imperial city. To be sure, this scenery was the property of one particular theater, but at the same time it must have been the model for the decorations prepared for Mondory's troupe of the Marais, and have differed from them only in extent and variety.

The stage, which Corneille as a citizen of the provinces knew, must have been more simple than even the modified scenery of the Marais; for the companies of actors who visited Rouen could not have transported any of their stage properties with them, since these belonged to the owners of the Hôtel de Bourgogne and were leased only with that theater. The scenery which the actors used on their tours was undoubtedly reduced to the smallest dimensions possible, and probably depended largely on the indulgent fancy of their audiences, who would gladly put up with a mere indication for the sake of the play. So that it is to be supposed—as Rigal does—that the less spectacular plays were alone given in the provinces, and that it is there and not in Paris that the beginnings of the classical theater are to be found. Corneille, of course, had visited the capital before he composed his first play, and must have attended performances at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. His evident familiarity, too, with the comedies of Latin antiquity may have suggested a more regular place of action than the example of Hardy and the Parisian playwrights could have afforded him.

However this may be, he himself states in the "Examen" to *Mélite* that it was his "common sense" which made him discover unity of action, and gave him an "aversion for that license which puts Paris, Rome and Constantinople on the same stage." Consequently he limited the localities in *Mélite* to the area of one town, Paris. But in *Clitandre*, which was written to please the old theatergoers who had found *Mélite* too simple and unemotional, the multiplex decoration is taken advantage of, and the stage is a king's castle with forests adjoining, as in the tragi-comedies of Hardy. Still Corneille yields even here to one requirement of the new school, and re-

stricts the time of the action to twenty-four hours.

The influence of Horace and his *Ars poetica*, now began to assert itself, and in *la Veuve* the dramatist returns to the order of *Mélite* so far as it affected the place, and tries a new idea of his own to satisfy the demands for unity of time. In the preface to *la Veuve* he claims that he always "observes inviolate" unity of place and action. As for the first he says:

"tantôt je la resserre à la seule grandeur du théâtre, et tantôt je l'étends jusqu'à toute une ville, comme en cette pièce. Je l'ai poussé dans le *Citandre* jusques aux lieux où l'on peut aller dans les vingt et quatre heures; mais bien que j'en pusse trouver de bons garants et de grands exemples dans les vieux et nouveaux siècles, j'estime qu'il n'est que meilleur de se passer de leur imitation en ce point."

And he promises some day to consider the question more at length. His invention for unity of time was a day to each act, or five days for the whole play. This is a compromise, as he states, between the rules of the purists and the freedom of the French stage. It is possible he already had in mind some idea of inventing a middle term for unity of place also.

The preface of *la Veuve* was printed in March, 1634. The next play of Corneille, *la Galerie du Palais*, was not edited until February, 1637, and its preface (a dedication) makes no comments on its construction. Yet so far as unity of time is concerned it continues the idea of a day for each act. For place there are two localities. The one temporary and probably occupying the whole stage at first, the other more permanent and consisting of a street bordered by houses, in which some of the female characters lived. All came into the street to carry on their dialogue, a proceeding not relished by the poet, but necessary, as he writes in the "Examen" of 1660, "pour trouver cette rigoureuse unité de lieu qu'exigent les grands réguliers." The first decoration appears for a while at the end of the fourth act.

La Suivante, which followed *la Galerie du Palais*, probably in the season of 1633-34, yet was not published until the quarrel of *le*

Cid was at its height, observed both the unities of time and place in the sense of the critics, though Corneille protested against them in his dedication of 1637, and in 1660 in his "Examen," claims that what his actors speak in the street would be better said in their houses which border the street on either side. Still he was evidently satisfied with this kind of unity in 1634, though in the next play, *la Place Royale*, he finds himself forced to modify it by putting his heroine in her own chamber during one soliloquy. The multiplex decoration would easily admit of this, and involved no moving of scenery.

When our author, after this series of successful comedies, was ready to try his Muse in higher flights, and test his powers as a tragic writer, he still disagreed with the ancients to a slight extent and infringed on strict unity of place. He confesses in the "Examen" to *Médée* that he could not bring himself to Seneca's standard in this particular, but makes the heroine of the piece prepare her enchantments in her own room. Another character he puts in prison, only to regret it later on, and affirm that guards would have answered the same purpose much better. So it is evident that the multiplex scenery was made use of again here just as in *la Place Royale*. The next play, *l'Illusion comique*, is known to have been performed with the stage setting in vogue at the time, for the register of the machinist, who prepared the decorations for it, has been preserved. A significant passage in his directions is where "carcans ou menottes" are required. These appliances must refer to the seventh scene of the fourth act, where the text reads *CLINDOR en prison*, and would go to prove that Corneille here employed the symbol for the reality, doing away with the actual prison for the same reasons, perhaps, which he afterwards advanced in the "Examen" to *Médée*.

L'Illusion comique was performed by the actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and very likely in the same season which saw *Médée* given by Mondory and his associates. If this is so, then a year and a half must have elapsed before Corneille tried the stage again with the production of *le Cid*. Such an interval seems more probable than the com-

monly received one of a few months, since not only the verse and language of *le Cid* reveal most careful study on the part of its author, but also because the difficulties attending its construction and adaptation to French dramatic standards, could have been surmounted only after many trials and much self-criticism. The comedians, too, seem to have been aware of the importance of the venture, for the enemies of Corneille, in the dispute which followed the successful performance of the play, claim that the acting and the handsome clothes of the actors were the chief factors in the fame it attained. Unusual efforts had been made, at all events, to have the theatrical properties of *le Cid* everything that could be desired. This care affords another proof of the weight Corneille himself attached to his new departure.

The amount of time spent in elaborating the piece leaves nowhere so clear a trace as in its observance, or non-observance, of the unities. A comparison of *le Cid* with its source is all that is necessary for absolute conviction on this point. The publicity given to the part of the Infanta in the French play, with the evident purpose of eulogizing the hero, interrupts its action, if it does not destroy its unity; while the transformation of the mad prince Sancho into a mere suitor for the heroine's hand, thus making him a counterpart to the Infanta, could have been the outcome only of mature deliberation. To attain unity of time, it was necessary also to reduce the events of three years to the limits of twenty-four hours. Corneille accomplished this feat to his own discomfiture, as he afterwards admits. Yet the final result could not have been reached until after many unsatisfactory trials. In other words, the whole make-up of the play as well as the final preparation of the actors, would indicate a much longer period of inception than the few months generally assigned to it, and for these reasons the date of *l'Illusion comique* may be better placed in the season 1634-35, than in the winter following.

The same care must have attended the setting of the play which was shown in its action and duration. The original drama of Guillen de Castro used all Spain for its theater. Cor-

neille's play was confined to the territory of one town, and evidently to the neighborhood of one street or square. But here the contemporaries have handed down a word of warning. Scudéry complains in his *Observations* :

“disons encore que le théâtre en est si mal entendu, qu'un même lieu représentant l'appartement du Roi, celui de l'Infante, la maison de Chimène et la rue, presque sans changer de face, le spectateur ne sait le plus souvent où sont les acteurs.”

The Academy agrees in this criticism, while admitting that the defect is not a new one :

“Quant au théâtre, il n'y a personne à qui il ne soit évident qu'il est mal entendu dans ce poème, et qu'une même scène y représente plusieurs lieux. Il est vrai que c'est un défaut que l'on trouve en la plupart de nos poèmes dramatiques, et auquel il semble que la négligence des poètes ait accoutumé les spectateurs. Mais l'auteur de celui-ci, s'étant mis si à l'étroit pour y faire rencontrer l'unité du jour, devait bien aussi s'efforcer d'y faire rencontrer celle du lieu, qui est bien autant nécessaire que l'autre, et faute d'être observée avec soin, produit dans l'esprit des spectateurs autant ou plus de confusion et d'obscurité.”

The meaning of these criticisms is obvious, and so far as the spectator could see, it is clear that the action of *le Cid* was carried on in one place. Rigal has explained this effect (*Alexandre Hardy*, p. 206) by supposing that the multiplex decoration was used, without any distinct divisions among the different pieces of scenery, or any attention being paid to them by the actors, who would all stand on the same spot. This explanation seems to be the correct one and, so far as the last half of it is concerned, is borne out by Mondory's letter to Balzac dated the eighteenth of January, 1637, not many days after the first performance of the play :

“La foule a été si grande à nos portes, et notre lieu s'est trouvé si petit, que les recoins du théâtre qui servaient les autres fois comme de niches aux pages, ont été des places de faveur pour les cordons bleus, et la scène y a été d'ordinaire parée de croix de chevaliers de l'ordre.”

Of course under such circumstances unity of place, except so far as the background might change, was unavoidable; and the fact that the comedians allowed their stage to be so

encroached upon, shows that their desire to do all they could for the success of *le Cid* was not heightened by any novelties in the way of scenery. We have seen Corneille approaching this notion of the place of action in his previous plays, though hesitating, as in *la Place Royale* and *Médée*, to entirely adopt it.

What was unusual in *le Cid* was the position of the actors in the middle of the stage, whatever might be the spot where they were supposed to be. The scenery, therefore, must have been based on the multiplex model, for Scudéry's "sans changer de face" was a technical term for different compartments in the same decoration, and does not signify a change between scenes or acts.—The strictures of the Academy also point unmistakably to the multiplex decoration.—Consequently we are to suppose that Corneille wished to carry to its logical conclusion what he had already attempted, and had designated his places by separate buildings, grouped around an open space, into which the characters came, through the doors opening out of each particular structure. It was not a new idea at all; but it was an improbable one in such a combination of passions and events as *le Cid*. Corneille in his "Examen" alludes to the trouble which his place of action made for him and adds:

"Tout s'y passe donc dans Séville, et garde ainsi quelque espèce d'unité de lieu en général; mais le lieu particulier change de scène en scène, et tantôt c'est le palais du Roi, tantôt l'appartement de l'Infante, tantôt la maison de Chimène, et tantôt une rue ou place publique. On le détermine aisément pour les scènes détachées; mais pour celles qui ont leur liaison ensemble, comme les quatre dernières du premier acte, il est malaisé d'en choisir un qui convienne à toutes."

To escape this ambiguity he thinks that the spectators should "help the scenery," and suppose people walking who are standing still, or that a character (Don Diègue, for instance) has entered his house while he is still at the same place on the stage as before. The funeral rites of the Count demanded another stretch of the fancy, another "poetic fiction," and the dramatist, uncertain what to do with so puzzling a question, admits:

"J'ai cru plus à propos de les dérober à son (the spectator's) imagination par mon silence, aussi bien que le lieu précis de ces quatre

scènes du premier acte dont je viens de parler; et je m'assure que cet artifice m'a si bien réussi, que peu de personnes ont pris garde à l'un ni à l'autre, etc."

In the *Discours des Trois Unités*, which was printed in 1660, at the same time as this "Examen," Corneille discusses unity of place at length. He still affirms that the limits of one town suffice to make that unity, and that the stage could very well represent two or three places within the city walls. In citing instances from his plays he says of *le Cid*:

"comme la liaison de scènes n'y est pas gardée, le théâtre, dès le premier acte, est la maison de Chimène, l'appartement de l'Infante dans le palais du Roi, et la place publique; le second y ajoute la chambre du Roi; et sans doute il y a quelque excès dans cette licence."

To rectify such indefiniteness he suggests one of two things: either that changes of place should occur only between acts, as in *Cinna*, or that

"ces deux lieux n'eussent point besoin de diverses décorations, et qu'aucun des deux ne fût jamais nommé, mais seulement le lieu général où tous les deux sont compris, comme Paris, Rome, etc."

In that way the spectator, not having before him different scenery, would not be aware of a change of place on the part of the characters. But when two persons appear in the same act, who are so antagonistic to each other that the auditor's oblivion of the surroundings is not probable, Corneille proposes a compromise, by "theatrical fictions," which would make the place of action no particular room,

"mais une salle sur laquelle ouvrent ces divers appartements, à qui j'attribuerais deux privilèges: l'un que chacun de ceux qui y parleraient fût présumé y parler avec le même secret que s'il était dans sa chambre; l'autre, qu'au lieu que dans l'ordre commun il est quelque fois de la bienséance que ceux qui occupent le théâtre aillent trouver ceux qui sont dans leur cabinet pour parler à eux, ceux-ci pussent les venir trouver sur le théâtre, sans choquer cette bienséance, afin de conserver l'unité de lieu et la liaison des scènes."

Unless this compromise be admitted, Corneille confesses that he had observed, previous to 1660, unity of place in but three tragedies, *Horace*, *Polyeucte* and *Pompée*.

The conclusion of the whole matter would be, then, that in *le Cid* Corneille had attempted

a fusion of the old and new, a compromise between the requirements of the purists and the freedom of Hardy's scenery, just as in *la Veuve* he had invented a middle term for the unity of time. But he was forced to give up the former as he had been obliged to yield the latter. Compromises were not in favor in his day, and are in fact but seldom met with in the annals of French history or literature. The spectator recognized in *le Cid* the fixed, multiplex decoration, not necessarily indefinite as Rigal supposes, otherwise Scudéry could hardly have written "presque sans changer de face," or the Academy have ranked it with the majority of the plays of the time. But instead of remaining within the various rooms bordering on the central open space, as in *Médée* and *la Place Royale*, or delaying on the thresholds, as in many of the scenes of Corneille's early comedies, the characters in *le Cid* came entirely away from their respective abiding-places and stood in the middle of the stage. Thus it may be easily explained why the last four scenes of the first act were indefinite in locality, as Corneille himself acknowledges. For these were connected by the characters of each speaking to one another, while the first scenes were separated from one another and from the following four by their entire lack of such communication. In the first two scenes of the original play the open square was the real place of the action, but in the third scene it was the assumed place, the Infanta and her attendants evidently coming thither from the door of her apartment (note the stage direction for line 61, *Le Page rentre*). Besides, the presence of a part of the audience on the sides of the stage forces us to allow that all the dialogue was carried on in the middle, while Corneille's admission that the four last scenes of the first act were indefinite in locality would indicate that he considered the first three definite. The only way this definiteness could be gained would be by the actors advancing from the buildings where they were supposed to be—as the dramatist had conceded in his previous plays and as he argued for in the *Discours des Trois Unités*. And this they must have done in the disconnected scenes of *le Cid*, while in those which were joined more closely together, one actor re-

mained in the square and the others came to him.

Here is the "theatrical fiction," a unity of place which satisfied neither the crowd, fond of spectacular effects, nor the strict disciples of Aristotle and Horace. And so it had to go the way Corneille's compromise for unity of time had gone. The outcome of the struggle was the banishment of general subjects from the classical stage of France. The scenery of *le Cid*, as Corneille planned it, would have seemed narrow and hesitating to the most indulgent of romanticists, yet it was still too varied for the Academy and the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Accordingly its author was forced to his last concession to their demands, and "Le théâtre est une chambre à quatre portes. Il faut un fauteuil pour le roi" (stage register of 1673), was the final realization of Corneille's words in the *Discours des Trois Unités*, of 1660.

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GERMAN LOAN-WORDS AND THE SECOND SOUND SHIFTING.

IT is well established that at different times, from the beginning of the O.H.G. period up to the late Middle Ages, certain consonant changes have taken place in the Upper German dialects. These changes are collectively known as the Second Sound Shifting, although not all consonants have permutated simultaneously throughout the whole linguistic area. It is rightly assumed that barring peculiar irreducible consonant groups and crossing influences, this change took place uniformly within the whole language, and that Modern High German represents the group of the Second Sound Shifting.*

German philologists are accustomed to subject loan-words to the test of native words and to judge of the approximate age of their introduction by the manner in which the permutations have taken place. They seem to forget that what is true of changes within the language is not *eo ipso* true of changes in newcomers whose foreign garb marks them as belonging to a special class. As far as I

*This is not the common view. H. C. G. v. J.