

Main Title

Théâtre : Le Cloître, Philippe II / Émile Verhaeren ;
Critical Edition by Michel Otten et Christophe
Meurée

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At the turn of the century, Verhaeren develops and showcases his whole palette of talent and contradictions. In his monographs dedicated to Rembrandt and Ensor, he lauds the artists' perfect use of light and color; the collections of *Les Forces tumultueuses* and *La Multiple Splendeur* (volume 10 of the *Poésie Complete*) magnify a nearly pagan way of living and bear witnesses to a profound hope in the future of mankind.

In contrast, Verhaeren reveals the darkness which has been haunting him from the very beginning through his theatrical works. With very little time in between, he composes *Le Cloître* (1900) and *Philippe II* (1901), plays which differ greatly from *Les Aubes* (1898).

An immense success in Europe, *Le Cloître* allows one to see and to hear Don Balthazar's late and public confession to murdering his father. This confession nearly provokes the dissolution of a community of monks chosen by him for asylum.

Philippe II plunges into the heart of the dark legend which nourishes Belgium's national consciousness and prolongs the European Romanticism's fascination with the personage of Don Carlos. The play concentrates on the conflict that sets Charles V's son against his own son, Don Carlos.

Two plays marked by murder and parricide. Two plays which combine verse and prose. Two plays centered on the struggle between individual ambitions and collective reasoning. Two plays that must be rediscovered.