

A STUDY OF THE DIRECT OBJECT

With A in Calderon.

THESIS

Presented to the Romance Department

of the University of Nebraska,

by

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A Study of the So-Called Personal Accusative  
in Calderon.

The use of the preposition a before a direct object in Spanish, commonly called the Spanish Personal Accusative, is a field of investigation which has apparently received little attention. No discussions of this subject has been found in such periodicals as Romania, Revue des Langues Romanes, Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie, and Modern Language Notes. An exceedingly brief treatment of the subject is found in the grammars of the Spanish language. Nothing more is given, however, than an unsatisfactory list of rules, each rule followed by a few examples which are for the most part unconvincing as they seemed formed by the grammarian himself, and not taken from some standard Spanish author. No inquiry into the causes of this accusative use, nor into its extent is given.

Yet the study of the Personal Accusative is a very important one. First, because it has not been treated before, and secondly, because the construction

is one peculiar to the Spanish language alone. It shall be the purpose of this paper to give a theory as to the rise of this use, then a general discussion of the subject followed by a more minute study of the accusative as it is employed by Calderon, in the plays,-- *La Vida es Sueño*, (L. V. S.) *El Alcalde de Zalamea* (A. Z.), *La Devoción de la Cruz* (L. D. C.) and *Las Armas de la Hermosura* (A. H.). Lastly will come a brief summary of the results of the inquiry.

The Personal Accusative is a construction which most probably came from the influence of the Latin language upon the Spanish. As we know, Spain was for six hundred years the richest and most important Roman province, and, as a consequence, became more Latinized than any other part of the empire outside of Italy. Through her great writers at this time, Spain was given a pure classic Latin for the basis of her language, and is even more like the Latin in the declensions than the Italian.

One of the most important constructions in Latin was that of the dative with special verbs,-- the rule being that the dative should be employed after near-



ly all verbs which signify to favor, help, please, trust and their contraries, also to believe, persuade, command, obey, serve, resist, envy, threaten, pardon, and spare. These verbs were for a long time strictly intransitive. But gradually, through the influence of popular use, or through a slight change in the meaning of the verbs, the intransitive signification of many became transitive.

In Latin, also, the oblique cases of a noun or pronoun were indicated by the ending given to that noun or pronoun. In Spanish the dative and genitive forms died out and these relations had to be expressed by means of the accusative with certain prepositions. The preposition a from Latin ad, to, indicated the dative. It is very probable that the case-endings of nouns were lost before the intransitive verbs became transitive. If such were the case, the preposition a must have been used as the dative sign when these verbs were intransitive, and still retained when they became transitive. Thus it came to govern a direct as well as an indirect object, and its use gradually extended to all transi-