The Development of the role of play in the theatre of Jean Anouilh

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Abbreviations used in the thesis.

P.N. = Pièces Noires (L'Hermine, La Sauvage, Le Voyageur sans bagage, Eurydice).

P.R. = Pièces Roses (Humulus le muet, Le Bal des voleurs, Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, Léocadia).

N.P.N. = Nouvelles Pièces Noires (Jézabel, Antigone, Roméo et Jeannette, Médée).

P.B. = Pièces Brillantes (L'Invitation au château, Colombe, La Répétition ou l'amour puni, Cécile ou l'école des pères).

P.G. = Pièces Grinçantes (Ardèle ou la marguerite, La Valse des toréadors, Ornifle ou le courant d'air, Pauvre Bitos ou le dîner de têtes).

P.C. = Pièces Costumées, (L'Alouette, Becket ou l'honneur de Dieu, La Foire d'empoigne).

N.P.G. = Nouvelles Pièces Grinçantes (L'Hurluberlu ou le Réactionnaire amoureux, La Grotte, Le Boulangier, la boulangère et le petit mitron, Les Poissons rouges ou mon père, ce héros).

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INTRODUCTION
Introduction

Jean Anouilh has insisted throughout his career on the importance of the concept of 'play' in the theatre in general and in his own works in particular. As early as 1935 he said during a conversation with Yvon Novy, drama critic of Le Jour:

Une représentation théâtrale est un jeu qui obéit à des règles précises. Il faut en accepter les conventions, conventions signifiant ici règles du jeu.

The italics are Anouilh's own. Theatre, he continued, was 'un jeu de l'esprit'. This, he explained, did not mean simply an intellectual game, for emotions were involved. Emotions, he continued, were important:

Nous pouvons avoir des émotions - et ce sont les plus admirables - sans cesser de jouer et sans cesser de savoir que nous jouons. C'est ça le théâtre.2

The role of the dramatist, he maintained, was not slavishly to copy reality any more than the function of the painter was to produce a photographic image of what he saw. Anouilh extended his idea thus:

Le rôle du théâtre, ce n'est pas de saisir, l'œil collé au trou de la serrure, le vrai de tous les jours; c'est de faire faux, au besoin - quand je dis faux, je n'entends pas contraire à la vérité, inhumain, mais artificiel - pour raccourcir, dépouiller, mettre en lumière un vrai d'une autre classe, un vrai éternel.3

To support his argument Anouilh instances the musician writing a pastoral symphony. He is not required all the time to imitate

1. Yvon Novy, 'Le rôle du théâtre n'est pas de faire vrai', Le Jour, 12-3-35.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
exactly the sound of cow-bells, bird-song or the gurgle of springs. His function rather is to evoke by the means at his disposal the spirit of these sounds and the eternal truth that they suggest.

Two years later in 1937 when discussing the stage with Pierre Lagarde, theatre critic of Les Nouvelles Littéraires, he reiterated his opinion and expressed his delight that he could write 'un théâtre artificiel'. ¹ He clarified his meaning with the following illustration. A child may wish to avoid going to school and so feigns illness. His mother will declare that she has not been deceived and that his acting has been poor. On another occasion that same child may be playing hospitals in the playground of the school with his friends who will tell him how well he has acted though they will not have been duped into thinking that the child really is ill. Whereas in the first case acting in a realistic context had failed, nevertheless in the second instance a performance given in a non-realistic situation had succeeded. Herein for Anouilh lay theatrical truth. A similar attitude is revealed in La Répétition (1950) when Tigre, the organiser of the rehearsal, is telling Hortensia, his mistress, how to act her part. His remarks on the nature of theatre seem to reflect Anouilh's own views:

Le naturel, le vrai, celui du théâtre, est la chose la moins naturelle du monde... N'allez pas croire qu'il suffit de retrouver le ton de la vie... C'est très

Indeed the best way to arrive at truth would seem for Anouilh to be through the pretence of theatre. When Georges in *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis* (1937) was asked by Isabelle why he had staged his charade with hired actors he replied that it was for 'le plaisir de vivre enfin une vraie soirée de famille'.

Play, then, is special for Anouilh in his understanding of the nature of theatre. He made his attitude on this point quite clear in an article entitled *Propos Déplaisants* reproduced in full by Pol Vandromme in his book *Jean Anouilh: un auteur et ses personnages*. 3

'Being used to the game' implied certain attitudes of mind for those who came to watch. Without them his plays would not be fully appreciated or might even be misunderstood. When this did happen in the case of *La Valse des toréadors* Anouilh sprang to his own defence in an article in *Le Figaro*. 5 Assuming the role of critic he began by praising the play itself and then wrote:

4. Ibid. p. 225.
Voilà enfin un dramaturge qui comprend que le théâtre est avant tout un libre jeu de l'esprit, que la vraisemblance, une intrigue soigneusement menée, des entrées et des sorties habilement agencées ne sont rien.¹

In *La Valse des toréadors*, he went on to write, 'rien n'est vraisemblable [...] et, cependant, tout est vrai.' The technique in this 'jeu de l'esprit', he continued, was that of vaudeville and caricature and was to be compared with the deliberate deformation employed in some modern art. In other media, as for example in scenarios by Mack Sennett (the outstanding producer of short, slapstick films in the nineteen-twenties) or by the celebrated writer of farces, Feydeau, one could find 'des sentiments vrais, parfois tragiques, mais rendus inoffensifs et propres au jeu de l'esprit par la déformation caricaturale.' When this happened, 'à nous de jouer avec eux.'²

Later still in 1968 when Anouilh produced *Le Boulanger, la boulangerè et le petit mitron* he was still insisting on the make-believe nature of theatre. Discussing his play with Claude Cézan, the theatre critic of *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, he pointed out how it ended on a sad note achieved by means of 'un truc de théâtre, un truc insolite.' But then, he added, vous savez bien qu'au théâtre tout est artifice.'³ It would seem that throughout his career Anouilh has held firmly to the belief that there is in the theatre a truth that can best be expressed through the apparently false, through play, as opposed to a more realistic form of drama.

¹. Ibid.
². Ibid.
It is with the importance of 'play' in Anouilh's works that this thesis will be primarily concerned. The first part will consider how the reviewers have reacted to this aspect of Anouilh's individualistic conception of theatre. Given the strong lead from Anouilh himself it is surprising that so few reviewers singled out his sense of play for special reference, though many have noted individual traits. André Frank, however, reviewing Ardèle for Le Populaire was a notable exception. He wrote:

> Si l'on voulait désigner, analyser, sur le plan de sa technique la qualité maîtresse de Jean Anouilh, je la nommerais en effet le sens du jeu, jeu des personnages avec la vie et les choses, jeu des événements avec l'intrigue principale, jeu des hommes avec leur destin.¹

In the remaining chapters which form the major part of the thesis the concept of play that pervades Anouilh's theatre and forms the basis of the theatricalism of his style is examined in detail and with reference to each of his plays in chronological order. Its development from the simple idea of role-playing into the more complex structures of play-within-the-play, inner play and self-conscious theatricality is traced. The precise meaning of these terms and the way in which some critics have already used them with reference to Anouilh's plays will be considered next.

Theatricalism, the global term covering the various aspects

of style and technique that will be considered in this thesis, occurs when a playwright deliberately sets out to make his stylization obvious. John Harvey, who examines Anouilh's style and technique in his book Anouilh: a study in theatrics,\(^1\) argues that theatricalism arose, like romanticism, as a reaction to realism. The theatricalist revolt was more determined than the romantic and derived from the view that 'a play should always remain a show, enacted on a recognized platform before spectators without illusions.'\(^2\) Harvey further argues that theatricalism rests on two premises. The first is that

any art form is more effective and honest when its medium is exposed than when it is concealed.\(^3\)

By making the stylization obvious - or as Harvey might say, 'by exposing the medium of theatre' - the dramatist dispels the illusion of reality that playwrights of the naturalist school try to create. Whereas naturalists endeavour to make audiences forget that they are in the theatre, theatricalists set out deliberately to remind them where they are. The theatricalists attempt to express rather than recreate reality. In the theatricalist view this admission by the theatre of its own essence is honest because theatre is no longer pretending to be other than it is.

The second premise noted by Harvey is that theatricalism

\(^{2}\) Ibid. p.2.
\(^{3}\) Ibid. p.3.
It seems to 'derive from a universal and deeply rooted human tendency to pretend and to savor pretending in others.'¹ This important aspect of theatricalism as it concerns Anouilh's theatre figures largely in his understanding of the nature of drama, for as we saw in the opening pages of this chapter he clearly envisages a play as a game in which the audience is invited to take part.

There is a further point I wish to make about theatricalism. Certain forms of drama are more highly stylized than others as in the cases of farce, melodrama and comedy. They already possess a kind of in-built artificiality and so may be designated theatricalist. When tragedy is cast in a non-realistic, formal mould, it too may be considered to be an example of theatricalism.

In Anouilh's early plays theatricalism is most clearly seen in the significance he gives to role-playing. The term is for the most part self-explanatory and embraces those instances when a character plays a part different from what he really is. There are two main ways in which this might occur. The one is when he acts the part of a known person; this may be seen in Anouilh's works when Bitos portrays Robespierre in Pauvre Bitos, or when Amanda assumes the role of Léocadia in the play of that title. The other self-evident way in which role-playing occurs is when a character enacts a known fixed type. An obvious example of this within Anouilh's theatre is when Lucien in

¹. Ibid. p.3.
Roméo et Jeannette announces that instead of being himself he will, since his wife has been unfaithful to him, play the traditional role of cuckolded husband. Frequently throughout the play he goes out of his way to remind his listeners, both on-stage and off, that he is a cuckold and, as such, certain actions and attitudes are expected of him.

There is a further way in which Anouilh uses the known fixed type. Certain characters are firmly established because they have been used on many occasions in the past. When a character conforms closely to the tradition of the role, although he is being himself, he may be considered to be role-playing. Early examples of this may be seen in Philippe, the faithful friend of Frantz in L’Hermine, or the stereotyped butler of La Sauvage.

The way in which the roles are distributed may vary. Sometimes one character will allocate a role to another, sometimes a person will involuntarily play a part, and at other times he will deliberately cast himself in a particular role. The latter case Harvey calls 'self-dramatization.'

Altogether he distinguishes four further ways in which Anouilh uses the device. Harvey's suggestions are useful in that they specify certain nuances in Anouilh's technique but they do not show how role-playing forms part of the general pattern of Anouilh's

1. Ibid. p.50
2. These are as a jejune means of indicating to the spectators that they are watching a play, as a dramatic metaphor with one figure superimposed upon a fixed type, as an indication that spontaneity, freshness, and originality are precluded from human affairs, and as a tragic mould for the individual who finds himself cast as an idealist in an imperfect world.
development as a dramatist.

Harvey shows that role-playing forms an important part of Anouilh's theatre. The device is closely linked with that of the play-within-the-play which he also uses extensively. It has been defined by Robert Nelson in his book *Play within a Play*\(^1\) as 'a formal imitation of an event through the dialogue and action of impersonated characters occurring within and not suspending the action of just such another imitation.'\(^2\) The device has numerous variations in all of which audiences see a main play and a subsidiary play taking place on stage in a special relationship one to the other. A play performed on stage and recognised as such by the audience, but not, generally, by the characters participating, may be regarded as theatre at the primary level. Sometimes within the play at this first level another play is performed that is recognised as theatre by the characters taking part at the primary level. This performance may be thought of as taking place at a secondary level; it has the quality of being recognised as theatre both by the audience within the auditorium and by the characters on stage performing at the primary level.

One of the best known examples of a play-within-a-play is the one that occurs in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* when Hamlet himself

engages strolling players to enact a playlet which depicts a situation similar to the one in which he finds himself. He it is who causes the play to be performed. The playlet in that instance would appear to serve many functions; it enables Hamlet to observe his mother and his uncle and thus confirm his suspicions about them, he is able to let his uncle and his mother know that he is aware of what has happened between them. It also permits the author to comment through the words of Hamlet on the nature of acting and to present in the form of drama an echo, as it were, of the main plot. Another example of a play-within-a-play occurs in Chekov's *The Sea Gull* which opens with a scene set in the park of an estate. Blocking a wide avenue leading away from the spectators into the depths of the park and hiding a lake from view, a roughly-built platform is constructed on which a play is performed during the first act of the main play. The playlet has been written by a young man, Konstantin, whose mother evidently disapproves of his actions. The strained relationship between the mother and her son is clearly illustrated by their reaction to the little play. The other characters comment on it and involve Konstantin in a discussion on the nature of theatre in general. Chekov has used the device of the play-within-the-play in this instance to expose personal relationships and to express certain ideas about the theatre. From the point of view of their dramatic construction the two playlets, that of *Hamlet* and that of *The Sea Gull*, have a major point in common. They are only recognised as examples of a play-within-a-play by the spectators within
the auditorium of the theatre; the characters on stage watching the playlet are, in both instances, oblivious of their own theatricality. The characters on stage are unaware that they are taking part in an action as unreal as the one they are watching (though the actors themselves, of course, are well aware of the fact). The concept of innerness, as Nelson writes, 'obtains only for the offstage spectator.'

A further point I wish to make about the play-within-the-play device is that it does not necessarily have to take the form of an actual playlet enacted on stage. A charade recognised as such by only some of the characters at the primary level and so integrated into the main stream of the action that it barely becomes visible may also be included within the definition given. However, to be considered as a play-within-the-play the subsidiary movement must have one character who consciously conceives an idea, obliges others to play, either knowingly or unknowingly, the roles he has chosen for them, and generally directs the affair. Sometimes an individual character acting a role may be his own director. It is the inclusion of the need for a director that distinguishes my definition of a play-within-the-play from that of Nelson.

Nelson's detailed study of Anouilh's use of the play-within-the-play device shows how the playwright has raised the device to the level of a structural metaphor in which reality

is found in the midst of illusion. The critic, however, deals with only six of Anouilh's plays, (Le Bal des voleurs, Léocadie, L'Invitation au château, Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, La Répétition and Colombe\(^1\)), whereas I shall examine the device in each of the plays in which it occurs and consider not only how it is applicable to the play studied but also how it, too, forms part of the general development of Anouilh's technique.

Closely related to the play-within-the-play but somewhat different from it are several other devices used by Anouilh such as the flash-back and flash-forward, dream sequences, nightmares, fantasies, tableaux and the like, all of which stand outside the main flow of the plot and sometimes interrupt its course. These happenings I have termed 'inner plays'; they do not have a character directing them as does the play-within-the-play. It is the lack of a director that clearly distinguishes an inner play from a play-within-the-play. A well known example of an inner play is the central flash-back of Sartre's Les Mains Sales in which the principal character, Hugo (a young, middle-class intellectual and member of the Communist Party), recalls the course of events leading to the moment when he shot his own chief, Hoederer, a Communist Party Leader. Here there is no deliberately staged play, as in Hamlet or The Sea Gull, nor an integrated action directed by one of the

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characters; the sequence of events with which the play begins is interrupted to show visually how the present state of affairs had been caused. The tale having been told, the opening narrative can then be worked out to its conclusion. The effect of telling the story in this way is to create tension; the audience knows from the beginning that Hoederer will be killed by Hugo, but it does not know precisely 'how' or 'when'. The flash-back device, as I have said, is one form (among others) of the inner play technique that Anouilh employs. Most critics in their consideration of Anouilh's plays have tended to include what I have termed inner plays in their discussions of his use of the play-within-the-play device. Nevertheless in dealing with Anouilh, since both devices are used by him and for different purposes, I have found it helpful to distinguish between the play-within-the-play, which has a director, and the inner play, which does not.

At some points the actors taking part in the plays speak directly to the audience, acknowledging the fact that they are performing the parts of certain characters. There is, for example, a clear distinction between the way in which the players admit to each other in *La Répétition* that they are playing parts allocated to them by Tigre, the director of the rehearsal, and the acknowledgement directly to the audience by the players in *La Grotte* that they are performing the parts given to them by the playwright, Anouilh. To the open confession of theatrical involvement such as occurs in the
latter case I have applied the term 'self-conscious theatricality', though I acknowledge that it is narrower in its implication here than when David Grossvogel uses it in his book The Self-Conscious Stage in Modern French Theatre.\(^1\) By the expression he seems to mean all the symbolistic fantasy that playwrights use which, through its very abnormality, seeks to express universal truths. In broad terms he appears to use the expression to convey all that Harvey refers to as theatricalism.

Self-consciously theatrical phrases and incidents (in my terms) are easily recognisable since they depend on the open acknowledgement by an individual of his existence only within the context of the play in which he is performing. Sometimes, however, Anouilh appears to be deliberately ambiguous and uses phrases or incidents that can be understood in more than one way. Comments that could be seen as self-conscious in some plays form in others part of the general ideas that the author is demonstrating within the play. Examples of this appear in the frequent references in Anouilh's plays to life as a game (jeu) or play (comédie), and to role playing. Some incidents may be seen either as examples of self-conscious theatricality, in my terms, or simply as logical extensions of what has gone before. This can be seen when Horace, identical twin brother to Frédéric in L'Invitation au château and played by the same actor, says

that he is unable to join in the general rejoicing at the
close of the play for reasons which are well known to everyone.
This could be construed to mean that he cannot come on to the
stage because he and his brother are being played by the same
actor who is already present (self-conscious) or to mean that
he cannot come because he may not leave his beloved (logical).

Whatever form the theatricalism takes in Anouilh's works,
whether it be role-playing, play-within-the-play, inner play,
or self-conscious theatricality, it forms an integral part of
the spirit of play with which Anouilh has imbued his theatre.
One of the purposes of this thesis is to show, by examining
each of Anouilh's plays in chronological order, how this spirit
of play has been with him throughout his career, how his skill
has developed over the years, and how these devices have formed
an essential part of his technique.
Part A.

The reaction to Anouilh's use of play by first-night reviewers.
PART A

The reaction to Anouilh's use of play by first-night reviewers

Chapter I

The plays from L'Hermine (1932) to Antigone (1944).

In considering the theme of play in the theatre of Jean Anouilh it is helpful to take into account the comments made by reviewers of the initial performances of his works, for as his technique developed and he used new devices the critics were aware of the changes that took place and responded to them. The degree of enthusiasm shown by the reviewers has varied considerably from play to play, and has often not been equally shared by critics over individual works. The reasons for the differences are often intriguing. The reactions of critics to individual works do not always reflect the merit or otherwise of the plays but they are still of interest.

Anouilh's initial three plays to be performed (L'Hermine, 1932; Mandarine, 1933; and Y avait un prisonnier, 1935) are cast in a realistic mould, but not entirely so, for each contains non-realistic elements. The first of the trio drew forth some reservations from reviewers, who were concerned about the violence in the play, but for the most part Anouilh was praised as a new dramatist of evident talent. The powerful impact of certain scenes and some of the dialogue was noted by critics, whose views generally were reflected in an article by the poetess Gérard d'Houville who wrote of L'Hermine in Le Figaro:

Malgré réticences et réserves on rendit justice à ce nouveau talent, à la qualité hardie et directe du dialogue,

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1. A list of the reviews consulted appears in the Bibliography, pp. 321-359.
Her doubts concerned the melodramatic passages in the play, its violence, Anouilh's cynicism and what she considered to be his bad taste. The theatricalist tendencies of the play were also picked out by Gaston Rageot who reviewed *L'Herminé* for the *Revue Bleue*. He first discussed the nature of theatre in general and its relationship to life, arguing that the link was only tenuous. Life in fact was a far cry from the theatre, and so to imitate it slavishly would not produce good theatre. From this Rageot concluded that:

> Il arrive donc que la capacité proprement dramatique se manifester tout à la fois par le don de création artistique et par le risque de l'erreur.  

Particularising his argument Rageot contended that this gift for artificial creation was clearly manifest in *L'Herminé*. Anouilh had allowed his natural talent to emerge and consequently had succeeded in constructing 'une pièce parfois puissante, souvent lyrique, constamment tragique, par instants très fausse et quelquefois magnifique.' In the context both of the sentences quoted and of the article as a whole the phrase 'très fausse' reads as a compliment along with the references to the power, lyricism, tragic intensity and magnificence of the play. Whereas d'Houville chastised Anouilh for the introduction of melodramatic scenes, Rageot (showing a more sensitive appreciation of Anouilh's introduction of non-realistic devices) drew attention to the

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3. Ibid.
artificiality of the play and defended it. What is important is that both critics seized upon the fact that the play was not strictly in the realistic tradition. Both critics were in agreement that the play augured well for the young playwright who had written it.

In the opinion of some critics the promise shown in L'Hermine was not maintained in Anouilh's next play, Mandarine, which was initially performed in February 1933 at the Théâtre Athénée. Stylistically it followed in broad terms the pattern of L'Hermine, that is to say mainly realistic but with non-realistic patches; however, critics considered it to be a bad play in which Anouilh merely set out to shock. The artificiality it contained was severely criticised and James de Coquet, reviewing Mandarine for Le Figaro, even went so far as to describe it as a work 'ou tout sonne irrémédiablement faux.'¹ He further criticised the play on the grounds that it contained not the slightest accent of revolt, not the tiniest moment of despair. The play ran for only thirteen performances² and Anouilh has not included it in any of his published works.

When Y avait un prisonnier was produced two years later in March 1935, some critics wrote encouragingly of the play's ease of dialogue, Anouilh's humour, and the moments when his feeling for theatre was evident. The play contained the mixture of realism and non-realism that had characterised his two previous plays but, whereas in the first two instances there is no sure way of deciding whether the inclusion of the artificial elements was

2. See Philip Thody, Anouilh, Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd, 1968, p.84.
deliberate, on this occasion Anouilh made his intention quite clear. He had refused to comment on his work prior to the initial performances of *L'Hermine* and *Mandarine*, preferring to allow the plays to speak for themselves; but, on the day before the production of *Y avait un prisonnier*, he published an article in *Le Journal* where he indicated something of the mood in which his play should be appreciated. His intention was to reach those people who frequented the theatre because they loved it, remembered playing as children, and went there to recapture something of that spirit.¹

In spite of Anouilh's explanation of his text and the critics' own praise of certain aspects of *Y avait un prisonnier*, most reviewers did not much like the play. A number of them developed the theme that, although life could be better, it was not all as bad as Anouilh depicted. Not only did the critics dislike Anouilh's view of existence as it appeared here, they also found distasteful the artificiality he had used in order to develop that spirit of play which was intended to appeal to the child-like element in his audiences. The theatre critic of *Le Temps* who signed only his initials, F.D., wrote of the play: 'On se demandait si c'est un vaudeville ou un drame.'² Pierre Lièvre described it as 'cette pièce qui porte un peu à faux',³ while Émile Mas saw it as 'une pièce amère, puérile, pénible par moments et d'une invraisemblance décevante.'⁴ For these critics the spirit of play with which

¹ Jean Anouilh, 'On présente ce soir aux Ambassadeurs *Y avait un prisonnier*,' *Le Journal*, 20-3-35.
² F.D., 'La Soirée Théâtrale: *Y avait un prisonnier*,' *Le Temps*, 23-3-35.
³ Pierre Lièvre, '*Y avait un prisonnier* de Jean Anouilh', *Le Jour*, 23-3-35.
⁴ Émile Mas, '*Y avait un prisonnier*', *Petit Bleu*, 23-3-35.
Anouilh had invested his work through his mixture of realism and artificiality had failed. To them Y avait un prisonnier had appeared childish, disappointing and perhaps confusing since they found themselves asking what kind of a play it was. They had not been conscious of a heightened awareness of the emotional issues involved that a theatricalist approach can bring.

Y avait un prisonnier also contains examples of Anouilh's humour; it is incorporated into the spirit of play that flows through his works. This quality was recognised by Pierre Brisson, one of the leading critics of his day, who in a long article in Le Figaro wrote:

La pièce entière, la tentative de suicide y compris, se maintient dans une note comique. De là, par endroits, sa saveur et, par contre-coup, sa faiblesse.¹

Anouilh was not yet able to win Brisson's full approval; nevertheless in the same article the critic did describe him as 'un homme de théâtre.' How good that theatre was to be had yet to be seen.

In addition to Anouilh's humour, his mixing of styles, and the fact that he shunned a fully realistic mode of drama (all noted in reviews of Y avait un prisonnier), one reviewer observed a trait that was to be designated later as one of the hall-marks of Anouilh's writing. The celebrated critic Gabriel Marcel described the play as 'cette pièce vibrante, grinçante, stridente.'² It is striking to see that he used the term 'grinçante' so early in Anouilh's career.

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2. Gabriel Marcel, 'Y avait un prisonnier,' Les Sept, 5-4-35.
Having written three plays each of which was broadly speaking in a realistic mould but which incorporated many non-realistic elements, Anouilh found himself in the position of being recognised as a young playwright of potential but who had not yet been accorded full acclaim. Indeed his use of artificiality had been attacked by numerous critics; their hardness towards him may well have stemmed from the same reasons as those given by Maurice Martin du Gard who explained his attitude thus:

Je suis un peu dur pour M. Anouilh. C'est que je sens en lui un tempérament et je me désolerais s'il le gâchait.  

If Anouilh was to achieve complete success in the eyes of his critics then he had to modify his approach to theatre and this is in fact what happened when he came under the influence of one of the leading playwrights of his day, Jean Giraudoux.

During the period when L'Hermine, Mandarine, and Y avait un prisonnier were first produced, that is to say between 1932 and 1935, Jean Giraudoux was staging successful plays. His Intermezzo was first performed in 1933, followed by La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu in 1935. Immediately previously in 1931 his play Judith had appeared, and later in 1937 (the year of Anouilh's Le Voyageur sans bagage) Electre was staged. The influence of Giraudoux on Anouilh was of paramount importance. Anouilh freely admitted in an interview with Pierre Lagarde that it was from Giraudoux he had learnt the possibility of writing 'un théâtre artificiel'. This knowledge had given him back his enthusiasm for writing. Giraudoux, he continued, had taught him,

1. Maurice Martin du Gard, 'Y avait un prisonnier de Jean Anouilh', Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 30-3-35.
qu'on pouvait avoir au théâtre une langue poétique et artificielle, qui demeure plus vraie que la conversation sténographiée. Je n'avais pas idée de ça. Ce fut ma révélation.¹

The fruit of this insight was Le Voyageur sans bagage which, according to its produced Georges Pitoëff, in an interview with André Warnod for Le Figaro, was animated by fantasy.²

It is this aspect of Le Voyageur sans bagage that distinguishes its style from that of Anouilh's three previous plays and is a point seized upon by many reviewers who picked up the lead given to them by Pitoëff. In particular their attention was caught by the fantasy of the ending whereby Gaston/Jacques renounces his past and elects to make a new life for himself, accepting a little English boy as a long-lost relative. Pierre Lièvre, for example, wrote that the conclusion to the play was quite captivating and gave the work an artificial optimism.³ The combination of fantasy and artificiality in Le Voyageur sans bagage appealed to most critics and induced the celebrated authoress Colette, in a perceptive and favourable review of the play, to call it 'un vaudeville orageux' in which tears and laughter occurred side by side.⁴ There were, however, a few exceptions among the critics. James de Coquet, who had previously condemned Mandarine as false beyond repair,⁵ showed his insensitivity to Anouilh's theatricalist approach by writing of Le Voyageur sans bagage that

¹ Jean Anouilh as reported by Pierre Lagarde in 'Jean Anouilh et l'artifice,' Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 27-3-37.
² Georges Pitoëff as reported by André Warnod in 'Le nouveau spectacle des Mathurins,' Le Figaro, 16-2-37.
⁴ Colette, 'Le Voyageur sans bagage', Le Jour, 18-2-37.
⁵ James de Coquet, see above, p. 24.
'les aventures sont d'une psychologie si sommaire qu'elles sont tout à fait incroyables.' In saying this, Coquet was giving vigorous expression to the minor doubts felt by some critics. Gabriel Marcel, for example, thought that Le Voyageur sans bagage unfortunately finished on a minor key, but, he wrote, audiences should look at the play as a whole; when that was done, then it emerged as, 'dans l'ensemble, un très bon spectacle.'

The play generally was regarded as a success. Gérard Bauer, for example, acclaimed it as 'une réussite superbe!', while a number of critics called Anouilh for the first time one of the leading playwrights of his day. André Frank expressed it thus:

Cette pièce est de Jean Anouilh. Souhaitons que cette oeuvre donne à l'auteur sa vraie place, au premier rang des dramaturges contemporains.

There seemed little doubt in the minds of most reviewers that with Le Voyageur sans bagage Anouilh had reached a landmark in his career as a dramatist. They had liked the mixture of lyricism, artificiality, and fantasy in the play, though (with the exception of the comments on the fantasy ending of the play) they had not really explained why they had liked Anouilh's theatricalist approach in this instance. It is noticeable, however, that they had also warmed to his theme, which they defined as posing a profound question concerning the permanency of society and people and asking whether humans were slaves to their past.

2. Gabriel Marcel, 'Le Voyageur sans bagage,' Les Sept, 5-3-37.
One year later Anouilh's next play, *La Sauvage* (1938), was also praised by most critics, but they did have some reservations. The play was written in 1934, two years prior to *Le Voyageur sans bagage*, and does not contain the fantasy of the latter work. *La Sauvage* follows *Y avait un prisonnier* in time of composition and contains the mixture of superficial realism and underlying artificiality that was visible in Anouilh's earliest plays. The superiority of *La Sauvage* to the semi-realistic works with which he began his career drew forth favourable comments from reviewers; his success with *Le Voyageur sans bagage* had led them to expect even better works from him, consequently their praise for the second play was less than for the first.

The fact that Anouilh shunned absolute realism and had not been a slave to logic was liked by the reviewers. Pierre Brisson, for example, wrote that:

> Anouilh méprise le réalisme, et je l'en félicite de grand cœur. Il craint les servitudes de la logique. Il cherche l'outrance, les grimaces, l'ironie du réel. C'est une belle entreprise qui peut satisfaire à la fois un besoin d'évasion et une soif de vérité.\(^1\)

Along similar lines J-L Le Marois proclaimed:

> M. Jean Anouilh est un dramaturge né. Il ne cherche pas de la première réplique à la dernière, à photographier la vie. Il sait bien qu'il n'y a point d'autre vérité au théâtre que la poésie.\(^2\)

The result was a play that was described by critics as often amusing, at times moving, and even shattering.

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Anouilh himself described his play as a psychological study concerned with happiness and suffering. Not all of the reviewers were convinced by Anouilh's assertion. Benjamin Crémieux, for example, wrote that it appeared as though the author could not make up his mind whether his characters were creatures of flesh and blood or whether they were puppets. Anouilh's presentation of his characters was the main butt of criticism though some reviewers did complain of vulgarities and some platitudes.

The non-realism of *La Sauvage* also included Anouilh's mixture of styles and tones. Although Pierre Audiat thought that the juxtaposition of different moods was frequently forced and puerile, most other reviewers thought highly of it. It was this very clash of tones that appealed to Colette who looked at the relationship between Thérèse, her father, and Gosta; she called it 'un grinçant concert,' thus picking up the adjective that Gabriel Marcel had applied earlier to *Y avait un prisonnier*. It also pleased Pierre Lièvre who described the effect as 'une sorte de violence scénique, de tumulte théâtral.' The force of this clash of contrasting moods and of Anouilh's non-realistic style in general appealed to critics who, in spite of their reservations about the presentation of characters in *La Sauvage*, placed him in the forefront of contemporary dramatists. Among reviewers to

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express such views Gabriel Marcel described Anouilh as 'de beaucoup le plus remarquable [dramaturge] de sa génération.'¹

While accepting that La Sauvage was a better play than most of Anouilh's previous works, the reviewers did not think it was as good as Le Voyageur sans bagage, whose fantasy element they had liked. Some reviewers recognised a poetic quality in La Sauvage that was new, but generally they were of the opinion that the play did not mark a significant advance in the development of Anouilh's theatricalist approach to drama. Clearly their attitude was related to the degree of their enthusiasm for his subject-matter, for in the case of Le Voyageur sans bagage both content and style were praised, whereas with La Sauvage the two aspects each incurred the displeasure of the critics.

After the success of Le Voyageur sans bagage and La Sauvage (though in the case of the latter the acceptance of the play was intermingled with some reservations concerning the presentation of the characters) Anouilh's next play, Le Bal des voleurs (1938), was immediately welcomed as a delightful, frothy piece of entertainment. Its total rejection of realism and its highly intense form of theatricalism were accepted as part of the sheer fun of the play. One reviewer, Lucien Descaves, called it 'une sorte de "commedia dell'arte" improvisée et faite pour amuser à la fois ceux qui la jouent et le public.'² Its humour, its burlesque,

¹. Gabriel Marcel, 'La Sauvage de Jean Anouilh', Temps Présent, 21-1-38.
its false beards, and its transparent disguises, reminded
reviewers of the zany clowning of the Marx brothers, and it was
described by various reviewers as comedy-ballet, vaudeville, and
farce. All in all it was deemed a notable success at a fairly
superficial level; Lucien Dubech, however, went so far as to
describe it as a masterpiece of its kind.

The play reveals Anouilh's acute sense of fun as poorly
disguised thieves steal from each other, acrobatic policemen arrest
the wrong persons to the accompaniment of ballet-like movements,
a Duchess and her dullard friend protect her innocent nieces from
the attention of two inefficient scoundrels, and other such pieces
of nonsense. All of this delighted the critics, who were surprised
by the lightness of touch and the whole tone of the play which was
so different from what they had come to expect from Anouilh. Gustave
Fréjaville, for example, wrote in his review that one had to
applaud a work written in a style of entertainment "que nous
n'attendions guère d'un auteur dont les pièces précédentes étaient
d'un tout autre ton." Although reviewers had already seen
examples of Anouilh's humour and his imaginative fantasy, they had
come to expect a more sombre note in his works. This new
development in Anouilh's style and technique, the evidence of his
greater use of play as a basis for his theatre, appealed to
reviewers. They recognised in the play a charming fantasy and what
Gabriel Marcel called Anouilh's 'invention primesautière.'

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2. Gustave Fréjaville, 'Les Répétitions générales', Journal des
Débats du Dimanche, 18-9-38.
3. Gabriel Marcel, 'Décidément M. Anouilh a bien du talent',
Temps Présent, 23-9-38.
Their praise was almost unanimous.

The pleasure of the critics on seeing the play led them to the position where they now praised what they had condemned in earlier works. The doubts previously expressed about Anouilh's presentation of characters as animated puppets disappeared; indeed G-J Gros spoke of their attractiveness. The reason for this is quite clear. The dazzling exterior of the play blinded most reviewers to all else so that few of them bothered to look below the surface for a deeper level of significance. Le Bal des voleurs was accepted merely as a charming but rather shallow entertainment; Robert Kemp, who was less enthusiastic, complained that the play was all very well, but: 'de M. Anouilh c'est autre chose encore qu'on attend.' By proclaiming Le Bal des voleurs to be delightful but superficial, sheer escapism from the anguish of life (as Marcel put it), most reviewers would appear, while sensitive to the new developments and general quality of the play, not to have fully appreciated its true worth. Only Edmond Sée and Benjamin Crémieux saw that beneath the play's lack of pretention Anouilh's claw and his bitterness were to be found, and, importantly, also his tenderness.

Interestingly the pattern of the reviews of Le Bal des voleurs represents in miniature the way in which criticism of Anouilh's

plays has developed. The acceptance or rejection of his techniques seems to depend largely on the degree of acceptance or rejection of the play as a whole. The reviews of *Le Bal des voleurs* are typical also in that they do not seem fully to have appreciated the possibilities of Anouilh's use of play. They were very much alive to individual examples of his skilled craftsmanship and recognised the development taking place.

Having found that fantasy was apparently a key ingredient in his recipe for success, Anouilh used it again in *Léocadia* which was first performed in November 1940. The play was regarded by most critics as an amusing fairy-tale, spiced with fantasy and containing much original and imaginative thought but still observing the rules of highly stylised drama. What is interesting, however, is the changed attitude of some reviewers to Anouilh's use of fantasy. Roland Purnal, for example, described *Léocadia* as lacking in substance, 'un vague bavardage de salon,' in which love was shown to be more ridiculous than fascinating.\(^1\) It was further criticised by the theatre-reviewer of *Paris-Soir*, signing himself simply R., as a prologue that went on and on, 'une pochade, fragile, habile, rien qu'une pochade!'\(^2\) According to André Warnod who had himself not seen the play, the reviews printed in Paris were not very good.\(^3\) The general implication seemed to be that Anouilh had overemphasised the theatricalism of his style and produced a play


\(^{2}\) R... , ' *Léocadia*,' *Paris-Soir*, 6-12-40.

\(^{3}\) André Warnod, ' *Léocadia, la nouvelle pièce de Jean Anouilh,*' *Le Figaro*, 8-2-41.
that had gone too far in the direction of fantasy. It was, as Jean-Pierre Feydeau wrote, like a soap bubble, colourful and sparkling, and blown hither and thither by gentle breezes.\(^1\) With the notable exception of the theatre-critic of L'Illustration who, giving only his initials R. de B., wrote that Léocadia was a sarcastic comment on the illusion of love,\(^2\) the reviewers saw no 'grinçant' element in the play, only a 'rose' quality. The play was accepted for its pleasing style but it failed to evoke the praise that had accompanied Le Voyageur sans bagage, Le Bal des voleurs and to a lesser degree La Sauvage. The reason for this is perhaps to be found in the time when it was performed, that is to say during the early years of the Second World War. Benjamin Crémieux in his review of the earlier play, Le Bal des voleurs, had asked whether Anouilh had been right in putting on a light-hearted play at such a terrible time in France's history.\(^3\)

Crémieux's conclusion was that Anouilh had been quite correct in having it produced, for when people are ill at ease they need something to divert them. Le Bal des voleurs had succeeded in doing just that. Conditions in France had worsened considerably when Léocadia was produced and reviewers were less kindly disposed to look at a light-hearted play in a time of national disaster.

A somewhat similar reaction occurred when in the following year Le Rendez-vous de Senlis was produced (January 1941). It contains some of the grace, fantasy, and fairy-tale quality of its

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2. R. de B., 'Léocadia de Jean Anouilh,' L'Illustration, 14-12-40.
predecessor, all of which were commented upon by reviewers. Indeed critics had little to say that was different concerning *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis* from what they had said about *Léocadie*. *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis* was perhaps better liked than its immediate predecessor, but it failed to produce anything like the enthusiasm of the critics for *Le Voyageur sans bagage*, or *Le Bal des voleurs*. With both *Léocadie* and *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis* the reviewers, while recognising Anouilh’s talent, gave the impression that they had seen sufficient of his flights of fantasy. As if to raise the stature of his plays, to give them greater significance, and to increase their substance, Anouilh turned to classical literature for the sources of his next two plays, *Eurydice* and *Antigone*. In doing this he had the examples to follow of two of his most famous contemporaries, Giraudoux and Cocteau, who both frequently drew on ancient mythology. Anouilh did not abandon the successful fantasy of *Le Bal des voleurs*, but adapted it to his treatment of the ancient love story of Orpheus and Eurydice. The resulting play was recognised by reviewers as another landmark in his career.

*Eurydice*, first presented in December 1941, is a sombre and complex play. In it Anouilh takes the ancient legend and sets it in the twentieth century; he casts Orphée as an itinerant musician and Eurydice as an actress in a troupe that is on the move to another engagement. The play does not have the lightness of touch of *Le Bal des voleurs* but it does contain something of its surrealist fantasy. It possesses, too, far more poetic prose than his previous works. As opposed to this, some of the settings for the play (the waiting-room of a railway station, a hotel-bedroom) and Eurydice’s death (killed in a road-accident) inject
touches of realism into the fantasy, artificiality, and poetry. There is no doubt that *Eurydice* was Anouilh's most ambitious effort so far and it was recognised as such by many critics; in general they acclaimed it a success. Alain Laubreaux, for example, wrote:

"C'est jusqu'ici la plus belle pièce de M. Anouilh, la plus forte, la plus complète, qui mêle avec une perfection indécomposable la poésie des âmes et la simplicité des mots."

This enthusiasm was shared by others including Roland Purnal who affirmed in his review of *Eurydice*:

"On peut dire sans crainte de se tromper qu'Eurydice est l'oeuvre la plus complexe qu'il nous ait donnée jusqu'à ce jour."

The acceptance by the critics of the mixture of fantasy and realism in *Eurydice* is in part due to Anouilh's skill (but this he had shown in other plays that they had liked less) and in part to the fact that the original story had a built-in element of fantasy through the return of Orphée to the underworld to bring back his deceased beloved. Marcel Lapierre thought, along with other critics, that the mixture of fantasy and realism in this play was appropriate. This was a story, he wrote, 'ou l'iréal se mêle sans façon au réalisme le plus quotidien pour bien montrer que les sentiments éternels sont partout chez eux.' In so far as Lapierre's comment is typical of many made by reviewers, it shows that the critics recognised in *Eurydice* the unity that existed between content and style.

A few reviewers, such as Charles Quinel, took exception to the

2. Roland Purnal, 'Eurydice,' *Comoedia*, 27-12-41 and 3-1-42.
vaudeville characters whom Anouilh had introduced into *Eurydice* and argued that the text was long and confused. Quinel conceded Anouilh's great talent but thought that on this occasion he had failed and had 'dépassé, cette fois, les limites de l'originalité pour aboutir à un spectacle décevant.'¹ Most critics, however, did not share Quinel's reservations; on the contrary they regarded *Eurydice* as a success. Alain Laubreaux, who went to see it for a second time, wrote that he still thought that the play was a masterpiece.² Few reviewers at the time were prepared to go all the way with Laubreaux in praising the play so highly, but for the most part they did agree that, by turning to classical literature as a source for his work and by presenting the legend in his own individualistic, theatricalist style, Anouilh had succeeded with *Eurydice* in establishing himself once more as a playwright of repute who had produced a near if not absolute masterpiece.

No doubt encouraged by the reviews that *Eurydice* received Anouilh was to turn again the following year to classical legend for the source of a play. In 1942 he wrote *Antigone* but did not stage it until two years later, in 1944, when it was directed by André Barsacq at the Théâtre de L'Atelier. Whereas in *Eurydice* Anouilh used a modern setting for his story, in *Antigone* the scene is set in ancient times, and in the second play he follows the details of the original much more closely than he did in the first. In *Antigone* there are a Prologue and Chorus but Anouilh introduced numerous anachronisms and staged the play in modern dress. Créon emerges as an authoritarian dictator, while Antigone is portrayed

². Alain Laubreaux, 'La querelle d'*Eurydice*', 'Je suis partout,' *Le Petit Parisien*, 10-1-42.
as a young girl in revolt against him. By presenting the two characters in this way Anouilh removed the religious theme from the original Sophoclean tragedy and substituted the secular dilemma of the individual in opposition to the state. Because of the play's subject matter it became a centre of controversy. On the one hand some reviewers saw in Antigone support for the Nazi army of occupation and argued that Anouilh was advocating acceptance of oppression since resistance was doomed to failure. On the other hand there were many critics who argued that the play preached the virtue of resistance no matter what the cost might be, even that of death. Critics saw an immediate contemporary relevance in the theme, the theatre-going public was gripped by it, and it ran for several hundred performances.¹

The debate waged fiercely as to whose side Anouilh was on, that of the oppressor or the oppressed. Further issues were raised concerning the amount of sympathy one could bestow upon a girl whose protest against authority was done for selfish motives, or whether one could utterly condemn a dictator, bully though he might be, who was motivated more by the needs of state than self-advancement and who put himself in some jeopardy to save the life of his stubborn niece (though he was quite willing to do away with the guards who might know too much). Debate of this nature on the ambiguities of the theme overshadowed discussion of the intensely interesting, theatricalist approach used by Anouilh in this play.

On the specific point of Anouilh's use of anachronisms both of language and dress, critics tended to write negatively or to explain

it away; the anachronisms, they wrote, did not grate, they helped to abolish distance, they followed the tradition established by Racine, they did no harm. The greatest condemnation came from the Communist critics who saw in Antigone the expression of a fascist point of view. Pol Gaillard was particularly incensed by the presentation of the guards and the nurse. Anouilh, he maintained, had lampooned and downgraded ordinary people.¹

The picture that emerges of the reviewers reaction to the theatricalism of Antigone lacks many precise details. Those that do exist are highly coloured by the political persuasion of the writer. Nevertheless it was held in sufficiently high esteem by enough critics for André Castelot to call it 'un chef d'oeuvre,'² and for Maurice Rostand to speak of it as 'une des oeuvres essentielles de ce temps,'³ thus suggesting that Anouilh had provided that something more that Kemp, in his review of Le Bal des voleurs, had demanded of him.

Having praised Anouilh early in his career for shunning a completely realistic approach to drama, and then having encouraged him for a while at his introduction of fantasy into his plays, the critics finally granted him on the production of his two classical plays the ability to write theatre of a deeper level of significance than they had at first believed within his powers.

¹ Pol Gaillard, 'Antigone de Jean Anouilh,' L'Humanité, 12-10-44.
² André Castelot, 'Antigone de Jean Anouilh,' La Gerbe, 24-2-44.
³ Maurice Rostand, 'Antigone à L'Atelier,' Paris-Midi, 20-2-44.
Their attention has for the most part concentrated on the content of his plays and their comments on his style have tended to be general in nature, admiring Anouilh's undoubted mastery of his craft. The reviewers have drawn attention to important developments in his style though they not always discussed them as thoroughly as they deserved.
During the period of three years that followed the end of the Second World War, that is to say from 1946 until 1948, three new plays by Anouilh were produced that were quite distinct from each other. They were Roméo et Jeannette, L'Invitation au château, and Ardèle. All three treat the theme of love which had occurred frequently in Anouilh's previous plays, as for example that of Frantz and Monime in L'Hermine, Florent and Thérèse in La Sauvage, the Prince, Léocadia and Amanda in Léocadia, Georges and Isabelle in Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, and Eurydice and Orphée in Eurydice. In the first of the new plays, Roméo et Jeannette, Anouilh took a known story (that of the ill-fated lovers Romeo and Juliet) and wrote a modern variation. The second of the plays, L'Invitation au château, is a light-hearted comedy of intrigue with identical twins, mistaken identities, and a happy ending whereby the right couples are united before the final curtain. Ardèle, set in the early part of the twentieth century, tells a modern story in a theatricalist manner and is grating in tone.

Roméo et Jeannette, following on as it does from Antigone and Eurydice, continues the pattern Anouilh had already started of using a story whose broad outline was already known. For the most part reviewers did not like the play, finding the characters sordid and the plot unconvincing. The distaste of the reviewers for the plot and themes of Roméo et Jeannette extended to the techniques and methods employed. André Lang described it as 'le comble de
l'artifice et de la confusion,¹ and Francis Ambrière lamented that the final impression left was of 'gratuité aussi râcheuse qu'inévitable.'² What numerous critics were saying was that in this play Anouilh had taken many of his old tricks and pushed them as far as they would go, and in this way had revealed their inherent weaknesses. The extent to which Anouilh had gone in using his various devices was apparent, in the view of Maurice Clavel, even in the title of the play. It was, he said, a parody of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, from which it was derived. Indeed, he argued, it was more than a parody; it was 'une dérision systématique, grinçante et grimaçante.'³ The term 'grinçante' which had already been applied to Y avait un prisonnier and La Sauvage had been used again.

Romeo et Jeannette, whose content was so disliked by reviewers, found its technique criticised on further grounds. Some reviewers argued that the play deteriorated after the first act which was, by common consent, the best. Robert Kemp, reviewing the play for Le Monde, wrote that the second half became obscure and went to extremes,⁴ and Guy Leclerc, while agreeing that the first act was excellent, argued that the rest of the play became steadily slower and was spoilt by interminable monologues. He singled out the fourth act as especially bad.⁵ This was the first time that Anouilh had been criticised repeatedly by reviewers of a single play for being unable to maintain the quality of the opening

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1. André Lang, 'Neveux et Anouilh,' Concorde, 19-12-46.
2. Francis Ambrière, 'Romeo et Jeannette à L'Atelier,' Opéra, 11-12-46.
3. Maurice Clavel, 'Jean Anouilh tue les personnages de sa jeunesse,' Spectateur, 19-12-46.
5. Guy Leclerc, 'Roméo et Jeannette,' L'Humanité, 10-12-46.
scenes. Both on the count of content and of method Roméo et Jeannette was criticised by reviewers. Robert Kanters, in an article in which he considered the contemporary scene in France, asked whether the gleam of several playwrights who had shone like stars previously in Paris was not beginning to dim. He thought that this was certainly so in the case of Anouilh and his play Roméo et Jeannette. In his view the hopes that had been pinned earlier on Anouilh had been misplaced.\footnote{Robert Kanters, 'L'Air de Paris - changer d'étoiles,' Verger, No.1., April 1947, pp. 74 - 79.}

The rejection of Roméo et Jeannette by critics contrasts with their reaction to Eurydice and Antigone, with both of which the later play is in line through its theatricalist adaptation of a known story. They argued that Roméo et Jeannette differed from its predecessors in its bitterness and its sordid characters. The hostility shown towards the play by critics who failed to find the techniques employed acceptable (though the cuckolded Lucien was considered noteworthy) may well have caused Anouilh to think back to his earlier successes, particularly the lighter ones, such as Le Bal des voleurs, whose tones he tried to recapture in L'Invitation au château.

This light-hearted comedy of intrigue, first performed in November 1947, was particularly well suited to brighten the life of a nation still recovering from the effects of a war and its ensuing shortages of food, clothing, luxuries and the like. Earlier Le Bal des voleurs had diverted Parisian theatre-goers during the gloom of 1938; with L'Invitation au château (1947) Anouilh provided a work that was entertaining at a time when it would be
appreciated. As a highly theatricalist work appearing in a year that has been described by R. N. Coe as marking the high-point of post-war naturalism, L'Invitation au château stands out. It contrasts with plays like Henry de Montherlant's more realistic, psychological drama, Le maître de Santiago, also first performed in 1947. Anouilh's non-realistic approach might possibly be linked very loosely with the highly stylised techniques used by Jean Genet in Les Bonnes (1947), though the tone of each play is quite different and Anouilh certainly does not set out to shock his audiences, as did Genet.

Whether Anouilh changed the mood of his play in order to recapture the appreciation of critics, whether he was sensitive to the needs of his time, or whether he simply felt like changing his style of writing, the resulting play, L'Invitation au château, differed completely in tone from Roméo et Jeannette. For the most part critics enjoyed the new play, which was described by Jean-Jacques Gautier as 'une pièce délicieuse et charmante puisqu'on s'y amuse tout le temps.' The whole, he continued, was irrésistible de malice, de fantaisie et de bonne humeur. A similar theme was developed by Gabriel Marcel who saw the play as 'une comédie - ballet' in the line of Le Bal des voleurs and Le Rendez-vous de Senlis. He wrote of 'le charme extrême de l'ouvrage', which was 'une transmutation de tous les thèmes d'Anouilh.'

Most reviewers had only praise for the technical virtuosity and themes of *L'Invitation au château*, although Robert Kemp did say that he thought the minor characters were more amusing than the main parts, and that the first act was superior to the second.\(^1\) Only Francis Ambrière, however, embarked on any sort of analysis of Anouilh's method. He spoke of the playwright's remarkable understanding 'des moyens scéniques,' but thought that his lack of inhibition may have led him into excesses, and this was a fault that could have been avoided with profit since the theatricalism could then have been a little more discreet.\(^2\) His concern was that Anouilh's laughter was grating and pessimistic, and this was not the best basis for humour. The curious thing about Ambrière's article is how, in its broad pattern of having reservations about both the content and the form of *L'Invitation au château*, it conforms to the general pattern of criticism of Anouilh's plays. Where reviewers have liked the play as a whole they have tended to like both its content and its theatricalism; on those occasions when they have disliked the play, in general both aspects have been criticised. Having encouraged Anouilh for his introduction of theatricalism in *Le Voyageur sans bagage* and *Le Bal des voleurs*, both of which had presented non-controversial, amusing themes, the reviewers questioned his use of it in *Roméo et Jeannette* which displeased them. Ambrière apart, few seemed to analyse seriously the reasons for their own attitudes.

The third of the three plays at present under discussion, *Ardèle*, was in a completely different register again. It was first

\(^1\) Robert Kemp, *'L'Invitation au château de Jean Anouilh'*,
Le Monde, 9-11-47.

\(^2\) Francis Ambrière, *'L'Invitation au château de Jean Anouilh'*,
Opéra, November 1947.
performed without interruption as a long one act play. It combined much of the theatricalism of L'Invitation au château with the grating tones of Roméo et Jeannette and was immediately acclaimed a success, Max Favalelli writing that Ardèle was 'peut-être l'oeuvre la plus dense, la plus serrée, la mieux charpentée de M. Anouilh.' Why Anouilh should have switched from the successful light-heartedness of L'Invitation au château to the sombre tones and single act structure of Ardèle is not immediately clear. Possibly he was doing little more than continue what Philip Thody calls his 'fairly disinterested search for new theatrical forms.' It may be, of course, that, for personal reasons besetting him at the time, his interests really lay in writing plays of an obviously grating tone and that L'Invitation au château had been slipped in merely to regain the favour of critics. Having won them back, he returned to the rasping mood he seemed to prefer.

The reviewers were impressed particularly with two aspects of Anouilh's theatricalist approach in Ardèle. The first of these was the way in which Anouilh mixed farce and tragedy; among many critics to comment on this were Gabriel Marcel and Robert Kemp, both of whom spoke of his astonishing skill. Their observations are expressed in broad terms rather than as examination of the

1. Max Favalelli, 'La Marguerite de Jean Anouilh,' Le Parisien Libéré, 4-11-48.
Henriette Brunot, however, in a prolonged analysis of *Ardèle* in the journal *Psyché III*, looked more closely at some of the implications behind Anouilh's use of theatricalism in this play. She saw it as a danger, for through it Anouilh might blind his audiences by sheer dramatic virtuosity to the sour, pessimistic vision he was presenting. Indeed Anouilh's 'pessimistic vision' was the only real butt of criticism in the reviews. Most critics relished the play as a whole, including its techniques.

The second aspect enjoyed by the reviewers was Anouilh's presentation of marionette-like characters. They had condemned this in *Roméo et Jeannette* where the characters had appeared to them to be sordid; in *Ardèle*, however, where the characters, though immoral, were not despicable, the critics saw people whom they could accept. The characters in *Ardèle* seemed to them to possess a humanity, particularly the General, that was lacking in Anouilh's previous plays. Here were flesh-and-blood characters who acted at times like puppets. Their burlesque nature, according to Thierry Maulnier, made them worthy of pity. This sympathy for the characters in *Ardèle* was also apparent in André Frank's review where he wrote that in this play were people who refused a life of compromise by playing a game - almost the game for the game's sake. By playing their game and by their humanity the characters endeared themselves to the reviewers.

The chorus of praise that greeted *Ardèle* was truly remarkable.

and vindicated Anouilh for having changed the mood and style in which the play was written from that of his previous plays; indeed in his last three plays Anouilh seemed to be trying himself out in different registers. In the first of the three plays the theatricalism was condemned as gratuitous; in the second it was designated a praiseworthy success though some reviewers qualified their comments on the grounds that it was considered extravagant; in the third it was highly praised, though one critic warned audiences to look below the dazzling exterior and consider more carefully what they saw. The dilemma of the critics was (and it was really one of their own making) that they recognised Anouilh's talent and his ability to move audiences, but some of them had doubts about the means he employed to produce these effects. Anouilh's reaction was to continue using and refining the same techniques which were proving box-office successes and to vary his subject-matter. In this way Anouilh was able to continue in the role in which he frequently claimed to have cast himself, namely that of entertainer.

Having won his way back into the favour of most critics through two widely different plays, L'Invitation au château and Ardèle, Anouilh then wrote four full-length plays each of which either introduced new techniques or emphasised ones that he had used only in minor capacities in earlier plays. La Répétition ou l'amour puni, first produced in October 1950, incorporated some of the text of Marivaux's La Double Inconstance. This feature, which had

1. For details see: Philip Thody, Anouilh, Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1968, pp. 84 - 93.
previously been used in a minor way in *Eurydice* when Vincent quoted from Musset's *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*, was a skilful variation of the play-within-the-play device; it especially held the attention of the critics in their reviews of *La Répétition*. All critics were in accord with their praise for the first two acts where the Marivaux text and that of Anouilh intertwined. As Jean-Jacques Gautier remarked, the text was so brilliantly handled that it was frequently impossible to tell where Anouilh began and where Marivaux finished.¹ Jean Mauduit, in an article on several contemporary French writers in the magazine *Études*, drew attention to the poetic effect of fusing the two texts and pointed out how the situation in *La Double Inconstance* was similar to that of Anouilh's play:

> Du coup, les deux intrigues se superposent, les deux textes prennent l'un par l'autre des résonances inattendues; la vérité du théâtre et l'illusion de la vie s'entremêlent étroitement.²

The last point was also made by Béatrix Dussane; in her view the movement from stage-truth into the illusion of life, and conversely from the illusion of life into stage-truth, was so skilfully done that it never seemed out of place or arbitrary.³ Both Mauduit and Dussane were of course picking up a lead that had been given to them by Anouilh in the text of the play itself. During the rehearsal Tigre had said to his actors that the relationship between life and the theatre was the least natural thing in the world but that the aim of art, in this case the theatre, was to try through every

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¹ Jean-Jacques Gautier, 'La Répétition ou l'amour puni,' *Le Figaro*, 30-10-50.
³ Beatrix Dussane, 'La Répétition ou l'amour puni', *Mercure de France*, CCCXI, No. 1049, 1 January 1951, pp. 125-127.
trick possible to create something truer than true.\footnote{P.B. p. 387.}

In contradistinction to their praise of the first part of \textit{La Répétition}, the critics' comments on the second half of the play were disparaging. Once the Marivaux text was no longer used the reviewers became disillusioned and thought that Anouilh was no longer creating something truer than true. Dussane herself disliked the second half of the play on the grounds that in it Anouilh returned to his black tone:

\begin{quote}
les personnages se déforment quelque peu, comme dans certains cauchemars, et perdent leur densité en même temps qu'ils accentuent leurs contours.\footnote{Béatrix Dussane, \textit{op. cit.}}
\end{quote}

The attack on the second half of the play was continued by Jean-Francis Reille who wrote that because the tone of the first half of the play was light, audiences could accept that the rake Tigre could fall in love with the naive Lucile. The later melodramatic events, however, were unconvincing because the tone of the play changed.\footnote{Jean-Francis Reille, 'La bonne Répétition et L'Amour mal puni de Jean Anouilh, \textit{Arts}, No. 283, November 1950.} The second half of the play developed in the words of Jean Fayard, into 'une farce grimaçante.'\footnote{Jean Fayard, 'Anouilh diffame l'amour', \textit{Opéra}, 6-12-50.} The dislike of the second half of the play was chiefly on the grounds of melodrama. No-one asked why the change was made though François de Roux did note that it coincided with love being punished.\footnote{François de Roux, 'Débutant en pièce rose La Répétition de Jean Anouilh finit en pièce noire, devenant l'amour puni,' \textit{Le Figaro Litteraire}, 4-11-50.} The fourth act in particular was condemned as prolix and dramatically unsound. Gabriel Marcel, for example, argued that the rupture between the Count and Lucile should have stemmed from the interaction of their

\begin{enumerate}
\item P.B. p. 387.
\item Béatrix Dussane, \textit{op. cit.}
\item Jean-Francis Reille, 'La bonne Répétition et L'Amour mal puni de Jean Anouilh, \textit{Arts}, No. 283, November 1950.
\item Jean Fayard, 'Anouilh diffame l'amour', \textit{Opéra}, 6-12-50.
\item François de Roux, 'Débutant en pièce rose La Répétition de Jean Anouilh finit en pièce noire, devenant l'amour puni,' \textit{Le Figaro Litteraire}, 4-11-50.
\end{enumerate}
characters, not from the interference of a third party. The differing reactions to the two halves of the play reveal the difficulty of the reviewers. On the one hand they could recognise the overall skill of the playwright, but on the other they could not always distinguish the true purpose behind the techniques employed by Anouilh. This skill shown by Anouilh led Gabriel Marcel to comment that the freedom with which he could use all the dramatic techniques at his disposal was not only his greatest asset and made him one of the leading contemporary playwrights, but it also might trap him into becoming a prisoner of his own methods.

Marcel’s review brings out clearly the difference in attitude of reviewers towards Anouilh’s theatricalist approach and his own inclination to use it. The variety of forms that he employed suggests that he was interested in theatre for its own sake; indeed, in my Introduction, I showed how, from early on in his career, he had insisted on the importance of play in his theatre. Whether this stance was a justifiable one for him to take, rather as the poets of the art for art’s sake school had held persistently to their beliefs, barely entered into the discussion of the reviewers.

The reviews of Anouilh’s next play, Colombe (produced in February 1951, four months after La Répétition), showed that the attitude of the critics remained unchanged. They were particularly upset by the content of the play. The story tells how Colombe is left by her husband Julien in the care of his actress-mother and

1. Gabriel Marcel, 'La Répétition ou l'amour puni de Jean Anouilh', Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 7-11-50
2. Ibid.
her company of actors. At first Colombe seems sweet and kindly in comparison with her boorish husband. By the end of the play she appears to be as shallow and as devious as the people with whom she has been living. Anouilh deliberately leaves it ambiguous whether the actors of the company have corrupted her or whether they have merely brought out her true personality that Julien had previously repressed. The play is a satirical comment, expressed with some violence, on actors and their lives within the ambiance of the theatre; it asks questions about the authenticity of their conduct and the effect for the worse that they might have on other people. Reviewers such as Gabriel Marcel found the satire atrocious and its cruelty and violence unacceptable; and Guy Verdot wrote that in Colombe there was no longer a fusion of 'black' and 'pink' but a violent juxtaposition of 'black' and 'vermilion'. Questions as to the relationship between what Anouilh was saying (the effect on each other of bringing people together from widely different backgrounds, some of whom were concerned in theatre) and the suitability of his theatricalist approach (perhaps intended to underline the pretence in the lives of the characters involved), were not asked. Instead Anouilh was condemned for having satirised those people on whom he depended for his livelihood.

The hostility of the reviewers to the content of Colombe extended to Anouilh's means and methods. Jean-Francis Reille, for example, wrote that, although the play contained one or two

powerful scenes and some fantasy, it nevertheless revealed Anouilh as in danger of becoming a prisoner of his own work. ¹
Along somewhat similar lines Thierry Maulnier wrote that Anouilh might easily fall into the trap of parodying himself.² Reille and Maulnier are criticising Anouilh for doing precisely what he set out to achieve, the exploitation of theatricalism in a wide variety of ways. If Anouilh was to maintain the spirit of play in his works and not become over-repetitive, then he must be at liberty to try out all the means at his disposal within a theatricalist approach. Reviewers did not seem willing to grant him this freedom.

One of the most obvious ways in which Anouilh toyed with his material in Colombe was the flash-back ending of the play. Only Jean-Jacques Gautier among the reviewers attempted to understand why Anouilh had brought his play to a close in this way. His suggestion was that through it audiences would see that it was Colombe who had first spoken of love.³ The implications of the ending of Colombe are, of course, much greater than Gautier suggests, but he at least did try to see why the flash-back had occurred. Most reviewers, however, found it either superfluous or, as Robert Kemp wrote, a feeble attempt to finish on a happy note.⁴ Why Anouilh should have wished to do this was not considered by Kemp. The failure by the reviewers to see any purpose in the flash-back led them to the conclusion, expressed by Guy Verdot among others, that it savoured of artifice.⁵

2. Thierry Maulnier, 'La Colombe de Jean Anouilh,' Combat, 6-2-51.
5. Guy Verdot, 'Colombe ne fait pas boum,' Franc-Tireur, 12-2-51.
After two consecutive failures in the eyes of the critics, Anouilh returned for his next work, *La Valse des toréadors*, to the characters, the theatricalism, and the grating tone of a previously successful play, *Ardèle*. If he had hoped that in this way he would win back the reviewers, then his hopes were not fulfilled. The critics disliked his misogyny and the bitterness of his attack on marriage, which was presented as a domestic hell from which there was no escape. At the centre of this family-battle was the General; critics recognised that in him there was a probing of the soul that was new, but they objected to the way in which Anouilh had presented him as a marionette-like character. Jean-Jacques Gautier wrote that, in fact, it was difficult to give an opinion on *La Valse des toréadors* because the main part was so difficult to play; the actor had to avoid giving the impression that he was only 'une marionnette chargée d'extérioriser les sentiments d'Anouilh.'¹ Other reviewers saw all the characters as marionettes who were simply caricatures. Among these, Yves Gandon thought Anouilh had used caricature for its own sake rather than to achieve anything.² What neither Gautier nor Gandon did, nor any of the other critics, was to ask why Anouilh had chosen to present the General and the other characters in this way. It was left to the author himself to write in defence of his own play and to say that he had deliberately chosen to deform the characters; it was, as he pointed out, a technique used by some modern painters. In this way the emotions that he wished to emphasise could be

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¹ Jean-Jacques Gautier, 'La Valse des toréadors,' *Le Figaro*, 11-1-52.
² Yves Gandon, 'Opinion sur La Valse des toréadors,' *France-Illustration*, No.328, 26-1-52. p.93.
brought out more clearly, but at the same time made inoffensive. The reviewers had been completely insensitive to Anouilh's intentions and approach.

After three plays that had been severely criticised by the reviewers, Anouilh did not have another play produced for nearly two years. The work that he then presented was L'Alouette whose subject matter, the story of Joan of Arc, was suggested to him by a Jesuit priest. A work based on a known national figure possibly appealed to him as a safe subject, the more so perhaps as he had not previously attempted an historical subject. Certainly, Joan as a character attracted him, as he admitted in his programme note which is reproduced in full by Pol Vandromme, for in her obstinate refusal to compromise her beliefs she resembled Antigone about whom he had already written. As soon as L'Alouette was produced in October 1953, it was acclaimed as a masterpiece by reviewers who saw in it none of the bitterness that they had condemned in Anouilh's recent plays.

L'Alouette is a skilful play in which witnesses at Joan's trial re-enact incidents from her past life. Béatrix Dussane found Anouilh 'entièrement renouvelé' with this play, and François Le Grix wrote that Anouilh did not tell a story so much as illuminate it by showing a few well-chosen episodes that were significant in their details. The technique of beginning the story at the end, he continued, was reminiscent of the devices

1. See above p. 9.
used in film-making, and was highly successful. A similar point was made by Jean Mauduit who went on to say also that there was no doubt at all that, strictly from a technical point of view, *L’Alouette* constituted 'dans son genre une entière réussite, et très originale.'¹ Anouilh's overall theatricalism, that had caused a number of doubts in some reviewers' minds with previous plays, now found favour with most critics. They found it entertaining and amusing though they did not try to see whether it was appropriate to the subject of *L’Alouette* which, as mentioned above, they liked since it was not tinged with bitter satire.

For the most part critics praised both the content and the structure of *L’Alouette* although a few voices accused Anouilh of aiming for cheap effects that would go down well with audiences: a priest obsessed by the flesh, Joan's trivial language, and contemporary allusions. There was some criticism that *L’Alouette* (like *Roméo et Jeannette*, *L'Invitation au château* and *La Répétition*) failed to maintain the brilliance of the opening scenes, though only Max Favalelli made any serious attempt to find a reason for the change that took place. In his opinion the tone was different in the second part of the play because, whereas in the first half Joan was shown in conflict with her century, in the second she was seen in opposition to heaven.² The only other serious criticism came from Jacques Audiberti, himself a renowned playwright, who found the role of Joan too static to allow Suzanne Flon, who played the part, sufficient scope to develop her skill.³

Audiberti's criticism is in marked contrast to the usual comments made by reviewers who generally seemed to consider that the leading parts written by Anouilh offered ample opportunities to actors. The number of adverse criticisms, however, were few compared with the total of reviews written in praise of Anouilh's theatricalist approach.

Of the many devices used in L'Alouette the one which caught the attention of all critics and received most individual commentary was the final trick whereby Anouilh ended the play with the coronation-scene. Although one critic, V-H Debidour, attributed the happy ending to a mere desire on the part of Anouilh to please his public, most reviewers thought well of it. Robert Kemp wrote simply that Anouilh had found nothing better; Georges Lerminier praised it on the grounds that it brought the play to a close on an optimistic note in contrast to the playwright's more usual pessimistic tone; and Georges Neveux, echoing Lerminier's point, wrote that by his final pirouette Anouilh had avoided a dark ending. On this occasion most of the reviewers, in praising the time-switch introduced by Anouilh at the end of L'Alouette, had given a reason for their favourable comments. In this case they could see a purpose behind the use of the device which seemed to them to be acceptable on the grounds of the effect it produced. When the critics had reviewed the final

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flash-back of Colombe, they had been unable (with the notable exception of Jean-Jacques Gautier) to discover any purpose to the device which, therefore, they dismissed as superfluous and savouring of artifice. It is noticeable that both in the case of L'Alouette and of Colombe the reaction of reviewers to Anouilh's use of a flash-back with which to end his play corresponded to their overall verdict on the work. With Colombe the reviewers were not enamoured of the play nor did they find the ending satisfactory, whereas with L'Alouette precisely the reverse was true. What is also certain, is that Anouilh's success with his first historical play firmly re-established him in the eyes of his reviewers in a leading position among contemporary French dramatists.

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1. See above p. 55.
Part A.

Chapter 3.

The plays from Ornifle to Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit.

The reviews of the three plays that followed Anouilh's successful L'Alouette reverted to disparaging criticisms similar to those levelled at Colombe and La Valse des toréadors. L'Alouette had been set in the time of Joan of Arc and, contrary to the opinion of a few critics, treated Joan sympathetically; the next three plays were each set in the twentieth century, which Anouilh seemed to prefer. One of them, Pauvre Bitos (1956), was also derived, in part at least, from historical fact. For the other two works, Ornifle (1955) and L'Hurluberlu (1959), Anouilh turned to Molière. Each of the plays is critical in varying degrees of contemporary society and its values; this in itself would not have distressed critics who were perturbed, however, by the nature of their satire. The treatment received by the plays from the reviewers will be dealt with in the order in which the plays were first performed.

Ornifle shows the influence of Molière's Dom Juan, Le Malade imaginaire, and Le Misanthrope. Most reviewers thought that Anouilh had done less than justice to his seventeenth-century predecessor. Jacques Lemarchand, for example, wrote that, in the same way that Anouilh had reduced Joan of Arc to a simple country lass (and not all critics agreed that this was a bad transposition), he had turned Don Juan into a man of our times who was hard on his womenfolk.\(^1\) François Le Grix also was critical, accusing Anouilh

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of robbing Don Juan of all his grandeur and substituting mere vulgarity.\textsuperscript{1} What incensed critics was that Ornifle was not presented as in conflict with God, plunging into further despair after each affair, and finally condemned to eternal damnation, but that he emerged as a bored lecher who died of a heart-attack because his doctors either would not or could not examine him properly. Few critics tried to explain Anouilh's presentation of a man light-heartedly and willingly dancing towards death and decomposition, though P. Marcabru did suggest that the theme of the play was Jansenist in outlook and illustrated that God bestowed grace upon some, who then were able to accept their inevitable death, but denied it to others.\textsuperscript{2} Anouilh has neither confirmed nor denied this interpretation of his play, but the lack of any apparent religious conviction on his part in any of his other works tends to suggest that, even though Marcabru's conjecture may be true, the Jansenist implications are accidental rather than intentional. Disappointment with the content of Ornifle was also expressed by Robert Abirached, who argued that Anouilh failed to make full use of the opportunities presented by the theme, which, for once, did not present intransigent purity opposed to the degradation of living, but a vile creature for whom sympathy could be felt and whose salvation was in doubt. Anouilh, he continued, had succumbed to his 'goût de la facilité' and turned it all into a vaudeville act.\textsuperscript{3}

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\begin{enumerate}
\item François Le Grix, 'Ornifle', Écrits de Paris, December 1955, pp. 94-96.
\item P. Marcabru, 'Anouilh le Janséniste,' Arts, 15-11-55.
\item Robert Abirached, 'Ornifle de Jean Anouilh,' Études, March 1956, pp. 434-438.
\end{enumerate}
\end{flushright}
The critics' dislike of the content of Ornifle extended to its style and technique; in this we are reminded of a similar pattern in their reviews of Colombe and La Valse des toréadors. Ornifle was roundly condemned as disappointing, verbose, and poorly constructed. Béatrix Dussane, for example, wrote that: 'la répétition générale de la dernière pièce d'Anouilh fut décevante, texte en bien des endroits surabondant.' Jean-Jacques Gautier was disconcerted by Anouilh's lack of consistency and wrote that it was as though the author had not bothered to correct his first version, leaving in all the bad bits; the play, he maintained, was full of tremendously irritating facilities and feeble jokes. The work as a whole was variously described by reviewers as vulgar, facile, and platitudinous; Gabriel Marcel called it quite simply a catastrophe. It is noticeable that, as B. de Garambé wrote, the academic Kemp, the bourgeois Gautier, the progressive Lebesque, and the aesthetic Lemarchand, all leading critics, rose against Anouilh condemning both his skill as a dramatist and his attempts at metaphysics. The high correlation established in the previous chapter between the reaction of the critics to the content of Anouilh's plays and their comments on his style and technique was again apparent in their reviews of Ornifle.

The attitude of the critics to Anouilh's next play, Pauvre Bitos, first produced in October 1956, is perhaps best summed up

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in the title of an article in the magazine *Arts*, 'Anouilh provoque Paris.'¹ In it Marcel Aymé discussed the play with several other critics and writers; the diversity of their views reflects the general pattern of the reaction of the critics to the play. Many reviewers were incensed by Anouilh's alleged attack on the French Resistance movement and the French Revolution, both of which were dear to the hearts of many Frenchmen. The critics thought that, just as Anouilh had failed to show due respect to Molière in *Ornifle*, he had not paid sufficient regard to history in *Pauvre Bitos*. They were also disturbed because they saw the theme of the play as one of hatred in contrast to Anouilh's previous successes that had been about love. A number of the reviewers were distressed by the bitterness of the satire. Those critics who admired the content of the play denied that Anouilh was attacking the events of twelve years previously; he was, they argued, ridiculing the spirit of revenge. Their arguments were often marred by an emotionalism as strong as that of those who were opposed to the play. Between the two extremes Louis Barjon, in a prolonged analysis of *Pauvre Bitos* that appeared in *Études* several months after the initial production of the play, came to the conclusion that it was neither worse nor better than most of the other works Anouilh was churning out year by year.²

Anouilh's theatricalist approach in *Pauvre Bitos* was found, for the most part, to be unacceptable. The picture that emerges from the comments of the critics, however, is perhaps distorted, for

¹ Marcel Aymé, 'Anouilh provoque Paris,' *Arts*, No. 589, 17-10-56.
those reviewers who approved the content of the play tended not to comment on the means of expression. A substantial number of writers voiced opposition to the devices employed.

One special feature of the structure of Pauvre Bitos is the flash-back sequence of the second act when Bitos, having fainted, dreams that he is Robespierre at the time of the French Revolution. The device was discussed by a number of reviewers who condemned it on several grounds. Louis Barjon thought the play as a whole was only loosely held together and that the flash-back was an example of Anouilh giving way once again to sheer caprice.\(^1\) Robert Kemp agreed, writing that Pauvre Bitos had provided him with one of his saddest evenings in the theatre and that the flash-back was almost unbearable.\(^2\) Gabriel Marcel complained that it contributed nothing to the action of the play\(^3\) and Guy Verdot lamented the historical inaccuracies, wondering which history book Anouilh could have read.\(^4\) The general verdict of the reviewers was reflected in the comment of Jean-Jacques Gautier who was normally to be relied upon to support Anouilh. On this occasion, however, he wrote that during the second act of Pauvre Bitos he had rarely been present at anything more depressing or deadly boring.\(^5\) Even though the theatricalism of the flash-back was thought by so many critics to have been a failure, nevertheless it was recognised by

\(^1\) Ibid.
\(^2\) Robert Kemp, 'Pauvre Bitos de Jean Anouilh,' Le Monde, 12-10-56.
\(^3\) Gabriel Marcel, 'Pauvre Bitos ou le dîner de têtes de Jean Anouilh,' Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 18-10-56.
\(^4\) Guy Verdot, 'Pauvre Bitos ou le dîner de têtes,' Franc-Tireur, 12-10-56.
\(^5\) J-J. Gautier, 'Pauvre Bitos de Jean Anouilh,' Le Figaro, 12-10-56.
some as serving a valuable purpose. Daniel Mauroc, for example, noted that the flash-back drew attention to the interesting parallel between the period of the Liberation and that of the French Revolution, but was sad to see that Anouilh had resorted to trickery to make the point.\(^1\) Béatrix Dussane was more precise, saying that the flash-back showed that in the turmoil of revolution the same human and social types come to the fore.\(^2\) Both the flash-back and the theme of *Pauvre Bitos* did have their supporters among the reviewers, as Marcel Aymé's discussion showed, but the provocation of the play was of such an intense level that the majority of the critics found themselves angered by it.

The antipathy of many reviewers also found expression in their comments on Anouilh's practice of presenting his characters as puppets. By portraying humanity in this way he particularly angered his left-wing critics. Guy Leclerc, for example, complained that Anouilh was 'un auteur qui peint la vie comme une entreprise absurde, et les humains comme de méprissables marionnettes.'\(^3\) Anouilh's seeming lack of respect for humanity as a whole and his depiction of men as controlled puppets was also noted, however, by the more conservative Béatrix Dussane. She observed that *Pauvre Bitos* was a 'Dîner de têtes [...] où toutes les têtes, finalement, nous font également souhaiter de les voir disparaître comme guignols de tir forain.'\(^4\) She concluded her

\(^1\) Daniel Mauroc, 'Jean Anouilh, a-t-il triché?', *Dépêche d'aujourd'hui*, No.1, January 1957.
\(^3\) Guy Leclerc, 'Un petit-bourgeois aigri: Jean Anouilh,' *L'Humanité*, 15-10-56.
article by saying that she was sad to see that Anouilh's aim had apparently been to show man's baseness, his spite, his cowardice, and his faults. The objections raised by both Leclerc and Dussane were not on the grounds of the lack of skill of the playwright, but because the technique provided, in their eyes, a derogatory comment on mankind; nor is their complaint that the device is inappropriate but simply that what Anouilh is saying is unjust. The alleged slur on ordinary folk made by Anouilh through the technique he used was another reason why his play provoked such fury when it was produced.

The major part of the reviews of Pauvre Bitos was, in fact, spent on discussing the content of the play. Such a political furore was created with critics not liking the theme that they did not bother, on the whole, to examine how it was presented. Those who did enquire, for the most part, did not like the techniques employed. Gabriel Marcel, however, did examine the devices used; he foresaw that the play would provoke hostile criticism and stated that this would be based on political prejudices which were the wrong reasons. In his eyes the major fault of Pauvre Bitos was of a technical order: 'le second et le troisième acte sont, scéniquement parlant, en retrait par rapport au premier.' His conclusion was, that the play as a whole ended 'sur une impression de confusion grimaçante.' On the grounds neither of content nor of method did Anouilh receive much support from many reviewers. In this respect the comments on Pauvre Bitos follow those of

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Ornifle in that the techniques and theatricalism of his play were criticised when the subject matter was disliked.

Anouilh's sensitivity to the hostile comments of his critics is suggested by the fact that after the production of Pauvre Bitos and the accompanying angry reviews there was a long gap before his next play was produced. In spite of the reception given to Pauvre Bitos by the public (the play ran initially for 308 performances), a period of two and a half years elapsed before L'Hurluberlu ou le réactionnaire amoureux was seen at the Comédie des Champs Élysées in February 1959.

Once again the majority of the reviews were devoted to commentary on the content of the play with some critics thinking that in L'Hurluberlu Anouilh had found a new level of humanity and rid himself at last of a few of his old complexes. The influence of Molière was noted, but from the point of view of Anouilh's theatricalism three main techniques were seen to be worthy of comment: his continued use of puppet-like characters, his humour that touched upon vaudeville, and his introduction of the play-within-the-play device in a clearly recognisable form.

The discussion of Anouilh's portrayal of characters as puppets whose strings he pulled centred mainly on consideration of the General himself, though not entirely so. Indeed Jean Gandrey-Rety wrote that the play was simply a jumble of puppets with no identifiable flesh-and-blood characters. On this topic the

reviewers found little to say that was new. Jacques Pascal argued that the General was more human than many of Anouilh's characters; there was still, however, the grating quality that derived from the portrayal of men as mere puppets. In saying this he was merely repeating what Leclerc and Dussane had said about Pauvre Bitos.

The humour of L'Hurluberlu was criticised on the grounds that it turned the play into just another vaudeville. Pierre Marcabru, for example, said that he was saddened to see Anouilh deceive his friends by writing a play that was a caricature of his own Antigone from which the searing moralist had disappeared. The laughter of the play was further criticised by Roland Laudenbach who thought that Anouilh used it to soften the impact of his castigation of modern tastes. Laudenbach's comments recall those of Brunot on Ardèle. All three critics are warning audiences to be on their guard lest the humour and skill of the playwright blind them to what the play really is saying. Laudenbach's few lines and Marcabru's expressed disappointment are less analytical than Brunot's article and do not form a deep examination of the play. Their comments reflect a situation where critics were at a loss to find anything original to say.

Reviewers also found themselves repeating what they had said earlier when they considered the play as a whole. From this point of view Max Favalelli's comments are typical in that he

argues that the sparkle of the first two acts is not maintained. Ever since *Roméo et Jeannette* the criticism has frequently been levelled at Anouilh's plays that they started well and then fell away.

Less was written about the new and interesting use Anouilh made of the play-within-the-play in *L'Hurluberlu* than was deserved. However, Max Favalelli did point out that Anouilh had used the device as a disguise to criticise the foolishness of contemporary society, and Georges Lerminier noted how the playwright had poked fun at the contemporary French theatre through the technique. These comments deal, of course, with the content of the plays-within-the-play used by Anouilh rather than the device as an effective technique of theatricalism. The reviewers were more concerned, as was frequently the case, with what Anouilh had to say than with his technique, in spite of their stated regard for his skill and their doubts about his outlook on life.

The general verdict of the reviewers on *L'Hurluberlu* is contained in the words of Robert Kemp who wrote in *Le Monde*:

> Sans doute ce n'est pas une des meilleures pièces de l'auteur. Mais elle n'est pas indigne de lui. On la suit avec attention.

That is to say it was accepted as a reasonably good play though not one of his best.

After a period of comparative disillusionment with Anouilh

2. Ibid.
the reviewers were won back again to him by another historical and highly theatricalist play, somewhat in the same way that L'Alouette had restored their faith in him earlier. Only nine months after the appearance of L'Hurluberlu, his successful Becket ou l'honneur de Dieu was produced in October 1959 at the Théâtre Montparnasse-Gaston Baty. It was immediately and widely acclaimed as a masterpiece. Béatrix Dussane, for example, wrote: 'fêtons sans restrictions le Thomas Becket [sic] de Jean Anouilh,'¹ and Paul Gordeaux, after calling it a 'chef-d'oeuvre,' went on to say that Anouilh was 'un auteur qui possède la totale maîtrise de son art.'² It was generally agreed to be a theatrically opulent play and reviewers noted favourably the mixture of styles and tones, the poetry, the puppet-like quality of some of the characters (which this time they approved), the sparkling dialogue, and Anouilh's ability to extricate himself from difficulties by playing with his material. It is striking how once again most reviewers praised the theatricalism of a play whose content they liked, for this was a play that dealt with the fairly non-controversial topic of the breakdown of friendship between two men set against a historical background abroad.

Amid the general euphoria there were still a few dissenting voices. They agreed that Becket was a more substantial play than many of his previous works because emotion played a greater part in it than facility, but they also found that even in this play there were vulgar platitudes, music-hall jokes, and the like, all of

². Paul Gordeaux, 'Becket ou l'honneur de Dieu de Jean Anouilh,' Paris-Soir, 3-10-59.
which reduced the quality of the play in their eyes. Guy Leclerc, politically opposed to Anouilh and consequently rarely given to praising his plays, complained of 'longueurs, facilités' and 'un côté boulevard' in Becket. A few reviewers were unhappy about the historical inaccuracies in the play but Anouilh forestalled them to a certain degree by writing in the programme-note to the initial production that he was aware of the errors without being perturbed by them. He was more concerned with the effectiveness in theatrical terms of what he had written and with the intensity of feeling undergone by his characters than with historical exactitude. The Swiss critic, Pierre Leuzinger, picked up this point, noting that although Becket lacked historical realism it did possess human realism. Leuzinger had in mind the clash of emotions in the play, and it was the validity of this conflict of friendship between Becket and the King that appealed to reviewers. The situation in which those reviewers who had reservations about the play found themselves was that, broadly speaking, the play as a whole pleased them but that certain aspects of the theatricalism seemed inappropriate. Their dilemma is perhaps typified by Bertrand Poirot-Delpech. He urged his readers to go to see the play, not just because it was by Anouilh (which remark indicates the high standing of Anouilh): 'mais parce qu'elle est bonne et, à certains moments, d'une facture toute nouvelle.' He agreed that the play assuredly had faults that cried out loud and that it could be cut without damage. His suggestion that this could be

done by leaving out the flash-back which showed the monks flogging the king at the beginning and the end of the play seems quite extraordinary and shows a total insensitivity to Anouilh's theatricalist approach. The success of Becket no doubt derives in part from the fact that, like L'Alouette, it treated a safe historical subject. When Anouilh had dealt with more recent history in Pauvre Bitos, the French Resistance Movement and the period of the Liberation, he was probing a more sensitive area, for many people in his audiences had been involved in these events. The fact that he appeared in their eyes to depict these historic occasions with cynical disapproval provoked their anger. What is more his presentation of the French Revolution, so esteemed by Frenchmen, in an unfavourable light also roused their ire. His theme had been the futility of revenge; his illustrations had touched upon sore spots. Consequently most reviewers misunderstood his play and angered by its apparent content failed to appreciate its technical skill. Becket, taken from foreign history and set further back in time, avoided areas that were so sensitive to French people. Its reviews were not bedevilled by the personal prejudices of the critics.

Anouilh's two plays derived in part from Molière suffered in a somewhat similar manner. L'Hurluberlu was better liked than Ornifle since it showed clearer glimpses of Anouilh's compassion; the General, it was recognised, had a soul. L'Hurluberlu also contained Anouilh's cynical comments on contemporary society and its values. This cynicism, felt by the critics to be clearly evident in all three plays, Ornifle, Pauvre Bitos and L'Hurluberlu
but absent from Becket, turned reviewers against these works. Distressed by the content, few critics analysed seriously Anouilh's style and technique. Becket, whose content was more favourably received, found its theatricalism welcomed; but even in this case no serious attempt was made to consider the style. Whether the play was liked or disliked still continued to determine whether the technique was found suitable.

It seems strange that, after having won his way back into favour with the theatrical opulence of Becket, Anouilh should leave a gap of two years before he produced his next play, La Grotte, in October 1961. However, almost as if to compensate, La Grotte was followed three months later in January 1962 by La Foire d'empoigne. Both plays marked ventures into new fields and exemplify Anouilh's constant endeavour to exploit new techniques and forms of drama.

La Grotte saw the first self-dramatisation on Anouilh's part and took an initial step towards theatrical autobiography. The reviewers were unimpressed. Poirot-Delpech, for example, wrote:

S'il joue à se mettre personnellement en scène sous les traits d'un auteur dépassé par la noirceur inexorable de ses personnages, c'est, bien sûr, comme dans toutes ses pièces, par goût baroque de la démystification théâtrale, par plaisir de la pirouette, et pour ricaner à l'aise des travers du métier. Mais jamais l'artifice n'a été inspiré aussi ouvertement qu'ici par un reflexe de pudeur.¹

The critic confessed himself dazzled, however, by Anouilh's skill and 'par tant de sincérité profonde dans la désolation et tant

¹. Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, 'La Grotte de Jean Anouilh,' Le Monde, 6-10-61.
d'ardour à désespérer. En donnant à croire qu'il joue plus que jamais, Jean Anouilh laisse percer qu'il n'a jamais été si sérieux.\(^1\) The playwright's skill in playing with his material was generally recognised by most critics, though not always with great enthusiasm. Béatrix Dussane, for example, felt embarrassed to watch a play that leant so heavily on Pirandello and in which the author himself appeared to be embarrassed by the characters he had created. This she recognised as all part of a game but was irritated by it:

> Si nous n'entrons pas ici dans le jeu, parce que nous sentons les dés pipés, Anouilh nous prévient que nous sommes des sots. Si au contraire nous nous affirmons ravis de ces nasardes, il ne se gêne pas pour nous traiter en dupes.\(^2\)

What is more, she maintained, Anouilh had employed the same tricks and devices to better effect in earlier plays. She predicted, however, that audiences, far from demanding their money back as suggested by the author in the play, would continue to fill the tills of the theatre whence they would emerge 'un peu déconcertés peut-être, mais en fin de compte, et selon les calculs du diabolique Anouilh, battus et peut-être contents.'\(^3\) Much of what she had to say found support in the article by Jean-Jacques Gautier who wrote of Anouilh in his article in *Le Figaro*:

> Il est adroit, il est malin, il est rusé. Il aime le théâtre, il n'ignore aucun des artifices que le théâtre peut lui procurer. Il va donc inventer le plus éblouissant des jeux de théâtre. Et il jouera longtemps, pour notre plus grand plaisir, pour notre joie, et avec une habileté consommée, en virtuose de toutes les ressources que lui offre l'art dramatique.\(^4\)

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1. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
This recognition and admiration for Anouilh's obvious skill was a constant theme throughout the review of *La Grotte*, which was adjudged to be diabolically clever, inspired by Pirandello, but, in the words of Gabriel Marcel, 'pas la pièce la plus accomplie de Jean Anouilh,'¹ It would seem that the critics had found themselves in the awkward position of having to review a play by a celebrated author whose skill they admired but whose technique in its details frequently irritated them, and about which they could discover little to say that was new in spite of the fact that the playwright had attempted something different.

With *La Foire d'empoigne* Anouilh turned to historical satire. The play presented caricatures of Napoleon and Louis XVIII with both roles played, incidentally, by the same actor, Paul Meurisse. The reviewers were not merely unimpressed by this venture; they were openly hostile. Gabriel Marcel described Anouilh's portrayal of the two national figures as odious,² while Henry Rabine wrote that they had simply been turned into typical characters of the author.³ The consistency of the reviewers reaction to Anouilh's presentation of historical characters is remarkable. Where they had liked the play, as in the cases of *L'Alouette* and *Becket*, they had accepted, broadly speaking, the portrayal of the characters; when they had disliked the play, as with *Pauvre Bitos* and *La Foire d'empoigne*, they had condemned the theatricalism of the characters.

The style of the play as a whole fared little better at the hands of the reviewers than Anouilh's treatment of the two leading roles. It was variously described as insignificant, verbose, execrable, feeble melodrama, and poor satire. Jean-Jacques Gautier set down his impression thus: 'De magnifiques vacances capotant dans un champ de betteraves sous une pluie diluvienne.'

Indeed the vast majority of reviewers found the play so disagreeable that they had little to say about individual points of technique.

La Foire d'empoigne was preceded by the short L'Orchestre. The latter was described by both Poirot-Delpech and Gabriel Marcel as a work in which Anouilh seemed to be writing a parody of himself and which was not bad in its way. Most critics, however, agreed with Robert Kanters that L'Orchestre was just a disgusting slice of life with less importance than the author seemed to think. But to describe L'Orchestre as a slice of life is to miss its theatricalism.

The ferocity of these reviews was among the most bitter Anouilh had experienced since the successful L'Alouette and recalls some of the bitter hostility engendered by Pauvre Bitos and earlier still by some reviewers of Antigone. But whereas with those plays opinion had been divided and Anouilh had found considerable support, the antagonism towards La Foire d'empoigne and L'Orchestre

was almost unanimous. The venom of the attacks on his plays seemed to have its effect on Anouilh, for during a period of six years no further new plays by him were produced in Paris. The notion that it was the writings of the reviewers that affected his decision not to produce any of his own plays for a period of time was confirmed by Anouilh himself. During an interview he accorded to Claude Sarraute of *Le Monde* in 1966 he said that he was tired of being constantly attacked by critics whenever he presented a new play. Furthermore, he could no longer bear the agonies he suffered on these occasions. A playwright, he said, laid himself bare, as it were, only to receive abuse:

"ça fait honte, un peu comme de se mettre tout nu devant quelqu'un qui vous dirait: "Ce que tu peux être mal foutu!"

Later in the same conversation Anouilh expanded the point with the following illustration:

"Vous invitez des gens à dîner, ils crachent dans vos plats. Un beau jour vous vous dites que ce n'est plus la peine de leur faire la cuisine. C'est ce que je me suis dit."²

From one point of view an early retirement at this time could have given Anouilh some satisfaction. He had seen reviewers initially encourage him in his theatricalist approach, then recognise him as a playwright of exceptional talent, and finally grant him his place as a major dramatist, recognising several of his plays as masterpieces. But reviewers had complained of a lack of intellectual content in his plays, had disliked his...

2. Ibid.
pessimistic outlook, had seemed unsure of individual theatricalist devices he had used (though they had been firm in their praise of his overall skill), and finally had lost patience with him. In the course of time, however, they had shown a lack of sensitivity to the many implications of his theatricalist approach, had allowed their judgement to be swayed by prejudice, and became repetitive in what they had to say.

The lure of the theatre for Anouilh was such that in November 1968 he presented Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron. The reception given to this play by the reviewers followed in broad terms the pattern of their comments on his plays since he had been accepted as a major playwright. The sharp hostility that had greeted La Foire d'empoigne and L'Orchestre gave way to a generally warm though not over-enthusiastic welcome-back. Much was again written about the theme of the play, which seemed to be saying that after several years of marriage couples knew each other too well, would squabble and in so doing would harm their children. The only hope of salvation for middle-class families was to find unity in misfortune; their sole chance of rescuing their marriage lay in shared disaster.

There was some criticism of the manner in which Anouilh had introduced the techniques of vaudeville. Matthieu Galey, for example, writing in Combat, stated that all Anouilh's tricks were there thrown together pêle-mêle but they did not make a play and eventually palled.¹ The man, Galey continued, was an enigma;

¹. Matthieu Galey,'Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron de Jean Anouilh: un pingouin de cauchemar,' Combat, 15-11-68.
he was a great dramatist who spoilt the most exciting dialogue by including aggressive vulgarity. Also writing in fairly general terms Georges Lerminier affirmed that Anouilh's ink became blacker and blacker, and more and more facile.¹ His style was a synthesis, a parody of every style, with the result that the truth of his observations was lost in the excesses of the play. Reviewers still seemed unsure about the validity of Anouilh's theatricalist approach, though they granted him outstanding skill. Galey's conclusion that Anouilh was a puzzle because of the contradictions in him, presents clearly the dilemma that had faced reviewers over the years.

An outstanding feature of the play from the technical point of view was the manner in which Anouilh mixed dream and reality. Anouilh's problem had been to show what was going on in the minds of the characters at the same time as they were involved in their everyday affairs. The skill shown by Anouilh in solving these particular difficulties was praised by most critics though Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, who thought that the play as a whole was sound, nevertheless was irritated by the 'sauts continuels dans l'imaginaire.'²

Overall the critics seemed to agree that *Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron*, though not a masterpiece, was entertaining and clever but overlong.

Anouilh's successful return was followed by a trilogy of plays

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each of which was widely acclaimed as a masterpiece. The first two of these, Cher Antoine ou l'amour raté and Les Poissons rouges ou mon père ce héros, were described by François-Régis Bastide as 'une nouvelle forme de théâtre autobiographique.'\textsuperscript{1} The phrase could equally well be applied to Ne réveillez pas madame, the third play in the trilogy. The concept of using a play for Anouilh to say something about himself had first occurred in embryonic form in La Grotte when he included an author-character in the cast and referred to his own previous plays. On that occasion, however, reviewers saw little more in the reference to himself than a facile quirk on the part of Anouilh to produce a theatricalist effect. The autobiographical implications of the three later plays are less overt than in the earlier La Grotte but were more clearly recognised.

When Cher Antoine was presented in October 1969 it was widely acclaimed as technically one of Anouilh's best plays. It is a highly theatricalist work in which the time sequence is frequently broken. Among the reviewers to laud the play Jean-Jacques Gautier, returning to his earlier enthusiasm, proclaimed: 'cette soirée de théâtre est une de celles qui m'ont procuré le plus de plaisir depuis un quart de siècle que je fais le métier,'\textsuperscript{2} and Bertrand Poirot-Delpech declared Anouilh to be more skilful than ever.\textsuperscript{3} Further praise still came from Matthieu Galey who assured his readers that Cher Antoine contained at their point of perfection

\textsuperscript{1} François-Régis Bastide, 'Les Poissons rouges de Jean Anouilh,' Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 29-1-70.
\textsuperscript{2} Jean-Jacques Gautier, 'Cher Antoine de Jean Anouilh,' Le Figaro, 3-10-69.
\textsuperscript{3} Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, 'Cher Antoine de Jean Anouilh,' Le Monde, 3-10-69.
all the tricks, influences, and obsessions of which Anouilh's theatre was comprised. Clearly Anouilh's theatricalist approach in *Cher Antoine* had won back the high regard of most of his reviewers.

The point of style that was picked out for most comment was Anouilh's introduction of plays-within-the-play and flash-backs. They were described as effective and masterfully executed. This view was supported by Jean-Jacques Gautier who went on to say that Anouilh had included these devices 'parce qu'il peut tout se permettre et qu'il sait tout faire.' It was the skill that enabled Anouilh to handle the most difficult technical problems and solve them in a theatricalist manner that had drawn form the praise of the reviewers.

The content of the play, however, was on the whole less well received; once again most discussion was devoted to what Anouilh had to say rather than how he said it. There seemed to be a fairly general agreement that he had nothing new to write about people. A number of critics developed the autobiographical theme of the play, seeing that here was something different. Robert Kanters, for example, asked if Anouilh were not possibly querying in this play (as the subtitle, *l'amour raté*, might suggest) whether his life-long love of the theatre had been misplaced. Another reviewer, Jacques Lemarchand argued that in *Cher Antoine* Anouilh was saying that he had loved the theatre, but while he had

devoted himself to it, life had passed him by. The autobiographical theme recognised by some reviewers and the highly stylised techniques employed are closely linked in that Anouilh seems to be saying through his theatricalist approach: 'This is the life to which I have devoted myself'. The characters in the play pose the question whether the effort has been worthwhile. Although most critics, unlike Kanters and Lemarchand, thought that Anouilh was simply repeating himself, they nearly all agreed that the play was most skilful and enjoyable. Mainly through sheer technique Anouilh had won himself back into favour with Cher Antoine, which was even called by Jean Dutourd 'un chef-d'oeuvre complet.'

The middle play of the trilogy, Les Poissons rouges: ou mon père ce héros, received much the same praise from reviewers as Cher Antoine. It was first performed in January 1970 and was immediately described by Jean-Jacques Gautier as 'un ouvrage d'une grande originalité.' His view was repeated by Jacques Lemarchand who wrote that the play was 'riche du même talent que l'auteur dépense sur la scène depuis quelques trente ans, et dont il use avec liberté et assurance.' Lemarchand went on to write that the play was full of tricks in which scenes followed one another 'au gré, non de la nécessité mais de la volonté de l'auteur.' This same skill was also much admired by François-Régis Bastide

who, as already noted, described the play together with Cher Antoine as 'une nouvelle forme de théâtre autobiographique.' He added, however, that the second half of the play dragged, saying nothing more than had already been said in the first half which was dazzling. After suggesting that it could be cut by half an hour he confessed it was somewhat presumptuous of him to criticise since he was quite 'incapable d'écrire avec la moitié du talent de la deuxième partie.' Gautier also found the first half of the play much superior to the second which seemed to him to lose direction completely. In saying this, the reviewers were repeating a criticism that they had made fairly frequently since Roméo et Jeannette. Indeed all their comments generally tended to repeat what had been said previously. In spite of the increasing theatricalism of Anouilh's latest cycle of plays, the reviewers' observations on the style of the works were barely distinguishable from one play to the next. Their general theme may be summarised as one which stated that although Anouilh's plays had faults, they were exceptionally skilful, successful and made audiences laugh.

The third play of the trilogy, Ne réveillez pas madame, appeared in October 1970. It too, was regarded by many critics as a work of quite exceptional quality. Jean-Jacques Gautier thought that, if a few weaknesses were removed, 'nous demeurions en plein chef-d'oeuvre.' This play about the theatre was seen as technically brilliant. Christian Megret drew attention to the

1. See above p. 81.
manner in which chronology was broken and how the association of ideas was fortuitous, meandering from one incident to another.\(^1\) In this respect he thought that the construction of the play resembled that of a novel. It also contained, Megret noted, Anouilh's personal tone, his grating and clowning, his enormous puns and facile witticisms. This led Megret to ask whether Anouilh's virtuosity in *Ne réveillez pas madame* did not demand too much close attention on the part of his audiences to follow his path. The fact that Megret hesitated to give full praise to the style of a play that was acclaimed by some as a masterpiece reflects a not-unfamiliar situation in Anouilh criticism. Robert Kanter's review revealed a similar division of thought. He maintained that while *Cher Antoine* remained the best of the trilogy, *Ne réveillez pas madame* was the most piquant; but, he added, there was much in it that was mechanical. When audiences were expecting genius, a theatrical trick appeared.\(^2\)

Disappointment with individual sections, though delight with the work as a whole, has been a fairly constant theme running through the reviews of Anouilh's plays ever since Gabriel Marcel wrote of *Le Voyageur sans bagage* that, to appreciate it properly one had to look at it as a whole and not analyse its details.\(^3\)

The reviewers' problem of reconciling the repetitiveness of what they wrote with their delight in what they saw was recognised but not solved by François-Régis Bastide. He wrote of his own

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3. See above p. 29.
review:

Cela devient peut-être monotone, mais qu'y puis-je? A chaque saison théâtrale, le seul moment où je suis vraiment content de l'auteur, même quand je n'adore pas sa pièce, c'est à la pièce d'Anouilh.1

The weaknesses of the play, he continued, were evident but: 'on voit une pièce d'Anouilh, et on se demande pourquoi ce n'est pas tous les soirs Anouilh.' Anouilh, he concluded, could allow himself the luxury of leaving in the faults of which he was surely aware and of risking a few moments when he might irritate, because he was quite sure that for the most part he would please. Bastide had put into words what had long been apparent; the critics knew Anouilh to be a major and skilful playwright, they found him amusing and entertaining, they had accepted and indeed encouraged his theatricalist approach, but they abhorred his repetitiveness, his excesses, his vulgarities, and his lack of intellectual content.

With regard to Ne réveillez pas madame the theme of the reviewers was constant: in spite of its faults the play was technically brilliant, laced with many flash-backs and plays-within-the-play, and, when seen as a whole, quite outstanding.

The enthusiasm exhibited for the trilogy of semi-autobiographical plays was not continued with Anouilh's final play to date, Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit.2 It is about the performance of a play and the involvement of the actors and members of the orchestra in that performance. Its intense form of theatricalism was disliked by reviewers. Robert Kanters, for

1. François-Régis Bastide, 'Ne réveillez pas madame de Jean Anouilh,' Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 29-10-70.
2. After the completion of this thesis 'Le Directeur de l'opéra' has been produced.
example, described the play as a dull exercise revealing that Anouilh's tricks and obsessions had grown old much more quickly than the young heroines of his tragedies. A similar theme was expounded by Pierre Marcabru who wrote that Anouilh had not only lost both his touch and his 'instinct d'homme de théâtre', but also enfeebled what he had done previously:

Les mêmes thèmes qui reviennent, mais avec moins de bonheur et d'aisance, plus proches du ressassement, sans liberté et sans éclat.

More condemnatory still, Bertrand Poirot-Delpech wrote that in parts it was almost like the work of a beginner, while even the normally faithful Jean-Jacques Gautier commented that the mixture of styles within the play (one noble, classical and a little cold, the second familiar and more human, and the third trivial and vulgar) did not operate as well as he would have wished. It is not surprising that following such universal condemnation the play was taken off after only forty performances.

The failure of Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit was Anouilh's only set-back after he had recommenced producing his own plays in 1968. This cycle of works form a coda, as it were, to his career and contains a highly intense form of theatricalism that laid stress on the frequent interruption of chronology and the inclusion of numerous inner plays and plays-within-the-play.

The first work, *Le Boulanger, la boulangerère et le petit mitron*, and the last, *Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit*, both look back in different ways to earlier works; the former to the themes of such family-dramas as *Ardèle* or *La Valse des toréadors* (the later play was perhaps slightly less grating than the earlier ones though expressed in an equal if not more intense theatricalist manner), while the latter recalled the 'classical plays' (*Eurydice* and *Antigone*) through its inclusion of the Oreste theme. The three central plays with their probable autobiographical implications were seen as the most important though even with these plays reviewers had found difficulty in finding something new to say about them. Broadly speaking the critics could only repeat their admiration for a playwright of outstanding talent.

The quality of the critical commentary on Anouilh's plays during the period which began in 1968 varied very little from that of the reviews of his earlier plays. New developments in his technique were noted and either liked or disliked depending on the degree of hostility or acceptance of the subject matter of the plays. Few critics attempted a detailed analysis of individual points of style or fully appreciated their true significance.

Throughout Anouilh's career the theatricalism of his style has been considered by reviewers who have commented on such aspects of his style as his use of fantasy, flash-backs and plays-within-the play, the introduction of marionette-like characters, anachronisms, the mixing of genres, and the general disruption of chronology. The many insights shown by the critics are often
remarkable in that frequently they were made hurriedly when the reviewers had seen the plays only at their initial performances. The reviewers were able, of course, to build up an awareness of Anouilh's general theatricalist approach, but at the same time a sensitivity was shown by many of them to innovations and nuances introduced by Anouilh into his technique.

When reviewers condemned Anouilh's style they usually did so on the grounds that the devices were introduced gratuitously and not because the situation demanded them. However, even those reviewers who levelled the charge of facility against Anouilh normally granted that the individual tricks of style were presented with consummate skill and that, when viewed as a whole, his plays were highly entertaining.

Often the critics found themselves faced with a dilemma that they never solved. On the one hand they praised Anouilh's great originality but, paradoxically, on the other they chastised him for repeating not only his themes but also his techniques. The reviewers were beset with further difficulties when, as happened with the semi-autobiographical works, they liked individual plays but disliked their theatricalism, or at least parts of it.

Shifts of emphasis in Anouilh's technique appear to have taken place on several occasions when it might be possible to attribute some influence in the change to the comments of the critics. Likewise periods of silence when Anouilh has produced no new plays of his own seem to have followed hostile reviews too frequently to be mere coincidence, though the strange silence following the success of Becket stands out as an exception. It is not the
purpose of this chapter to consider the strength of this influence on Anouilh's style in comparison with other factors such as his own reading, the actors available, the themes he treated, general trends, and the like. Rather I have tried to show how reviewers have drawn attention during the various stages of Anouilh's career to many aspects of his theatricalism without discussing them in any depth. The critics have noted many developments in Anouilh's style and technique but have frequently not recognised the true worth of some plays. I would now like to examine each play in chronological order showing in more detail how Anouilh's theatricalist approach developed, how he exploited his various techniques and devices in a variety of ways to under-score the content of his plays, and how his theatricalist approach has been appropriate to the themes treated.
Part B.

The development of Anouilh's exploitation of play.
Anouilh's first dramatic sketch was the short *Humulus le muet*, a brief farce that he wrote in collaboration with Jean Aurenche. *Humulus* is physically capable of speaking only one word per day but, by storing up his days, he can save words until he has enough to pronounce a sentence. He falls in love and decides to collect sufficient words to declare his affection to his heart's desire by keeping silent for a whole month. When his opportunity arrives, he squanders his words on giving unheeded directions as to the nearest path to the sea. With only three words left, he blurts out "Je vous aime!" The cruelty of life is such that his beloved is deaf, and so his protestation of love passes unheard. The play symbolises an attempt at a dialogue between the deaf and the mute, a situation that is presented in a non-realistic manner. The mute *Humulus* can speak only because an English doctor has perfected a miraculous process whereby the boy can pronounce his one word per day. He is seen on stage with his grand-mother "La Duchesse, sorte de personnage fabuleux" and his uncle "un grand hobereau maigre et faisandé"; an orchestra can be heard playing. The whole tone of the play brings to mind some of Ionesco's plays of the absurd.

1. P.R. p.22
2. Ibid. p.11.
3. Ibid. p.11.
The playlet was of course intended merely as a light-hearted frolic of little depth. It will, however, bear more than a superficial glance, if no great scrutiny. In the play love is made to look ridiculous: it is not equally felt and, when expressed, not always heard. In a humorous fashion Anouilh demonstrates the inability of individuals to communicate. It is an amusing play in which can be found a serious intent. The sketch certainly does not try to present a slice of life. The dark humour, the theatricality of Anouilh's technique and the presentation of incredible, lively characters, which were to become some of the hallmarks of his plays, are adumbrated in *Humulus le muet*.

It seems strange that, after the style adopted by Anouilh in *Humulus le muet*, he should return to a more realistic pattern in *L'Hermine*, though certain aspects of the play retain some of the theatricalism of the earlier play.

A clue to understanding the play is given during the first act when the hero Frantz tells his journalist friend Philippe of his need for money, to which the latter replies that he too is in the same condition. Frantz calls his youth spent in poverty 'une sinistre farce' to which Philippe replies that the same is true for young people who are wealthy.¹ For both rich and poor life is a farce, but for the poor it is a dark comedy. These two aspects, the dark and the comic, are reflected in the style of

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¹ P.N. p.40
the play, and indeed were to become dominant themes in Anouilh's theatre.

A similar idea is taken up again later in the play when Frantz confesses to Philippe that he has killed the Duchess. Frantz sees the situation in terms of the theatre with Philippe playing the role of the good, comforting friend:

C'est ainsi que font les vrais amis ... le partage des joies et des peines ... C'est entendu, tu prends le remords et tu me laisses le reste.

Their situation amuses him and he goes on to compare it with a drama, saying that like all dramas it is a mixture of tragedy and comedy.

In this early, superficially realistic play there are already indications of Anouilh's vision of life as an extension of the theatre, a game in which everyone has his part to play. The idea is not fully developed but the notion of role-playing is referred to on several occasions. Frantz tells Philippe that for two years he, Frantz, has been putting on an act, pretending he is not poor.


Later Monime recognises that her beloved is playing a part to hide from her his true feelings, and tells Frantz:

1. P.N. p.118
2. P.N. p.42.
Il faut te rendre cette justice, tu joues bien ton rôle. Pourtant, à travers tous ces gestes qui sont les mêmes, tu es triste, Frantz, je le vois bien.

Monime herself admits to Frantz that she too, at one point, is putting on an act for a specific purpose:

Je suis une pauvre fille qui t'aime et qui joue des comédies pour tâcher de te faire sourire.

The references to the theatricality of life and to role-playing are too few and underdeveloped to be of great significance at this point of time in Anouilh's development as a dramatist; nevertheless they are there and thus give a hint of what is to come.

Whereas Frantz, Monime, and Philippe are apparently realistic characters who at times act theatrically, the Duchess is portrayed in a completely non-realistic manner. She is described as "[une] sorte de personnage fabuleux" (the same words were used to describe the Duchess in Humulus le muet), who cannot even sit down without great show.

Elle s'installe dans son immense fauteuil à oreille. Cérémonie lente et minutieuse.

When on-stage, she talks almost incessantly. Indeed the use of the tirade is a further device employed by Anouilh in L'Hermine to dissipate the semblance of reality. In a speech of some 750 words, interrupted twice by Monime who manages to utter on each occasion two words only: "Ma tante ...", and once by Frantz whose contribution is "Certainement non, Madame", the Duchess

1. P.N. pp. 60-61.
2. P.N. p. 68.
3. P.N. p. 69.
4. P.N. p. 69.
talks of the need for money in marriage and the consequent impossibility of the poverty-stricken Frantz marrying Monime.¹ A further example occurs when Frantz in about 340 words explains to Monime how killing the Duchess has somehow purified him and turned him into a man.² This time the tirade proceeds without interruption. A little later, when Frantz has been rejected by Monime, he recognises that he has not become the man he thought he was, that he did kill for money, and that Monime would do well to take a lover.³ Finally, after a little over 400 words of almost uninterrupted speech - Monime does at one point manage to ask him what is wrong and at another to tell him he is odious -, he realises how ridiculous he is. Frantz is more vehement than the Duchess in what he has to say; both characters achieve a theatrical effect by the sheer length in time of their flow of words.

The 'tirade' has, of course, long been established as a theatrical form and where it has psychological or emotional justification has come to be accepted by audiences. Indeed Frederick Tonge makes just this point in his discussion of Musset's use of the 'tirade' in his prose comedies, writing:

ce que révèlent surtout ces tirades ce sont les émotions qu'êprouvent des personnages - car il est facile d'établir un rapport entre la longueur des tirades et les émotions qu'êprouvent les personnages en scène. Ce qui revient à dire que les personnages de Musset se lancent dans des tirades lorsque psychologiquement, il est naturel de le faire, qu'il s'agisse d'un développement

¹ P.N. pp. 69-72.
² P.N. pp. 121-122.
³ P.N. pp. 127-129.
Tonge's argument is not altogether convincing for, although the tirade may be used by an author to do all the things he mentions, it is still true that in the normal way of conversation people do not speak coherently at length, especially when they are experiencing a great emotion. When Anouilh uses the 'tirade', he usually achieves a theatrical effect either by exaggerating the importance of the topic or emotion involved, or by making the personage speaking look ridiculous, or by the language used, as in the example quoted.

In addition to the points mentioned above, Anouilh further destroys the illusion of reality in L'Hermine by introducing an element of farce when the ageing maid Marie-Anne begs, amid floods of tears, to be allowed to go to see her so-called cousin who has been reported dying in hospital. She is made to look ridiculous. Her plight has certain similarities with that of Frantz and Monime since she, in her youth, had been unable to marry for lack of money. Her ridiculousness, tinged with sadness, forms an echo of Frantz's comment on the "sinistre farce" that a poverty-stricken life represents.

On two further occasions in L'Hermine Anouilh puts theatrical terms into the mouths of his characters. Frantz goes

for the last time to the Duchess to ask her to allow him to marry Monime. Her response is simply: "Cette scène est ridicule". ¹ After he has killed the Duchess, he finds himself rejected by Monime who thinks that Frantz has killed merely to obtain the Duchess's money for himself. Frantz is horrified in his turn, saying: "Oh! que c'est bête, cette scène ..." ² Theatrical terminology is used here to comment on the situation in which the characters find themselves and probably represents little more than a general awareness by the author of a dramatic situation. In Anouilh's later plays he deliberately uses such phrases to comment on his plays themselves.

This use of vocabulary associated with the theatre combines with the other devices Anouilh has used (farce, non-realistic characters, long speeches, references to role-playing), to produce a twofold effect. The initial, seeming realism of the play is diminished, while the tragedy and comedy of life are both reflected in it. Clearly, from the beginning of his career, Anouilh has avoided writing in a way that attempted to present a slice of life, for his style in *L'Hermine* incorporated non-realistic elements. The devices and techniques employed, the realism and the artificiality, together suggest the duality of an existence which is no more than a black farce.

*L'Hermine* is described by L. C. Pronko in his book *The World of Jean Anouilh* as a play of unrelieved realism.³ As we

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¹. P.N. p.99  
². P.N. p.25.  
have just seen, Pronko's criticism is inaccurate since there are already indications in that play of Anouilh's use of theatricality. Pronko also includes two of Anouilh's other plays in his description, La Sauvage and Jézabel. The American critic's classification of these two plays is equally mistaken.

Jézabel, written in 1932, has been described by Philip Thody as Anouilh's worst play.¹ It fails to show the sensitivity of the earliest plays but does retain some of the theatrical devices of L'Hermine, marking a development in their use. The story is, for the most part, melodramatic; a mother poisons her husband in order to obtain his money, which she needs to save her lover who is the chauffeur of her son's prospective father-in-law. The fiancée of this son is a rich and loving girl; by marrying her he would escape from his sordid background but, for apparently no other reason than shame at his mother's behaviour, he decides to renounce his chance of happiness, choosing instead to remain under the sway of his sexually obsessed mother and her hard, rapacious young servant-girl. Lust and greed dominate the play.

Anouilh endeavours to maintain interest by the obvious device of minor coups de théâtre, such as when the mother comes in dishevelled and distraught, begging her son for money:

Il me faut cinq mille francs, tout de suite. Avant ce soir.²

This minor coup is followed shortly afterwards by another, when

² N.P.N. p.46.
she admits to her husband that she needs the money to save her lover from prison. A further example occurs near the end of the play, when Marc tries to turn his bride-to-be against himself and his family by suddenly (and falsely) telling her that he had helped his mother poison his father.

Clumsy though these attempts may be, they help to dissipate the semblance of reality when considered together with the general overtones of melodrama. So also does Anouilh's use of the long speech. The mother attempts to dissuade Marc from leaving her in a flow of some 520 words, interrupted twice by a mono-syllabic utterance from her son.\(^1\) She pauses occasionally to watch in silence as he packs his case, she drinks and tries to cajole him into staying by showing him the photograph of herself as a young woman, at a time when she and he did have some affection for each other. She seems to have no redeeming features. The total effect is melodramatic and unrealistic.

A further aspect of the mother's character is that she is constantly playing a role. She claims that the lack of warmth on the part of her husband has driven her to find comfort in the arms of other men. She now, as an old woman, refuses to give up the part of a charming young seductress that she has filled for so long. Her vanity is shown during the opening scenes of the play when she is seated in front of a mirror, preoccupied with her appearance. Marc tries to talk to her about his problems,

\(^1\) N.P.N. pp. 108-110.
but she can give him only part of her attention and says:

Allons, parle. Ce sont des chagrins d'amour? Il est vrai que tu ne me les racontes jamais. Tu n'as pas confiance en moi. Hé bien, parle. Aimes-tu ce blond vénitien? Je crois que j'étais mieux lorsque je me teignais en châtain. Tu ne me dis toujours rien.

Marc's aunt tells him that his mother neglected her motherly tasks, leaving them to her husband:

Son rôle de mère se bornait à bien te friser et à te mettre une belle culotte pour t'emmener se pavaner avec elle sur le cours.

Marc's mother rejected the conventional role of mother as envisaged by her husband's sister, because it did not enhance the image she had made of herself as an attractive female.

The idea that people must go through life playing certain parts in order to obtain particular ends occurs on two other occasions in Jézabel. The maid, Georgette, tells the mother that, if she wishes to keep her son, then she must stop being the kind of person she really is, a drunken slut, and approach more closely the dear old-lady image her son has of what an ageing mother should be. The director of her life from henceforth will be Georgette:

Il faudra m'écouter pour tout si vous voulez qu'on réussisse à le garder ici.

Jacqueline too thinks that she can bring the mother and her son together again:

Nous irions habiter la campagne. Je suis riche. C'est honteux à dire, mais vous verriez comme avec un

2. N.P.N. p.62.
The difference between her solution and that of Georgette is that the latter can only try to improve the heroine she has, whereas Jacqueline, as it were, wants to transfer the play to a completely new theatre altogether. Marc evidently recognises that Jacqueline's solution is nonsensical and that of Georgette is impossible, and so he rejects them both.

Role-playing, merely hinted at in *L'Hermine*, has thus acquired some significance in *Jézabel*, for it helps to explain the relationship between the hero and the heroine and throws some light on the final outcome of the plot. The mother has chosen for herself a role that her son rejects; he envisages an ideal role for her but, because she is who she is, she cannot play that part although she is given two possible arenas in which to do so. When he dashes off, the impression left is that he might well be running away to seek another play in a different theatre.

The impression that the characters are all acting parts is further augmented by the continued use of vocabulary associated with the theatre. After having kept silent for many years Marc at last begins to tell his mother his opinion of her:

*Pardon, maman, pardon. Je ne sais pas ce que je dis. Tu vois, cette mauvaise scène m'échappe des lèvres.*

Marc shows too that he has seen through the charade his mother is enacting when a few lines later he says to her:

*Bientôt tu joueras une comédie sinistre qui te fera souffrir...*
The phrase 'une comédie sinistre' recalls Frantz's statement in L'Hermine when he referred to his youth spent in poverty as a 'sinistre farce'. Marc, however, is not referring to life in general but is pointing out how 'black' the game is that his mother is playing. Marc, too, puts on an act when he tries to repulse Jacqueline; she replies in terms that suggest she is aware of the theatricality of their situation:

Je veux vous sauver malgré vous, Marc. Vous valez mieux que votre rancoeur. Que cette scène horrible, que tout.

The theatrical terms used in the instances quoted above merely continue the pattern that was started in L'Hermine; they reflect on the situation that exists in terms of the plot, they do not comment on the play itself.

Jézabel is mainly of interest, however, because it contains, for the first time, a sordid family the like of which was to recur in Anouilh's later plays. Both parents are theatrical in their exaggerated mannerisms and their lack of subtlety. The mother, as we have seen, is sexually obsessed; she is nearer to melodrama than to realism. The father chases after the opposite sex, he is besotted and money-grubbing, but he is not presented in the same disparaging light as his wife. In his amiable degeneracy he is the precursor of the Tarde father in Anouilh's next play, La Sauvage, but inferior to him.

La Sauvage, also described by Pronko as a play of unrelieved realism,² is important for in it Anouilh's technique can be seen

1. N.P.N. p. 119.
2. See above p. 93.
to have advanced in three main ways towards a more thoroughgoing theatricalist treatment of a theme. The first of these is the manner in which he exploits for theatrical effect the roles of the Tarde parents, more especially that of the father. Monsieur Tarde is a memorable character who pinches cigars from his future son-in-law,\(^1\) tries to force open his cocktail cabinet,\(^2\) steals his walking-stick,\(^3\) hides in the toilets when his wife's lover attacks her,\(^4\) is comic in his never-ending endeavour to cadge money, but who has a certain dignity of his own since, when all is said and done, he did win a prize (albeit only second) at the Arcachon music festival.\(^5\) These actions are presented in a humorous way. When Hartman first sees Tarde, he says of him to Florent:

\[\text{Le père, c'est le bonhomme à la contrebasse? Il est inouï!}^6\]

Hartman's reaction is typical of audience-comment on virtuoso actors and serves to stress the theatricality of Tarde. The mother is vulgar, her actions are exaggerated; she simpers when her daughter's fiancé first arrives, and ogles him a little later. Her words contrast with her actions for she tells her daughter to get what she can out of him. Hartman, having seen both parents, can only say:

\[\text{Vous êtes un garçon extraordinaire, Florent, d'épouser cette petite malgré ces deux personnages.}\]

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3. P.N. p. 204. 
6. P.N. p. 150. 
Hartman's choice of the term "personnages", itself a theatrical term, to describe M. and Mme. Tarde is significant, stressing as it does their essentially scenic existence. As the play progresses, Tarde becomes increasingly important; _La Sauvage_ was in fact the first play to be staged by Anouilh in which a major character was depicted in a deliberately non-realistic way.

The way in which M. Tarde is presented is interesting. Virtually everything that he does reflects his preoccupation with money. He is willing to profit from Florent's willingness to play in the café when Gosta cannot be found, since this will safeguard his own employment; in the hope of gaining a share in the cash receipts, he conceives the plan of trying to persuade Florent to play in the farewell-concert as this will encourage a larger audience to attend; he requests excessive compensation for Thérèse's departure from the orchestra rather than takes pleasure in his daughter's good fortune; he grovels on the floor after the bank notes she has scattered there; when he rests in the comfortable armchairs at Florent's home, he cannot refrain from commenting on how much they must have cost, nor can he resist hazarding a guess on the price of Florent's cigars that he is smoking (and incidentally slipping into his pocket); he avoids the expense of a new suit for his daughter's wedding by cadging one from his future son-in-law; and his final visit to his daughter to warn her of Gosta's approach is tarnished by his agitation lest he should not be reimbursed for his journey, and when he is given some money, he makes out he has no small change to pay back the excess - his hope is realised and he is excused repayment. The method Anouilh has used here is one of
exaggeration, a technique he frequently employs; particular aspects of a person's character are fixed upon and grossly enlarged to the point of caricature. In the case of M. Tarde it is not just the way in which all his thoughts turn to pecuniary matters that is treated in this way, but all other aspects of his character as well. His cowardice, followed by bluster, is always evident when he is dealing with anyone, whether it be his wife, his daughter, Gosta, or in any other situation where he is likely to be hurt. In spite of his second prize at Arcachon he is excessively mediocre in all things. It is because he is 'aussi sale, aussi ridicule, aussi vulgaire' that Thérèse shows any affection for him at all. To hide his mediocrity he strikes poses, not always consciously, as when he is described exhorting his musicians in a ridiculous and pretentious manner to put their work before their personal squabbles. In this case, too, his concern for his own safety and the employment of his group are motivating factors in his behaviour. Here is an instance both of the underlying reasons for his actions (his excessive concern with money) and of his actual demeanour being treated theatrically. He does, it is true, show some affection for his daughter, as when he comes to warn her of Gosta's threat to kill Florent, and he does show some contrition over his disgraceful behaviour at dinner when he first arrived in Florent's home and became intoxicated, belching, singing crude songs and almost drinking from his finger bowl. There is no viciousness in him, rather he is amiably convivial. These moments of tenderness, concern and merry-making, together with his flashes of dignity,

1. P.N. p. 220
tend to evoke sympathy and pity. They stand in contrast to the theatricality of his caricatured exaggeration and poses.

Caricature, exaggeration, and poses are devices that distinguish all Anouilh's theatricalised personages - the father and mother in Jézabel, the Duchess in L'Hermine, for example - from his so-called realistic characters. The former lack nuances; they take trivial things seriously and, conversely, they fail to devote to matters of importance the attention they deserve. From most points of view they should be despised, but in the case of M. Tarde his amiable nature and the sympathetic manner in which Anouilh has portrayed him make him likeable and memorable. The technique of presenting major characters in a theatricalist manner in Anouilh's plays had thus been initiated.

Whereas the Tarde parents are deliberately unrealistic, their daughter's lover, Florent, is perhaps unintentionally so. He is perfect to a degree that makes him incredible. Only at one point does he slip at all from complete grace and that is when it appears that his fiancée, Thérèse, is going to leave him. He sheds one tear, and that is sufficient to soften Thérèse so that she stays. Again there is here a lack of nuances.

The effect of Anouilh's theatricalist presentation of characters is to emphasis, through exaggeration, the emotions he wished to stress. In an interview with André Warnod he stated that he intended La Sauvage to be 'une étude psychologique' to do with happiness and suffering. ¹ Anouilh had, therefore, to draw attention to these feelings and this he did by contrasting

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¹. See above, p. 31.
a realistic with a non-realistic portrayal. When critics reviewed *La Sauvage* they accused Anouilh of vacillation\(^1\) failing to appreciate that he had deliberately chosen to use a method of presentation for major roles that previously he had reserved for minor characters.

The second way in which Anouilh shows a further movement towards theatricality is in his use of language, which at times is less realistic in *La Sauvage* than in *L'Hermine*. He retains the use of long speeches and this device helps to dispel any sense of the slice-of-life type of play with regard to *La Sauvage*. Tarde tries to excuse his own vulgarity and find out why his daughter seems to have changed her attitude towards him;\(^2\) a few moments later, partly drunk, he tries to decide whether he ought to return some of Florent's money.\(^3\) After Thérèse has tried to alienate Florent he comforts her and rebukes all those things that have distressed her, the chairs, the books and the pictures of his family;\(^4\) Thérèse herself endeavours to make Florent understand something of the gulf that exists between them - she is so poor and he is so rich.\(^5\) Where the language of *La Sauvage* surpasses that of *L'Hermine*, however, is in the poetic grace that it sometimes achieves. Thérèse tries to explain to her father why she feels that Florent and everything that resembles him are against her and her father:

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1. See above, p. 31.
5. P.N. pp. 224.
Sa maison qui n'a l'air si claire et si accueillante le premier jour que pour mieux vous faire comprendre après que vous n'étiez pas fait pour elle. Ses meubles dont aucun n'a l'air de vouloir de moi. Papa, je cours quand je traverse le salon toute seule. Chaque fauteuil m'adresse un reproche de vouloir m'implanter ici. Et toutes ces vieilles dames dans ces cadres! [...]

Et ses livres, tiens, ses livres qui sont tous ses amis - pire ses complices - qui lui ont parlé, qui l'ont aidé à devenir lui; ses livres qui le connaissent mieux que moi et que je ne connais même pas, moi, pour me défendre. Oh! mais je les ai repérés de dos, va si je ne les ai pas lus!

The above words reveal a sensitivity that is nearer in tone to the lighter touch of Anouilh's later plays than the more realistic Jézabel and L'Hermine. Part of the effectiveness of the passages just quoted lies in the mental images that they are able to evoke. Anouilh's ability to convey emotion through word-pictures greatly enriches his plays. The visions he creates also coincide with the understanding of life he would appear to have had at this time, as something in which his characters are actively involved rather than as events to be passively accepted. In a completely different tone from the passage quoted above, but presented with the same 'scenic vision', to use Harvey's term, is Thérèse's account of her pregnancy at the age of fourteen when, bleeding and crawling about on all fours, biting on anything she could find to stop herself screaming, she delivered her own child. Anouilh has here fused language and his vision of life in a way that was to become one of the distinguishing features of his later plays.

The third way in which La Sauvage looks ahead to Anouilh's

future plays can be seen in the setting of the first act of the play and in the choice of profession for the Tarde family. They are performers, musicians, poor it is true, but people nevertheless whose lives consist of putting on an act. They form prototypes on which will be modelled the father of Orphée in *Eurydice*. The spa-café in which these third-rate musicians perform is decorated in a mediocre and pretentious style which creates an effect of inauthenticity and foreshadows the more extravagant setting of *Le Bal des Voleurs* and the café-tableau of *Léocadia*. In *La Sauvage* Anouilh uses music for the first time in one of his major plays as an integral part of the work, the falsity of the notes being in accord with the unlikelihood of the situation (a gifted, rich musician in love with a third-rate impecunious violinist) and with the shabbiness of the setting. The café does have the symbolic value of a place where chance encounters may be made. When the curtain rises the platform on which the family are playing occupies the major portion of the stage. Its prominence helps to illustrate the life of performing from which Thérèse hopes to escape to the fairy-tale existence with Florent; she is, however, part of the life on that stage and will eventually discover that, though she may be able to move off it now and then, ultimately she must return there. Sham though it may be, for her it is reality. A further important point to note is the position of the audience in relation to the rostrum-stage on which Tarde's orchestra performs. The spectators thus achieve a double

significance for they are not merely watching what is happening on stage but are also forced into becoming, as it were, clients in the cafe being entertained by the orchestra. The audience thus feels itself involved in the play as both spectator and participant. In La Sauvage for the first time Anouilh gives importance to the location of his play and the profession of his protagonists. This was to become particularly significant later in Le Bal des Voleurs.

In addition to the three advances so far indicated, Anouilh retained the use of theatrical vocabulary. At the close of the emotionally charged scene in which Florent sheds his tear and Thérèse decides to stay with him after all since it seems that he does need her, she tells her father she is happy, to which Tarde replies:

Hé bien, saperlotte, après une scène pareille je me demande bien comment tu trouves le moyen d'être heureuse, toi !

Tarde, it would appear, has sensed something of the theatrical nature of the situation in which his daughter has placed herself; Anouilh has not yet reached the stage in his development where he makes his characters comment on the play itself.

There is a further reference that suggests that even at this early stage in his career Anouilh was sensitive to the theatricality of certain aspects of life. Hartman and Thérèse discuss the happiness of the rich which the former suggests is beginning to envelop Thérèse, and she admits he is right:

1. P.N. p. 234.
To this Hartman replies "Il faut apprendre votre rôle."\(^2\) The concept of life as theatre, merely hinted at here, was to be developed in his later plays. Anouilh had already suggested the idea in *L'Hermine*.

Anouilh further dissipates the impression of reality in *La Sauvage* by introducing a touch of farce at the close of Act One, when the Tarde parents are shown grovelling on the floor of the café grabbing at the money Thérèse and Florent have discarded. In a later play (*L'Invitation au château*) Anouilh was to exploit further the theatrical possibilities of characters sitting on the floor surrounded by banknotes that had been torn up and thrown away.

The continuing exploitation of theatricality in *La Sauvage* that I have indicated above does not, it is true, form a major aspect of the play; but it does reveal a growing realisation on the part of Anouilh that he was able to use the techniques for his own purposes.

Two plays dating from this early period in Anouilh's career, *Mandarine*, written in 1929 but first acted in 1933, and *Y avait un prisonnier*, dating from 1934 and initially performed the following year, may be dismissed briefly since they contribute little to our understanding of Anouilh's progress towards a use of the play-within-the-play device. Suffice it to say that they

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1. P.N. p. 250.
2. P.N. p. 250.
are feeble melodramas and recognised as such by author, public and critics alike.¹ Significantly, Anouilh has not included them in his published plays.

Between the initial performances of L'Hermine and La Sauvage another play was successfully staged by Anouilh, Le Voyageur sans bagage, (1937). It indicates some progress towards the use of play-within-the-play by further exploitation of devices used in L'Hermine and La Sauvage, but adding to them in an interesting way. The story concerns an amnesiac who, with the help of a family who have befriended him, is trying to establish his identity. The story is obviously derived in part from Giraudoux's Siegfried which set out to portray the folly of enmity between nations and in particular the animosity of France and Germany. Anouilh's purpose is different; his play raises the issue of whether one has the right to choose the kind of person one wishes to be.

The play is set in a large country-house in the period between the two world-wars. The first characters audiences see are a garrulous, domineering duchess (a revival of the duchesses from L'Humulus and L'Hermine) whose manner and name, Dupont-Dufort, are comic, and a maître d'hôtel whose opening remarks reveal him to be a very caricature of his role:

Ah! Madame la duchesse voudra bien excuser Monsieur et Madame, mais Madame la duchesse n'était attendue par Monsieur et Madame qu'au train de 11h.50. Je vais faire prévenir immédiatement Monsieur et Madame de la venue de Madame la duchesse.²

¹ See above p. p.
² P.N. p. 279.
Other characters, too are presented theatrically. The little English boy destined to provide Gaston with his escape route arrives dressed in his Eton jacket, apparel that would no doubt appear comic to French audiences; he is looking for the lavatory. His lawyer, blessed with the name of Picwick [sic] and all its humorous connotations, is amusing. Both characters are drawn very much larger than life. They contrast with the more realistic family members and together with them suggest the dark and the light side of life that we have seen portrayed by Anouilh in his other plays. What is new in Anouilh's use of theatrical characters is their growing number.

The duchess has a tendency to see what she is doing in non-realistic terms. When she is about to meet the Renaud family for the first time, she has to hold on to the arm of her lawyer, Huspar, and says:

\[ J'ai \text{ l'impression d'entreprendre une lutte sans merci contre la fatalité, contre la mort, contre toutes les forces obscures du monde...} \]

She is not alone in her self-dramatisation. The maid Juliette sees her life as composed of episodes from a book. When asked by Gaston whether the extravagant description she has given him of her own early life is not perhaps lifted from a novel, she replies:

\[ Oui, \mais ça s'appliquait tellement bien à moi! \]

The idea is taken a stage further in an exchange between Gaston and Valentine, his brother's wife and own former mistress. She proves his identity to him through the melodramatic trick of the secret

1. P.N. p. 293.
2. P.N. p. 325.
scar that she had previously inflicted on him. As a result he rejects his past and tells her that she has now done her bit and may depart:

\[\text{Allez-vous-en, maintenant. Il ne me reste pas le plus petit espoir; vous avez joué votre rôle.}^1\]

Valentine's subsequent non-appearance on stage turns this remark into a comment not only on the situation but on the play itself. Anouilh has introduced here a note of self-conscious theatricality, using the term as I have defined it.\(^2\)

A further device that Anouilh develops from La Sauvage is the use of music which, when played by the Tarde family, was logically introduced, but which in Le Voyageur sans bagage begins for no apparent reason and floats through the air, recalling a technique used in early, romantic films. Anouilh uses the music to underline the mood of the scene. It is sad, when Gaston has just smashed the mirror symbolically destroying his past;\(^3\) it is mocking, when Gaston meets the little English boy;\(^4\) it is triumphant, when Gaston finally departs with his chosen family.\(^5\) Music has helped to increase the atmosphere of theatricality at the close of the play.

In this play Anouilh was faced with two crucial problems that are of interest to the present discussion. He had first to reveal to his hero, Gaston/Jacques, the latter's past. This he does by bringing his hero face to face with people who knew him in his

\[\begin{align*}
1. & \quad \text{P.N. p. 375.} \\
2. & \quad \text{See above pp. 18-20.} \\
3. & \quad \text{P.N. p. 375.} \\
4. & \quad \text{P.N. p. 377.} \\
5. & \quad \text{P.N. p. 385.}
\end{align*}\]
younger days, with the members of his family. They, using wordpictures, tell him of the things he did and thus inform him of the kind of person he was. These relations are not involved in a flash-back nor are they taking part in a play-within-the-play, but are used, as it were, as mirrors in which Gaston/Jacques can find his past revealed. So far Anouilh has employed devices that are perfectly in accord with what happens; it is quite logical that people should come to tell Gaston what they know about his past and it is quite credible that he should imagine for himself a likeable personality. The danger of having people talk about the past rather than demonstrating it is that the play might become prolix. In Le Voyageur sans bagage Anouilh had an excellent opportunity to develop the flash-back or play-within-the-play device rather in the manner that he was to employ later in L'Alouette, for example; but he seemingly preferred, this time, more or less to pass it by. It would appear that Anouilh either had not yet sufficient mastery of his technique or the idea did not occur to him to have the events from Gaston's past life relived on stage. No matter how Anouilh had presented Gaston/Jacque's past the effect of the knowledge upon him would have been the same. What he saw did not conform with the image he had formed of himself nor with the role he had chosen to play. He therefore rejected what was evidently true about himself. The morality of Gaston/Jacques' choice in refusing his past may be open to doubt, nevertheless, his action in rejecting it is dramatically effective. He is then faced with what he is to do with his future and this was the second interesting problem that Anouilh had to solve.
The solution Anouilh provides (the unlikely story of a young English boy who has lost both his parents in a shipwreck, together with all his friends and relations, and who needs to find a nephew in order to succeed to his inheritance) may at first seem contrived. It is in fact quite consistent with the rest of the play. Gastoi/Jacques's decision to accept the orphan-foreigner as his only remaining relative means that he can continue to live as he wishes. As an amnesiac he was able to play the part in life that pleased him; he will be able to continue to do so. Thus, on two counts, the idea of role-playing has been used by Anouilh as an integral part of the play.

At a slightly different level Gaston/Jacques's choice can be seen to have a further significance, one which Anouilh was to develop in his later plays. Two worlds have been shown in the play to exist side by side; the first is the world of ostensible reality as represented by the family and the old Jacques, while the second is that of the imagination as seen in the little English boy, Picwick and the new Gaston. By his choice of a life with the English boy Gaston is indicating not only his rejection of his past but also that fantasy is preferable to reality. To enter this fantasy, however, trickery and deceit had been necessary.

Le Voyageur sans bagage marks a definite step forward in the direction of a theatre animated by fantasy and gives visible substantiation to Anouilh's own words:

L'enthousiasme me revient, maintenant que je sais qu'on peut faire un théâtre artificiel.¹

It was no doubt this realisation, combined with the success of his play, that encouraged Anouilh to attempt to stage Le Bal des voleurs.

Although written in 1932 Le Bal des voleurs was not performed until six years later. Curiously, it seems to terminate a period in Anouilh's technical development rather than stand at the start of his career, for it is the play in which he exploits theatricality most thoroughly during his early years before using full self-consciousness.

Of this play Anouilh said in an interview with André Thierry in 1951:

> Vous savez, il me semble que tout est dans Le Bal des voleurs. Mes personnages, mes thèmes. L'inspiration ce n'est qu'une broderie sur des figures immuables; l'important c'est d'avoir l'instinct du théâtre, c'est-à-dire, l'instinct de retomber sur ses pieds. Je suis contre les plans, les personnages dont le destin est écrit d'avance. Les constructions à la Salacrou. J'écris, j'écris, j'écris, et puis voilà. Quand le jeu ne m'amuse plus, je m'arrête, c'est le dernier acte. 1

The quotation is of importance not only because it tells something of Anouilh's general method of writing (that is to say, he does not like to work out in advance all the details of his plays but prefers to let them develop as he is writing), but also because it shows that Anouilh himself considered the play to contain the outlines of his later themes and characters. What Anouilh does not say, but is equally true, is that the basis of his future technique is also to be found in Le Bal des voleurs; part of this

basis is the device of the play-within-the-play.

Le Bal des voleurs is so constructed that it forms a series of plays within the main play, each of which is designed to serve a different theatrical purpose but all of which help to illustrate a main idea.

The main story tells of an English noblewoman, Lady Hurf, who is on holiday with her two nieces, Éva and Juliette, and an old friend, Lord Edgard. The two girls are attracted to two young men who turn out to be thieves. A poverty-stricken stockbroker tries to arrange for his weak-minded son to marry one of the girls. The plot progresses to the accompaniment of music and ballet.

The episodes that form the plays-within-the-main-play are not performances in the sense that they take place on an actual platform erected on stage, but are incidents woven into the plot; sometimes the characters involved are directed by another character, sometimes they are their own directors.

The principal organiser of operations is Lady Hurf. She sees, in the dressing-up of the thieves as Spanish gentlemen, an opportunity to escape from the boredom of life. She says early on:

Je m'ennuie comme une vieille tapisserie.

A few moments later she adds:

J'ai cru pendant soixante ans qu'il fallait prendre la vie au sérieux. C'est beaucoup trop. Je suis d'humeur à faire une grande folie.1

Consequently she will not allow Lord Edgard to protest that he does not know the gentlemen. She believes she has found a kindred

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1. F.R. p. 43.
soul who is also seeking to break the monotony of existence, and so she says to Peterbono:

Je suis sûre que vous vous ennuyez aussi? Vous ne trouvez pas que c'est une chance inespérée de s'être rencontrés?¹

It is "pour égayer un peu cette soirée"² that she organises the other characters into taking part in the thieves' carnival. Both of these events are deliberately organised by her for the same purpose; indeed her whole life has been a conscious effort to disguise her dissatisfaction with existence. When Éva says that she cannot believe this, Lady Hurf tells her she cannot have been using her eyes properly:

Je joue un rôle. Je le joue bien comme tout ce que je fais, voilà tout.³

In spite of her efforts she is still bored. Thus the whole of Lady Hurf's life, especially her two major attempts at organising diversions, serves the simple function of trying to dispel her boredom. The dramatic function of the plays-within-the-play, in this instance, is to illustrate that one possible means of escape from life is in fantasy, as was true also in Le Voyageur sans bagage when Gaston/Jacques elected to go off with the little English boy.

A second series of incidents that form a variation on the play-within-the-play device centre upon the thieves themselves. The play opens with them wearing disguises and robbing each other. To be the kind of people they want to be they find it necessary to dress up, but are in fact incompetent. When they don the garb of

¹. P.R. p. 49
². P.R. p. 67
³. P.R. p. 65
Spanish gentlemen, they fail to deceive Lady Hurf. For them the actual process of living demands dressing up and acting a part. When they appear as thieves for the carnival, people only laugh at them. Peterbono cannot understand why, asking:

Comment s'imagent-ils les voleurs? Ils n'ont jamais été au théâtre.¹

This further illustrates that for them life has to be lived as it appears to be in the theatre. Ironically when one of them, Gustave, does try to be a real robber, he fails. He is incompetent but honest.

Whereas Lady Hurf escaped into play as a flight from life, the thieves adopt play because they think it is life itself. Thus, through the thieves, the play-within-the-play device has been used to illustrate play not as a refuge from life but as life itself.

The charade enacted by the Dupont-Duforts, father and son, shows two unconsciously humorous characters consciously trying to play the parts of captivating men of the world. If they succeed in conning one of the girls into marriage, their own financial problems will be solved. They play their parts badly and fail; fundamentally they are corrupt. In contrast to Gustave they are incompetent but dishonest. Technically, they commit no crime; morally, they are more corrupt than the robbers. As a result the spectators are encouraged to sympathise with the thieves rather than with the Dupont-Duforts. Logically the former should be apprehended, but in fact the latter are. The police make their arrest "avec les gestes des acrobates de cirque".² The ballet—

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1. P.R. p. 91.
fantasy thus enacted suggests that the audience should not take matters too seriously, for the manner in which events are resolved is really quite fortuitous. What Anouilh has said, however, is serious. In one way the incident recalls Anouilh's first dramatic sketch, the short *Humulus le muet*, in that both are examples of the author using the theatrically light-hearted to say something rather more grave than at first appears.

The niece Éva casts herself in an interesting role. She fell in love with a young man, Hector, who spoke to her in the park while wearing one of his robber-disguises. It was his appearance, not the man himself, that attracted her. When Hector does find again the disguise that had originally pleased her, Éva realises that she no longer loves him. The illusion that she had first fallen in love with had not been able to sustain its appeal. She decides to return to her former way of life:

> je m'en vais continuer à jouer mon rôle de charmante jeune femme qui a beaucoup de succès.

She is going to replace one illusion with another. In that she has still to learn to distinguish her role clearly and play it well, she does, in some slight degree, resemble the Dupont-Duforts.

Hovering along the sidelines of the game, the dull Lord Edgard watches uncomprehendingly. He can only live prosaically, refusing to pretend that the dead Duc de Miraflor is alive again; he unimaginatively solves the problem of stopping the unwanted attention of the Dupont-Duforts to the girls by sending for Scotland Yard.

1. P.R. p. 130.
Even he, however, has wit enough eventually to join in Lady Hurf's game by claiming Gustave as his long lost son. The point illustrated is that the game is open to all who make the effort to participate and have a modicum of imagination.

The final hint of a play-within-the-play concerns the musician/detective who makes himself known at the close of the play. Anouilh leaves deliberately vague whether the character is really the musician who throughout has been the detective, or whether he is a newcomer disguised as the clarinettist. The function of this final frolic would seem to be to suggest that no real distinction can be made between life and the theatre.

Anouilh has consistently maintained that his prime intention is to divert, and with Le Bal des voleurs he succeeds in this aim. Yet the play, through the use of the play-within-the-play device, does more than just please. In a way it complements La Sauvage and Le Voyageur sans bagage. In these plays life only became bearable for Anouilh's heroes when they escaped and found happiness in dreams. Le Bal des voleurs shows dreams brought to life, the unreal materialised through illusion. But the sad truths are that dreams cannot last, they lack authenticity and contain a happiness that is of doubtful quality, for, as Lady Hurf tells Éva at the end of the play, perhaps after all it is only those who have been truly themselves who have been triumphant, something only possible to young people who still possess a naive and simple faith, as did Juliette and Gustave.

Elle est finie, notre belle aventure. Nous nous retrouvons tous seuls, comme des bouchons. Il n'y a que pour ceux qui l'ont jouée avec toute leur jeunesse que la comédie est réussie, et encore c'est parce qu'ils
Having suggested that happiness can only be found in dreams and then having cast doubt on that idea, Anouilh goes on to suggest that perhaps at only one time in one's life can one be happy and then only when one is sincere. Perhaps the world of fantasy is not as preferable as it had seemed previously in Le Voyageur sans bagage.

With poetic sensitivity Anouilh has used various forms of the play-within-the-play device in Le Bal des voleurs, not in order to solve a problem or state a case but rather to illustrate different facets of an idea and then cast doubt on the thoughts that might appear to have been suggested. Superficially the play may appear to be simple and light-hearted; close examination shows it to be complex and serious. So far it is the work in which a spirit of play is most evident.

In these early works can be seen how after a tentative start in Humulus le muet Anouilh moved from the semi-realism of L'Hermine and Jézabel to the increased theatricality of La Sauvage, followed by the growing element of fantasy in Le Voyageur sans bagage, and ending with its imaginative and wide-ranging use in Le Bal des voleurs. This development can be traced in a number of aspects of Anouilh's technique. From the point of view of his use of language, in his first plays he did not attempt a slavish imitation of reality but was quite willing to introduce long speeches and melodramatic outbursts. With La Sauvage and Le Voyageur sans bagage there appeared an element of poetic prose in

l. P.R. p. 130.
certain passages. These two plays, marking, as they did, a
definite step forward towards non-realistic presentation, saw the
deliberate introduction of music. The number of non-realistic
characters in each play increased, and audiences were encouraged
more and more to sympathise with them.

Of most significance for this thesis, however, is the way in
which Anouilh has developed the concept of role-playing. In
L'Hermine Frantz and Monime merely tell each other that from time
to time they have put on an act to hide their real feelings from
other people. Jezabel saw this idea taken a stage further when
the mother is seen acting a part in which she desperately hangs
on to her youth. It is a part she has chosen for herself and
which she is reluctant to give up, in contrast to Frantz and
Monime who were able to put aside their masks if they wished. A
further idea is introduced in Jezabel when the servant-girl,
Georgette, attempts to direct her mistress in the part of the
ageing and kindly mother that her son wished her to be. The
implication of this manoeuvre would seem to be that, if there are
roles in life for individuals to play, then perhaps one person
can direct another into a course of action for his own ends. If
the mother can be turned into the kind of person her son likes,
then Georgette will be able to remain with Marc. She is
attempting a manipulation in the tradition of the Marquise de
Merteuil in Laclos's Les Liaisons dangereuses, but without the
latter's intelligence. In Jezabel the desired result is not
achieved.

The next logical step for Anouilh to take, after having
introduced the concept of role-playing, was to present on stage characters whose lives were made up of performing. This he did in *La Sauvage* with the Tarde family, a group of jaded musicians, some of whom (in particular the father) had become so used to performing that they found difficulty in conforming to the accepted norm of behaviour in society. For them putting on a performance had become a way of life. Anouilh's skill was further demonstrated in this play by the way in which he used the musicians' rostrum to encourage a feeling of involvement in the play by the audience. It was in *La Sauvage*, too, that Anouilh made a non-realistically portrayed character (the father) a person towards whom audiences could feel sympathetically inclined. This contrasts with characters like the Duchess in *L'Hermine* who, although murdered, evokes little regard on account of her prejudiced opposition to her niece's marriage, or the mother in *Jézabel*, a selfish, drunken and promiscuous murderess.

In these first three plays role-playing has progressed from passing reference to performance on stage and then to total involvement; it has been used to hide feelings, to achieve particular ends, to portray a way of life. *Le Voyageur sans bagage* follows this up by presenting an amnesiac who has lost his role in life and is encouraged by friends to re-find it. He rejects those parts offered to him (including the one he recognises should have been his) and finally selects one to his own liking. Into this variation on the device of role-playing Anouilh has woven his portrayal of a character in a non-realististic manner by making the person whom the hero accepts as his long-lost relative,
a character who, by realistic standards, is incredible. The hero, the 'new-found relative' and the latter's lawyer all have to connive in order to make the ruse work, thus enabling the amnesiac to escape from the life other people were trying to force back upon him. Together they have performed a minor play-within-the-play.

If the lives of individuals could be made up of roles accepted and performed and if groups of individuals could act together, then perhaps the whole of existence might be composed of a series of playlets loosely combining to form that pattern of behaviour called life. The construction of Le Bal des voleurs would seem to illustrate precisely this point; in it various interrelated groups perform their own little charades, each of which demonstrates some aspect of the relationship (as Anouilh would appear to see it) between life and the theatre.

What began as simple references to role-playing has thus progressed through individual performances, either chosen or imposed, to combined efforts and finally linked playlets.

From the beginning Anouilh shunned straightforward realism, exploiting certain aspects of theatricality with the purpose of illustrating the duality of existence, its darkness and its humour. He had become increasingly aware that fantasy in the theatre could express what he wished to say. In one of his plays he had used variations on the play-within-the-play abundantly. At this early point in his career Anouilh had employed the device to illustrate man's vain search for true and lasting happiness. Theatricality and the technique of the play-within-the-play had
combined to suggest that life was one long pretence: it might provide some incidental fun but it was doomed to end in failure. In this way the form of Anouilh's plays had been well-matched to their thought-content which, though not highly significant, was interesting and contributed to the author's stated main aim, which was to please.
Chapter 5.
The plays from Le Rendez-vous de Senlis (1937) to L'Invitation au château (1947)

Having successfully staged Le Bal des voleurs, in which variations on the play-within-the-play device were used, Anouilh went on to employ numerous forms of the technique in many more plays. The decade from 1937 to 1947 forms a period wherein he consolidated his control over this particular device and further developed the spirit of play. The purpose of the present chapter will be to show the various ways in which his mastery of the technique revealed itself. During the same period Anouilh introduced hints of self-conscious theatre into his works, indications that will be mentioned when they occur. The device becomes particularly important in the final play of the period, L'Invitation au château.

Though written before Léocadie, Le Rendez-vous de Senlis (1937) was the second to be performed. It was probably being written while Le Bal des voleurs was in rehearsal and this may explain why the techniques used in the two plays have some aspects in common. There are, however, some significant differences. Whereas in Le Bal des voleurs Lady Hurf gave a general invitation to all the people around her to join in her game and to participate just for the fun of it, Georges in Le Rendez-vous de Senlis issues his invitation to particular individuals who are to perform the specific task of recreating for him an ideal family. His purpose is quite precise as opposed to that of Lady Hurf whose aim generally was to have fun; he sets out deliberately to create an
alternative present as a means of escape from the sordid reality in which he is living.

The limitation of the invitation to take part in a charade to particular individuals, as opposed to a general invitation to all, has a parallel elsewhere in the play: Anouilh moves from a broad comment on life in general to a precise statement on a particular aspect of it. *Le Bal des voleurs* illustrated in general terms, through the use of the play-within-the-play device, the close relationship between life within the theatre and life outside it. The device as it occurs in *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis* conveys a more precise notion; this is seen most clearly in the way the actors interpret their roles. Philémon in performing the part of George's father must not portray a stage-father as such characters are usually presented, for this would be too near George's actual father; rather he must appear to be natural though perfect. A truly theatrical father in this case would be too real; the seemingly natural father is in the event false and idealised.

*Mme de Montalembreuse*, who is to play the part of the mother, offers an equally complicated picture. When rehearsing, she succeeds in capturing so well the kindly tone that Georges requires that he cannot believe she has not, at some time or other, either spoken these words to her own son (who had expressed a desire resembling that of Georges to live unmarried with a young girl) or that she has not, on some occasion, acted a similar part in a play. As an actress *Mme de Montalembreuse* can say:

\[\text{A ton âge, c'est l'amour qui n'a pas de prix.}\]

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1. P.R. p. 171.
When she had found herself in such a position in real life her reaction had been quite different:

C'était avec une petite violoniste [..] une petite putain de rien du tout [..] Je lui ai flanqué une paire de gifles, oui! 1

When, however, George's real mother meets her son with Isabelle, then the reaction is different again. Mme Delachaume tries to persuade Isabelle to leave Georges, not for the latter's good but for selfish reasons; in so doing her manner of persuasion is, as described by Anouilh, "très mère". The situation is such that if Isabelle remains the parents will be financially ruined since the source of their income will be cut off. By showing both the real mother and the actress mother to be different from what they at first seem to be, Anouilh has made the truth about them a little more difficult to establish.

The actor-parents are treated to one further touch of irony; they are unable to act the parts for which they have been engaged until the play is over. By this time the person they were supposed to deceive is thoroughly conversant with the situation and their acting can be recognised as such. The play-within-the-play that Georges has endeavoured to stage does not take place until after the fall of the final curtain; in this instance the play-within-the-play is only seen in rehearsal, as it were. The ambiguity with which Anouilh has clothed these characters suggests less an exploration of the relationship between reality and sham or an attempt to discover truth in falsehood than the fact that truth and illusion cannot be pin-pointed and are in fact

interchangeable. It is to convey this precise idea that Anouilh has used his variations of the play-within-the-play device in Le Rendez-vous de Senlis.

Some of the hints of self-conscious theatricality that I mentioned in the opening paragraph to this chapter are to be found in this play. There are three of them, all connected with Robert, Georges's brother-in-law. He it is who recognises the theatricality of both his own existence and that of his family; by paying them their livelihood Georges dictates their lives. They are playing parts that could easily have been written for them. Thus the first example occurs while the confrontation with Isabelle is taking place; Robert is the only one who can see that they have to carry on with the parts that they have been given:

Me taire? Mais tu ne sens donc pas qu'au point où la scène en est arrivée maintenant il ne nous est plus possible de nous taire? Que nous allons enfin devoir jouer nos rôles, tous, jusqu'au bout?¹

The situation is such that there is no going back; the characters must continue playing their parts right to the end, for once a sequence of events has been set in motion it must inevitably progress to its conclusion. In Le Rendez-vous de Senlis Anouilh has introduced with Robert's words an element of logical determinism that was to reappear in Antigone in more pronounced form and with a trace of pre-determinism added.

Self-conscious theatricality is seen for the second time when Robert asks advice of Philémon:

Alors vous allez pouvoir me donner un conseil. Nous avons fini notre scène: comment croyez-vous que nous devons sortir?²

¹ P.R. p. 223.
² P.R. p. 262.
When at last he does depart, Philemon exclaims:

Raté! Personne n'est jamais sorti comme ça.¹

At this point Anouilh is giving a very clear reminder to his audience that it is watching a play.

The final touch of self-consciousness occurs after Robert and the other members of the family have departed; Georges can then indulge his fantasy with Isabelle by dining with her among his "pretend" family. The incident sounds a note of frivolity on which to conclude the play, with the Maître d'hôtel reciting his ridiculous ditty only to be told to get on with serving the meal. Anouilh's intention would seem to be to say to his audience that his play has only been a piece of entertainment after all, but one wonders whether perhaps this is not an attempt at a double deception on the part of the author.

Le Rendez-vous de Senlis is certainly entertaining, but it goes further than that in its hint of self-consciousness. Most important, however, are the use Anouilh has made of the invitation given to individuals to play specific roles and the preparations for the play-within-the-play, whereby he suggests the precise idea of the indivisibility of sham and truth which so merge that the whole of life tends to become theatrical. Furthermore, this is the first instance in his theatre where he includes characters who are actors as distinct from musicians.

Closely linked to Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, by its light-hearted tone, by its invitation to certain individuals to play

¹. P.R. p. 263.
particular parts, and by its use of the play-within-the-play device to illustrate a particular point of view, is Anouilh's next play, *Léocadie* (1939).

The plot of *Léocadie*, at the primary level, tells of the concern of a Duchess for her son who is pining for a lost moment of bliss. The mother recreates the scene of her son's past encounter with the extravagant Léocadie Garcia by transposing to the park of her chateau the very buildings, taxi, and personages involved. Unfortunately she is one character short, for Léocadie accidentally throttled herself with her scarf. A young modiste, Amanda, is invited to join in the game by taking the part of the deceased Léocadie. After some hesitation the girl agrees. The reason for Amanda's presence as arranged by the Duchess is quite clear; she is to lay the ghost of Léocadie and awaken the Prince from his trance. The final words of the Duchess confirm this view:

*Nous venons de la tuer une seconde fois dans son souvenir. Il fallait sauver notre petit Albert.*

She is willing to save him even if this means marrying him off to a girl who works in a dress shop. Her attitude here calls to mind that of Lady Hurf who was willing to let her niece marry a would-be thief. What is at first not so clear is the manner in which the Duchess intends that the Prince should be saved. By playing the part of Léocadie, a play-within-the-play, Amanda can be seen to be recreating the past so that it becomes the present for the Prince; he can then start living again from this point in time. Alternatively it might so happen that Amanda creates a new passion in the Prince, and this is in fact what seems to occur. From this

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moment onwards the Prince is alive again, the past forgotten.

The play-within-the-play in Léocadia has not been used as in Le Rendez-vous de Senlis to provide an escape from present unpleasant reality, but as a means of escaping from the memory of the past in order to live an enjoyable present.

As we have seen, the play-within-the-play of Léocadia does follow the pattern set by Le Rendez-vous de Senlis in its invitation to individuals to take part in a game and in its function of presenting a specific idea. In Léocadia, however, Anouilh adds to the significance of the device by stressing the importance of setting. As already stated, the very buildings and people with whom the Prince came into contact during the three-day Léocadia incident have been rebuilt in the park of the chateau. Here it is that the play-within-the-play shall take place; but it is in this park also that the Duchess herself and her household move and life. Existence at both the primary and the secondary level takes place on the same stage. Life and fantasy are merged through the dramatic device of the play-within-the-play, creating a poetic inter-relationship between the two elements. Moreover, it is in fantasy (play) that the Prince finds reality; but only when Amanda has ceased acting and is herself. Ultimately Anouilh has reversed his previous trend and shown reality (in this instance enjoyable) as the victor.

Clearly Le Rendez-vous de Senlis and Léocadia show Anouilh firmly establishing his control of the play-within-the-play device when applied to works that are light-hearted in tone.
When we come to *Eurydice* (1942), we find examples of Anouilh's use of both inner play and play-within-the-play; they will be dealt with in the order in which they occur in the play whose sombre atmosphere reflects the mood of the French public in a war situation, in contrast to the almost frivolous tone of his immediately previous plays. The experiments in technique that Anouilh has made hitherto have brought forth their first real fruits in *Eurydice*, a play that has been described by Paul Ginestier as Anouilh's first masterpiece.¹

The first example of Anouilh's use of a play-within-the-play in *Eurydice* occurs when Vincent and Eurydice's mother cast themselves in the roles of re-united lovers. They are both actors and are drawn somewhat larger than life. He is described as 'argenté, beau et mou sous des dehors très énergiques. Le geste large, le sourire amer, l'œil vague'.² When the mother arrives, she is described thus:

*Elle fait une entrée triomphale. Boa, chapeau à plumes. Elle n'a pas cessé de rajeunir depuis 1920.*³

When on-stage the couple constantly indulge in self-dramatisation. They recall their first meeting in the grand casino at Ostend when they danced a Mexican tango together. They repeat the very words they spoke on that occasion:

*Tu te rappelles le premier jour: "Madame, est-ce que vous voulez bien m'accorder ce tango?"*⁴

² P.N. p. 401.
³ P.N. p. 308.
⁴ P.N. p. 404.
When Vincent and the mother recall this past moment of happiness, they are surrounded by the dreariness of the rather drab station waiting-room. Anouilh has here used the play-within-the-play device as a means of escape from the gloomy reality of the present. This, it will be remembered, is what Georges had attempted to do in *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis* but, whereas he had tried to escape into a new present, Vincent and the mother fly to a past moment of bliss.

This play-within-the-play involving Vincent and the mother serves a second function since their false extravagance contrasts with the simple affection of Orphée and Eurydice in the scene that immediately follows. The older couple had declared in their youth that their love would last for ever, and could no longer remember why they had parted. When Orphée swears to Eurydice:

Je ne vous quitterai jamais,¹

the audience may well wonder, bearing in mind Vincent's words, how prophetic his protestation will prove to be. The device in this instance has thus been used as a means of contrasting two sides of love.

A further aspect of the charade played by Vincent and the mother is the former's inability to distinguish between life and the theatre, an idea we have already encountered in our analysis of *Le Bal des voleurs*. What is new in Anouilh's treatment of the idea is his use of another playwright's text. Vincent quotes Perdican's love speeches from Musset's *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*, but does not realise that he has lapsed into a part he

¹. P.N. p. 408.
has played in the theatre. Another implication of this playlet is that, when love degenerates, lovers are then obliged to borrow the ready-made phrase. Moreover, given that the words are from Musset (and for that reason hardly to be despised), it may well be that true love is enshrined in art not in life, that is to say in the unreal world of the theatre. Indeed Anouilh's choice of model, the classical legend of Orpheus, for his own play could be seen to imply the same idea, namely that true love can only exist in fantasy (the preferable alternative to reality).

The second incident that I wish to discuss conforms more to my definition of an inner play since it cannot be said to have a director nor do characters perform in ways greatly different from their previous pattern of behaviour. I am referring to Orphée's journey into the realm of the dead in order to meet again his beloved Eurydice after she has been killed in a motor accident. This is in part governed by the fact that the original story necessitated the incident, but Anouilh also uses it to illustrate further that true love can only exist in an unreal world. Orphée forms an idealised conception of Eurydice. With the help of the mysterious M. Henri, a symbolic figure of death, he enters the supernatural world of the dead and learns from those people who have played a role in Eurydice's life the kind of person she is. The woman envisaged by Orphée could not survive when confronted with the harsh realities of worldly existence. It would seem appropriate, in this instance, that the true lovers should meet in the unreal world of the supernatural. Anouilh has introduced

the inner play device to express the specific idea that real affection can only exist in fantasy. Its effect is to increase the theatricality of the play since it stresses a non-realistic element.

In the third example, Anouilh again uses the play-within-the-play device. It occurs within the fantasy element of the third act, when Dulac, Eurydice, and Le Petit Régisseur enact a scene before Orphée which shows the latter how it was that Dulac, by constantly threatening to dismiss the timid and incompetent régisseur, could force Eurydice to sleep with him. Her kindliness always prevailed:

> Et voilà comment cela se passait chaque fois... Pardon, mon chéri! j'étais lâche, mais je ne t'aimais pas encore. Je n'aimais personne. Et il n'y avait que moi qui pouvais le défendre.

The almost virtuoso use Anouilh has made here of the device recalls the skill he displayed in handling the numerous plays-within-the-play of Le Bal des voleurs, but it also looks forward to the technique he was to exploit in L'Alouette when characters already on-stage step forward to perform their parts.

The final incident in Eurydice to which I wish to draw attention is to be seen in the concluding moments of the play. In so far as the real world can be said to represent the main play and the supernatural to be outside it, then the final tableau when Orphée is seen united with Eurydice in the peace and calm of death, as M. Henri describes the life hereafter, can be classified as a further use of a non-realistic device. This use of tableau

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1. P.N. p. 505.
is new in Anouilh's theatre and meets my definition of inner play rather than that of play-within-the-play; it has no directed role-playing but is extra to the main plot at this point, which shows Orphée's father enquiring after his son. It is significant that the spectators can see the transcendental couple whereas the father is unaware of their presence. Anouilh has attempted to represent symbolically here the fact that his heroes,

 les nobles 

 Ceux qu'on imagine très bien étendus, pâles, un trou dans la tête, une minute triomphants avec une garde d'honneur ou entre deux gendarmes selon: le gratin,

will live on in the minds of the spectators after the fall of the final curtain because these heroes are exceptional. People like the father, on the other hand, are insensitive and unexceptional:

 Une race nombreuse, féconde, heureuse, une grosse pâte à pétrir, qui mange son saucisson, fait ses enfants, pousse ses outils, compte ses sous, bon an mal an, malgré les épidémies et les guerres, jusqu'à la limite d'âge; des gens pour vivre, des gens pour tous les jours, des gens qu'on n'imagine pas morts.

Such people will cease to have any significance once the play has ended because they have added nothing original to our understanding; such people will fade from our memories as individuals though we may recall them as types. People like the father, however, are the ones who will survive uncrushed by the weight of the world to which they have adapted themselves. For this reason the father is still on-stage when the curtain finally falls, his presence symbolising the survival of the 'gens pour tous les jours' in life.

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1. P.N. p. 470.
2. P.N. p. 470.
Play-within-the-play and inner play have each been used twice by Anouilh in *Eurydice*. The first example of play-within-the-play is found in the opening act when Vincent and the mother play out their charade of false love. The first use of inner play occurs in the third act which transposes the audience from the world of ostensible reality into a mystic Elysium where the hero meets his slain heroine. Within this scene Anouilh takes us yet a further step along the corridor of mirrors when the past relationship between Dulac, Eurydice, and Le Petit Régisseur is shown through a variation on the play-within-the-play device. Finally the play closes with an inner play when the audience is permitted a brief glance of Orphée and Eurydice reunited in death. On each of these occasions Anouilh has endeavoured to make the device not only theatrically effective but also symbolically relevant to the idea it is trying to convey.

In one way *Eurydice* can be seen to emerge in clear line of descent from *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis* and *Léocadie* in that it, too, uses the devices of inner play and play-within-the-play to convey specific ideas rather than a general notion of the inter-relationship of life inside and out of the theatre, though that idea is constantly to be found in Anouilh's plays. *Eurydice* goes further than the other two plays in the number of examples it uses, all of which are concerned with the nature of love and its only true existence in fantasy. This play is also more sombre than the other two, a quality that partly derives from Anouilh's sensitivity to the time when he was writing *Eurydice*, and partly from the theme of the legend itself. The play was certainly the most important Anouilh had written so far; its significance came
in part from the classical legend itself. The play goes beyond its predecessors, also, in the innovative skill Anouilh has shown in adapting the devices of his earlier plays in exciting ways. For the first time he uses actors as main characters; when they appeared in *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis*, they were little more than hired hands. Furthermore it is apparently with pleasure that, in the case of the mother and Vincent, they re-enact their past, as opposed to the evocation of bygone times in *Léocadie*, which seemed shrouded in dreamy wistfulness. The use of another playwright's text and having characters already on-stage step forward to perform were also new. With Orphée's journey to meet his deceased Eurydice and with the final tableau of the loving couple Anouilh introduced devices that can be classified under the general term 'play', or more precisely 'inner play'. Because these devices tended to be non-realistic they accorded with the fantasy in the original classical legend.

Anouilh's second important play derived from classical sources is *Antigone*, written in 1942 and first performed in February 1944. Like *Eurydice* it modernises an ancient story, not this time by grafting a new story onto the outlines and theme of the old, but by following the old story in closer detail and by using anachronisms and modern dress. The work is so structured that the story of Antigone appears to be a play-within-the-play, for the work begins with a prologue and ends with an epilogue spoken by a Chorus, who also addresses the audience during the course of the play and takes part in the action.
When the Prologue introduces the characters to the spectators at the beginning of the play he does so with the very significant words:

Ces personnages vont vous jouer l'histoire d'Antigone.¹

From the opening words Anouilh makes quite clear to the audience that they are to remember that they are watching a play. This is an important aspect of the self-conscious theatricality to which I referred at the beginning of this chapter. What the chorus does in his opening monologue is to show that the actors have foreknowledge of their parts; of the girl who is to play the part of Antigone the Prologue says:

Elle pense. Elle pense qu'elle va être Antigone tout à l'heure ... ²

What is going to happen to each of the characters is briefly sketched in by the Prologue. The girl on-stage is not presented as an Antigone dogged by fate because she is the daughter of Oedipe, but as an actress about to perform the story of Antigone, a role that she will have to play "jusqu'au bout".³ In this way suspense dependent on the outcome is removed and replaced by a sense of inevitability; the end has been pre-determined. Given the natures with which the characters have been invested by Anouilh they proceed logically to their appointed ends, though the spectator may sometimes wonder during the confrontation scene between Antigone and Créon whether perhaps the heroine might escape after all. At the close of the play the Chorus steps

¹. N.P.N. p. 131.
². N.P.N. p. 131.
³. N.P.N. p. 131.
forward and informs the audience:

Mais maintenant, c'est fini. Ils sont tout de même tranquilles. Tous ceux qui avaient à mourir sont morts. [...]
Et ceux qui vivent encore vont commencer tout doucement à les oublier et à confondre leurs noms. C'est fini."

The Chorus is thus confirming both the theatricality of the play and its concept of predeterminism; the end as planned has been inevitably reached, with all those dead who had to die and those to be spared carrying on. A consequence of presenting the story in this way is that Anouilh has eliminated any meta-physical significance from his play. Whereas the Antigone of Sophocles found herself struggling against fate, cursed by the gods because she was the daughter of Oedipus, Anouilh's Antigone is bound to die because she is Antigone and traditionally Antigone must die. The play-within-the-play as Anouilh uses it in Antigone functions as a visual illustration of the concepts of pre-determinism and logical inevitability.

This double concept is picked up by the Chorus during the course of the play and applied to tragedy in general, which he describes as a well-oiled machine that once wound up and set in motion will quietly unwind of its own accord. Inevitability is not, however, in itself tragic as the Chorus maintains; the struggle to escape one's fate while inevitably drawing nearer to it approaches tragedy; if the struggle is based on transcendental values, then tragedy ensues. Life as it appears to be presented in Anouilh's theatre is spiritual death; to struggle, to try to

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1. N.P.N. pp. 206 - 207.
escape physical death therefore becomes absurd. Hence, "c'est reposant, la tragédie",\(^1\) for it is a release from spiritual death; attempts to escape death (the release from spiritual suffocation) as destined by fate are therefore to be despised, for the struggle is purposeless; man is caught in a trap, and death is inevitable. The concept of tragedy, as dependent on inevitability, expressed by the Chorus may be suspect, but by using a known story in the form of a play-within-the-play to express that view Anouilh has reinforced the basic idea.

The Chorus's definition of tragedy, however, also includes the idea of innocence. Since all is predetermined, no-one is guilty: "c'est une question de distribution".\(^2\) In so far as this suggests the allocation of roles to be played, it accords with Anouilh's general concept of life as a game to be played. This receives emphasis through the words of the text, such as:

\[ \text{Faites comme moi. Faites ce que vous avez à faire.} \]\(^3\)

In what is partly a delayed reply to Antigone's above words, Créon shouts:

\[ \text{J'ai le mauvais rôle, c'est entendu, et tu as le bon.} \]\(^4\)

These words further remind the audiences that they are watching a play; when considered together with the indications given by the Prologue and the Epilogue to the same effect, they augment the concept of inevitability that dominates Antigone and form part and parcel of the self-conscious theatricality employed by Anouilh in this play.

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\(^1\) N.P.N. p. 161.
\(^2\) N.P.N. p. 161.
\(^3\) N.P.N. p. 174.
\(^4\) N.P.N. p. 175.
The recognition of their own theatricality by the characters in *Antigone* recalls the use Anouilh made of the same device in *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis*, when Robert reminded the other members of his family that they had now reached a point in their charade where they were obliged to continue with their parts right to the end. In *Antigone*, however, Anouilh has used the technique of self-conscious theatricality to express the same single idea as that of the play-within-the-play. The unification of techniques in a singleness of purpose, found in *Antigone*, derives directly from Anouilh’s previous use of the device to express a specific idea and from his use of self-conscious theatricality in *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis* to convey the concept of pre-determinism.¹

In addition to *Eurydice* and *Antigone*, Anouilh wrote two other works during the period beginning with *Léocadie* (1939) and ending with *L’Invitation au château* (1947) that were inspired by his reading of ancient classical literature. They are, however, not strictly relevant to my main theme: *Oreste* (1942) is only a fragment and *Médee* (written in 1946 but not performed until 1953), though important because it shows in Anouilh’s attitude a possibly less stringent intransigency towards an acceptance of life, is not significant from the point of view of the playwright’s technical development because it merely repeats devices he has previously employed. In this play Anouilh re-uses such techniques as the concept of life as a game in which we play prearranged roles, music as a back-ground to give point and mood to what is happening, the long speech in ordinary conversation, and a symbolic setting —

¹ See above p. 132.
this time a gipsy caravan on a wild plain outside a city wall, suggesting the ambulant life of its occupant and the shifting relationships she forms, the wildness of existence and the background of stability to which the hero will retire. The play-within-the-play device is not used at all.

With Roméo et Jeannette (1946) Anouilh returns to the modern world, though the influence of the classical plays is still apparent. This work forms a link between the author's classical plays and the next landmark in his technical development. It contains two characters whose actions recall the theatricality of earlier plays.

The first of these is Lucien, Jeannette's embittered brother, who is reminiscent of the cynical Robert in Le Rendez-vous de Senlis. Lucien is ever-sensitive to the dramatic nature of situations in which he finds himself. When the cock, Léon, has been slaughtered, Jeannette speaks out in anger against the mother who had killed it, calling her an unfeeling intruder into their lives. Lucien describes himself and the other members of the family, who observe the incident, as the ancient chorus in a classical play:

Et nous sommes là comme le choeur antique, impuissants, livides, muets ....1

Here Lucien is referring to all present, but the quotation is mainly applicable to himself as it is he who comments on what is happening.

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1. N.P.N. p. 244.
Lucien also plays the role of embittered cuckold. This is a role that has been thrust upon him by his wife but it is one that he plays to the full, exaggerating to comic excess the bitterness of his plight and thus heightening the poignancy of his situation. He has, as it were, donned a mask that he constantly lets slip. He is in fact aware that he is playing a part as he tells his sister, Jeannette:

Oui. Je joue un mauvais rôle. J'avoue que tout cela n'est pas très brillant.¹

Here Anouilh is returning to a less blatant use of self-conscious theatricality than in the two classically inspired plays that I have discussed. When it is linked with the concept of chorus through the role of Lucien, it couples Roméo et Jeannette with Antigone. Yet another indication of a relationship between these two plays is given by the hints of inevitability that are brought about by the application of self-conscious theatricality to the concept of role playing. When Lucien says that he is playing a bad role, this can be taken to mean both that as a person he is unpleasant and that as a character in a play he is disagreeable. If taken to mean the latter, then, since all parts are written and therefore determined before the curtain rises, Lucien's fate has already been settled and the audience may well sense this inevitability.

The second character to reveal an awareness of role-playing is Jeannette herself. The audience learns of her game when she chides Frédéric on his seriousness and describes to him her gaiety at her wedding. She asks him: 'Vous ne savez donc pas jouer avec

¹ N.P.N. p. 331.
When he replies that he does not, she tells him that she too is hurt but she is playing a game and making everyone else join in. This temporary escape from sordid reality in the pretense of a gay young bride proves unsatisfactory for Jeannette. Finally parted from Frédéric and finding no joy in the role she is playing, she decides to end her life only to find herself at this point reunited with her beloved in death. The lovers discover, as Eurydice and Orphée did before them, that only in the supernatural world of the dead can true love exist.

The above examples of theatricalism in Roméo et Jeannette mainly look back to Anouilh's two previous plays based on classical legends. The contemporary nature of the work, however, and the return to the use of role-playing as an escape from present reality prepare the way for Anouilh's future development. In these respects Roméo et Jeannette anticipates the author's next play, L'Invitation au château, wherein Anouilh appeared to find his own voice again, casting himself once more in the role of entertainer. The sombre timbre sounding through the spirit of play in Anouilh's last three works was to take on a much lighter note in his next production.

After the bitterness of Roméo et Jeannette the gaiety of L'Invitation au château (1947) stands in great contrast. The play's extravagance made it particularly welcome when it appeared, for it allowed the Parisian audiences a form of escapism into a pleasurable world of make-believe at a time when people generally

1. N.P.N. p. 331.
in Europe were still suffering from the effects of the holocaust that had engulfed them. Anouilh's sensitivity to the general mood of the public has often contributed to his box-office success.

The main protagonist in the play, Horace, is bored and cynical; he protests at the conditions in which mankind has to exist. He is insensitive to the feelings of others but is not vicious. His refusal of life manifests itself in an attempt to control it, an endeavour that forms a play-within-the-play which itself comments both on man's condition - he is a puppet to be controlled - and on life in general - it is a game to be played.

At the same time the play suggests that life and games should be enjoyed, and so within the play there is much humour found in various guises: wit, caricature, mots pour rire, and the subtle blending of moods and forms.

Est-ce que cette aventure vous amuse au moins, mademoiselle? C'est la première condition.

In addressing these words to Isabelle, the invitée alluded to in the title, Horace is echoing Anouilh's own stated attitude to the theatre in general:

Il faut bien que le théâtre continue et que le public s'amuse.

The purpose that lies behind the comedy that Horace arranges is complex; he is not fully aware himself of all the factors that motivate him. At first he believes that he is trying to save his brother from making a disastrous alliance by marrying a girl whom

he only thinks he loves and who certainly does not love him:

Il ne s'agit que de le tirer d'un songe.\(^1\)

This is the first reason given by Horace for engaging Isabelle to act the charade he has planned. He repeats it later when he denies Mme Desmermortes's allegation that he is in love with Diana:

\[J'ai seulement pensé, dès que je l'ai vue, qu'il lui fallait un autre cavalier que le pauvre petit Frédéric.\(^2\)

Anouilh is here using the same ruse that was successful in \textit{Léocadie} when Amanda was employed by the Duchess to waken the Prince from his dream world, but, whereas Amanda had to rescue her man from a past love, Isabelle's concern is for a present infatuation. Both girls fall in love with the man they are trying to save.

Horace's motives become further clarified when he admits to Mme Desmermortes: "Je m'ennuyais".\(^3\) The dissipation of boredom as an inspiration for action was the mainspring behind Lady Hurf's intrigues in \textit{Le Bal des voleurs}. To this have been added Horace's affection for his brother and irritation at Diana's behaviour. Horace claims that the whole affair has been an exercise of the mind for him, strongly denying Mme Desmermortes's suggestion that it has been a chance for him to show his philanthropy just as she does by her good works among the poor. Horace tries to substitute his world of fantasy for the world of reality; it is his way of saying "no" to life.

\footnotesize  
1. P.B. p. 43.  
3. P.B. p. 133.  

What Horace fails to appreciate is that in trying to fashion
the life of Frédéric he is affecting the course of his own
existence. Fate, he has argued, acts without reason, rather like
winning a raffle, and therefore people should not allow blind
destiny to control their lives:

Mais permettre au destin de vous conduire, lui tolérer
des maladies, des passions ridicules, des catastrophes,
des familiarités. Cela, c'est grave, mademoiselle, c'est
impardonnable.¹

Horace discovers that he cannot control events because other
people have their plans. Furthermore emotion over which he can
have no authority in other folk has its part in human affairs.
Mme Desmermortes and Isabelle's mother evolve a plan, partly to
amuse themselves but also for other reasons. They mistakenly
believe that Horace, unknown to himself, loves Isabelle. Their
plot, so they think, will reveal to him his true feelings.
Messerschmann, too, stages his little game, attempting to
impoverish himself; but his ploy fails and he finds himself
richer than ever. He has to learn, also, that for all the power
of his wealth he cannot buy off Isabelle. Horace has to be taught
that he cannot dictate how other people will feel, that he cannot
prevent Diana from cherishing a love for him, nor Isabelle from
becoming enamoured of Frédéric. Horace's attempts to play the
role of destiny are his way of protesting against life and form a
further motivating factor in his staging of his play.

Horace's intrigue goes a stage further than protesting, for
in attempting to control the lives of other people he is

¹. P.B. p. 40.
suggesting that people are little more than puppets who will dance for whoever pulls the strings. Life thus becomes a fortuitous muddle full of surprises, a comedy of intrigue and errors, like the plot of *L'Invitation au château* itself. But Horace himself is taking part in the comedy and must therefore be a puppet, if it so pleases anyone to pull his strings, he may find himself taking part in a comedy for which he has not bargained. This is of course precisely what does happen to him when Mme Desmermortes stages her little plot with Isabelle's mother. She complies with the latter's pretence that she is the Countess Funela and obliges Horace to accept her as such. In addition to adding an amusing incident to the main story, the Mme Desmermortes comedy does indeed show Horace that destiny is something that he cannot govern.

A further implication behind the numerous intrigues that go to make up *L'Invitation au château* is that the world is a theatre in which the characters play many parts. The styles of acting differ so that people as diverse as Patrice Bombelles and Lady India can perform in the same play as Isabelle. The former pair are extravagant in their conversation and gestures; they are theatrical but believe themselves to be natural. Isabelle, on the other hand, acts her part as a young girl, enamoured of Frédéric, and yet creates the impression of being natural:

*Il n'y a qu'elle qui n'a pas l'air de jouer la comédie.*

Through her pretence, truth has been revealed. In living Patrice Bombelles and Lady India are acting; in acting Isabelle is living.

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The former are unaware of their theatricality; the latter does not recognise her reality. The distinction between life and the theatre has become inverted, with the consequence that the spectator has been encouraged by Anouilh to believe that there can be no real distinction between life as it is lived outside the theatre and that which represents it within. The real and the non-real (imagined fantasy) are difficult to separate in life. The division is even more tenuous in the theatre, where nearly all is unreal and yet an attempt is made to create an illusion of reality. This inversion of the distinction between life and the theatre, made by Anouilh, suggests that any attempt to create an illusion of reality is unnecessary and indeed rather pointless. The logical step-forward is to acknowledge the theatricality of the play itself through the text. This is in fact a significant technique employed by Anouilh in *L'Invitation au château*, wherein he extends the manner in which he used the device previously seen in *Antigone*.

On several occasions within the text, the play acknowledges itself to be a play and not reality itself, that it is and is not the thing it purports to be. These moments stem primarily, but not entirely, from the fact that the twin brothers are played by the same actor. Patrice Bombelles describes Horace as 'un garçon qui joue un double jeu'.¹ A little further on in the same conversation, Patrice shows his disgust with Horace who, he alleges, copies his brother. Lady India protests 'Mais non, c'est Frédéric qui copie les siens, to which the double-edged reply comes back, 'C'est la même chose!'² The self-conscious nature of the

1. P.B. p. 11.
play is here implied rather than directly stated, as it is also when Isabelle announces her intention of giving up her part in Horace's comedy:

> On m'a demandé, c'est vrai, de jouer ici une petite comédie. Mon rôle est fini, le rideau tombe et je m'en vais.¹

When, thirty pages later, the play still has not yet ended, the audience hears Mme Desmermortes say, 'Cette petite comédie commence à se faire longue,' to which Horace replies, 'Que voulez-vous que je fasse? Je ne peux pas me couvrir de ridicule pour la faire finir plus tôt'.²

Mme Desmermortes and Capulat are instructed to speak directly to the audience:

> Quand tout le monde sort pour voir le feu d'artifice elles s'avancent au public et disent seulement les quatre premiers vers, sur une petite ritournelle, s'en allant à reculons, mutines, en envoyant des baisers d'adieu.³

The penultimate episode when everyone is waiting in tense excitement to see how Anouilh will handle the arrival of Horace with Frédéric already on stage underlines the theatricality of the play:

> C'est une tête de bois, mais il sait que la pièce est finie, il va bien être obligé de revenir.⁴

When it is, in fact, the servant Josué who enters carrying a note, Frédéric comments, 'J'étais sûr qu'il ne viendrait pas'.⁵ Horace's letter hammers home the point:

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1. P.B. p. 117.
2. P.B. p. 146.
3. P.B. p. 149.
5. P.B. p. 152.
pour des raisons que vous comprendrez tous, je ne peux pas me joindre à vous au milieu de l'allégresse générale.¹

On the one hand, the vous can refer to the characters on stage who will know that Horace cannot leave his new-found love, while, on the other, the vous can equally well mean the people in the audience who will be aware that Horace and Frédéric are performed by the same actor and consequently cannot be present simultaneously. The theatrical references are both direct and indirect. Their effect is to reinforce the point made earlier that acting is living and, conversely, that living is acting. The theatricality tells the audience that L'Invitation au château is life, an intrigue played out by puppets who move through time and space at the behest of the author, the master of the marionettes.

In L'Invitation au château Anouilh has combined the device of the play-within-the-play with the inherent theatricality of the work. In so doing he has provided a reminder to audiences that they have entered a maze of distorting mirrors reflecting life itself.

In the ten years between the writing of Le Rendez-vous de Senlis and L'Invitation au château Anouilh's technique as a dramatist developed significantly. Le Rendez-vous de Senlis and Léocadie had seen individuals invited to act specific parts within the play-within-the-play rather than perform generally. This was a development of an idea first seen in Le Bal des voleurs when Lady Hurf obliged the robbers to continue in their disguises.

¹ P.B. p. 152.
as Spanish noblemen. Whereas the actors in *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis* (used as characters by Anouilh for the first time) had to perform naturally, that is to say by realistic rather than theatrical standards, Amanda (in *Léocadia*) was instructed to act theatrically. In so doing she was in fact acting naturally, for the model on whom she had to base herself behaved theatrically. The hiring of an individual to portray a particular person was not used again by Anouilh until the final play of this period (*L'Invitation au château*) when Horace engaged Isabelle; she, like Amanda in *Léocadia*, was not a professional actress. What was new in Anouilh's technique in *L'Invitation au château* was the manner in which he wove the device into his handling of a comedy of intrigue.

A further variation in technique was seen in *Léocadia* where Anouilh stressed the setting of his play-within-the-play. Already in *La Sauvage* we had seen some importance given to the rostrum on which the musicians played but, then, any raised platform would have sufficed. In *Léocadia*, on the other hand, only those items present during the Prince's original adventure could be set in the Duchess's garden. Anouilh uses this to show the difference between the Prince's recognition of objects that surrounded him, as opposed to his hazy recollection of people including, as it happened, even Léocadia herself. The relevance of this contrast gives an importance to setting that is not found in previous examples of play-within-the-play.

When Anouilh turned as a next step to classical legends and adapted them, he clearly made a significant advance in his
technique. The reviewers at the time noted the anachronism but concentrated their attention for the most part on the content of the plays and did not always find this to their liking. The plays are particularly significant from the point of view of their technical development in their move towards self-conscious theatricality. This is seen in Antigone in the use of the Prologue to emphasise to the spectators that they were about to watch an interpretation of the ancient story of Antigone. The full acknowledgement within a play of its own theatricality was reached in L'Invitation au château, Anouilh's final play during the period I have been discussing.

Five of the six plays that I have discussed in this chapter all have something to say about the preferability of fantasy to reality. The exception to this is Antigone which uses 'play' for a different purpose. In this work fantasy is used to show how freedom of choice is a myth since all is predetermined and inevitable. In the other plays fantasy is shown to be generally preferable to reality. Georges, in Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, finds this is so when he arranges his little dinner party with his imaginary family. But he also learns that, only when everyone concerned is aware of the make-believe, can it be fully enjoyed. Orphée and Eurydice discover that try love cannot flourish in the choking atmosphere of worldly reality. A similar message was learnt by the lovers in Roméo et Jeannette, whereas L'Invitation au château seemed to suggest that only in the pretence of the theatre (and there were numerous reminders to audiences in this work that they were watching a play) was true joy to be found.
Only Léocadia appears to move in the opposite direction. Here a life of fantasy is shown as ridiculous, and it is only when the heroine stops acting and is true to herself that the Prince falls in love with her. But the story itself has the quality of a fairy-tale; a Cinderella-like figure is invited to the home of the Prince where she stays after midnight and marries the Prince. In this instance reality has been the instrument for bringing about a fantasy; ultimately this play, too, in spite of initial appearances suggests that make-believe is not only preferable to reality but a possibility.
Chapter 6.

The plays from Ardele to L’Alouette

The development of Anouilh's theatrical technique prior to the production of Ardele (1948) together with its companion piece Episode de la vie d'un auteur passed through two distinct stages. The first showed Anouilh's growing awareness that a non-realistic theatre best expressed what he had to say; linked with this was his increasing use of fantasy and the device of the play-within-the-play. Secondly, he gained tighter control of his technique and seemed to make a conscious endeavour to give his works greater significance, as is evidenced by his turning to classical legends for inspiration; at the same time the self-conscious theatricality of his plays increased. The works written during the period that began with Ardele (1948) and ended with L’Alouette (1952) can be seen to indicate a third stage; after an initial consolidation of his technique Anouilh incorporated the style and in some cases the actual text of other playwrights. This use of source material goes beyond the borrowing of plot that we saw in Anouilh's classically-derived plays; it expands the technique used in Eurydice when Vincent quoted Musset's text from On ne badine pas avec l'amour.¹

Of the two plays that begin the period considered here, Ardele and Episode de la vie d'un auteur, the latter is the more interesting from the point of view of its technical construction for the purpose of this thesis. Ardele on the other hand is the

¹. See above p. 137.
more important of the two plays when its content is considered, an understanding of which helps with an interpretation of the shorter work. **Ardèle** will be examined first, therefore. The play is not devoid of interest, however, when considering the development of Anouilh's skill as a dramatist. In it he does introduce a new variation on the play-within-the-play device when he makes the two children, Toto and Marie-Christine, play as children will at 'mothers and fathers'. The nature of their game is different in tone from what one usually expects from children, but it does reflect the general mood and theme of the play as a whole.

The story tells of the family of General Saintpé,¹ whose members have gathered at the General's request to discuss his sister, Ardèle. She is a hunchback and is having an affair with a similarly deformed person. Each member of the family is engaged in an extra-marital relationship. The General, chained by the bonds of marriage to a wife whose mind has become unhinged, seeks comfort with the various parlour-maids he employs. His younger sister, the Countess, has a lover, Villardieu, whose presence is happily acknowledged by her husband. The General's daughter-in-law, Nathalie, was in love with his younger son, Nicholas. Nevertheless, in spite of this love she married the older brother. This, it seems, was mainly as a financial safeguard against the insecurity of her position. When Nicholas returns, she agrees to meet him secretly at night. As they sit together in the shadow of the stairs, they watch the other members of the family flitting

¹. When the General appears in a later play, *La Valse des toréadors*, the orthography of his name changes to Saint-Pé.
from one bedroom to another. These people have to pronounce on Ardèle's affair. The General calls his sister's love a scandal\(^1\), while his younger sister uses terms like "affreux"\(^2\) and "monstrueux".\(^3\) Even Nathalie, who at first is not condemnatory, when faced with the sight of the hunchback entering Ardèle's room exclaims: 'Ah! c'est trop laid! Tout est trop laid.'\(^4\) Only the Count and Nicholas, themselves robbed of true love, show any sympathy for Ardèle. The Count says to the General:

Général, c'est bien ennuyeux, j'en conviens, mais figurez-vous que tante Ardèle a une âme dans sa bosse.\(^5\)

His words could well apply to other characters in Anouilh's plays; they act as a reminder that beneath the comic, grotesque exteriors of his marionettes there are human beings with souls and emotions. Nicholas's sympathy is shown when he cries to Ardèle that she must make the most of her love in spite of the opposition of the members of her family, otherwise they will make her like them. These comments together with Ardèle's stated religious tendencies give an initial impression that her love for her hunchback friend is pure. At first their association has a sort of idyllic quality, and while that lasts the General is content. For six months they enjoy music together and chasing butterflies. The turning point comes when one morning the General notices that Ardèle has started to put on lipstick. This use of make-up becomes symbolic of Ardèle's acceptance of worldly values and from that moment onwards

\(^{1}\) P.G. p. 30.
\(^{2}\) P.G. p. 34.
\(^{3}\) P.G. p. 35.
\(^{4}\) P.G. p. 76.
\(^{5}\) P.G. p. 51.
her behaviour becomes as devious and reprehensible as that of the other members of the family. She is rude to her sister who, while not divulging what Ardèle actually says, nevertheless exclaims: 'Elle a été extrêmement désagréable avec moi'. The sweet Ardèle, it seems, is not all sugar after all. Certainly she is sufficiently on the alert to know when it is safe for her to call up her lover to her room; her time comes when all is dark and the family, having forgotten to fasten the bolts on the outside of her bedroom-door, are busily engaged in their own sordid affairs.

Nathalie exclaims:

Elle savait qu'on avait oublié de refermer la porte et elle lui a ouvert.

The lover can only have known that it was safe for him to come up if he had received a signal from Ardèle. A few moments later the General's wife, ever sensitive to beasts or humans active in copulation, bursts from her room screaming out Ardèle's depravity:

Elle n'est pas seule. Je les entends, je les vois tous les deux.

Anouilh seems to be suggesting that, as soon as affection manifests itself in the physical act of love, it becomes just another act of lust similar to the activity of the General with his serving girls, the Countess with her lover, or all beasts and animals in nature, and even flowers.

By understanding clearly the ideas, expressed here in such grating tones, we can interpret more readily not only Anouilh's minor play, Épisode de la vie d'un auteur, but also his variation

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1. P.G. p. 49.
2. P.G. p. 76.
on the play-within-the-play device in *Ardèle* and the reasons for his farcical representation of some of the characters. The play is performed straight through without interruption; there is no escape into a dream world. When the two children play their game, they ape their parents, acting out a miniature parody of married life. They begin by professing their love for one another, squabble over who loves whom the most, scream irrationally and viciously at each other, and finally come to blows. By ending his main play with this little playlet Anouilh would seem to be holding out very little hope for the future of mankind, for the children, tomorrow's adults, are already contaminated. Their actions produce a horrifying effect on audiences because the fun usually associated with children's games is lacking. The play-within-the-play in this instance has been introduced naturally since it is normal for children to play; the device this time serves to augment the bitterness of the play.

The only relief from this mood is found in the non-realistic portrayal of some of the characters, a representation often bordering on farce. The Count, who frequently acts as the voice of reason, recognises this ridiculousness, saying:

"Heureusement que nous sommes ridicules, sans quoi cela serait vraiment trop triste, cette histoire." ¹

One effect of this farce is to make the play more acceptable to audiences who might otherwise find it unpalatable. It also serves as a reminder that *Ardèle* is a play, not life itself, and that therefore audiences should not be too upset by it after all. Anouilh was to use this device of coating a bitter pill with a covering of farce in some of his later plays.

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¹ P.G. p. 65.
Thematically *Ardèle* is closely linked with its less important companion piece, *Épisode de la vie d'un auteur*, which was dismissed by many critics as a mere make-weight. From the point of view of construction the latter play is interesting since it exploits further the technique of self-consciousness. There are also grounds for considering the *Épisode de la vie d'un auteur* as an apologia for *Ardèle*, an attempt by Anouilh to forestall the criticism of the latter play that he felt might come. The author-character in *Épisode de la vie d'un auteur* is being interviewed by a Roumanian Princess turned state-journalist; they are discussing the author's latest play entitled *La Marguerite*, which is the subtitle of *Ardèle*. The author's wife, who constantly squabbles with her husband, is called Ardèle. More important still is the fact that in the *Épisode de la vie d'un auteur* the "hero"—author is discussing his play. These facts together tend to suggest that Anouilh is writing, as it were, an extended programme note in dramatic form to *Ardèle*.

*Épisode de la vie d'un auteur* is constructed round a main plot, the interview with the foreign journalist, which is constantly disrupted by a series of minor incidents. Since these do not have a director but do interrupt the main plot, they may be termed 'inner plays'. The theme of the interview is love, a topic which Anouilh seemed to treat so harshly in *Ardèle*. At one point the lady asks the author what he really thinks of love:

> La Roumanie voudrait savoir ce que vous pensez vraiment de l'amour. ¹

¹ *Épisode de la vie d'un auteur* p. 65.
At first the author appears to prevaricate:

Que vous dire de La Marguerite et de l'amour? Voilà, je pense que vous avez tout de suite saisi la fine allusion du titre. La Marguerite, je t'aime un peu, beaucoup, passionnément, pas du tout. ¹

Madame Bessarabu, the lady reporter, presses the point and finally the author answers:

Donc, l'amour a des pétales. Excusez-moi, je vais être bref, je suis débordé. Vous m'avez posé une question précise, je vous réponds: je crois à l'amour. ²

Since the author is so involved with other matters his reply above may well be little more than an attempt to fob her off with an answer that will satisfy her. What is also possible is that he would like to believe in love because man is so lonely and this loneliness can only be broken by love:

Oui, je crois à l'amour. Je crois à l'amour, parce que seul l'amour peut nous sortir de l'affreuse solitude.

Since man has remained alone, then it would follow that either love has never existed or, if it has, it has been ineffectual. The author's cry would thus become an expression of hope rather than a statement of fact.

In practical terms the author is far from being alone. His whole life is a series of interruptions disrupting the flow of time, a host of loosely connected incidents that individually and collectively are amusing. When the author is asked by his friend whether life is funny, he insists that this is far from so: 'Non, elle n'est pas drôle ...' ⁴ It is not funny because men and women

1. Ibid. p. 66.
2. Ibid. p. 74.
3. Ibid. p. 76.
4. Ibid. p. 72.
constantly squabble, further proof of the failure of love; life is, however, farcical as the author discovers when his ceilings collapse, water pours down his walls, officials house large families in his home, and big men fall weeping onto his shoulders. Sadly he, as an individual, has no control over any of these events.

This, as the author-director indicates, is what life is like, a vaudeville-mixture of pain and farce like the play that is now taking place. He draws attention to the fact that this is a play in one exchange with the lady reporter who has just met his maid:

Madame Bessarabo: Elle est charmante. Tout à fait la servante de Molière.

L'Auteur (minaude): Vous exagérez, vraiment, vous exagérez! C'est un compliment exagéré.1

He, the author, has not only written the play but is taking part in it also. He takes it as an exaggerated compliment that he has created a character that is so much in the tradition of Molière. The highly self-conscious ending of the play also reminds the audience that it is in a theatre:

(L'auteur s'avance chargé d'Ardèle et de Contran tandis qu'au fond c'est la panique et le décor s'écroule. Il s'adresse au public).

On fait ce qu'on peut, messieurs, mesdames ... Et puis il y a tant de penseurs de nos jours qu théâtre que, s'il vous a seulement fait rire, je suis sûr que vous excuserez les fautes de l'auteur.2

The self-conscious ending has been prepared not only by the farcical tone of some of the incidents and by the theatricality of the staging – as when both callers in a telephone conversation are seen simultaneously on stage – but also by the setting itself.

1. Ibid. p. 69.
2. Ibid. p. 96.
The stage-instructions are that the décor should be 'aussi peu réaliste que possible'; on the other hand the personages in the play should be realistic, with the womenfolk quite charming,

mais – ce détail de mise en scène est indispensable – tout le monde porte un faux nez.

The world inhabited by the playwright is made up of real things but they are there to create an illusion, and so in this case their pretense is recognised; the actors whose ability to feign reality is greater than that of the inanimate objects that go to make up the set, appear more normal still; but their sham, too, is acknowledged. The effect of putting on false noses has been to dehumanise them, to reduce them to a level nearer to that of the set itself.

By revealing the actors, the setting and the play itself for what they really are (pretence), Anouilh may well have been endeavouring to prepare his audiences to accept another and perhaps greater truth. Through the construction of the play he seems to be suggesting the idea put forward by the author that, in this farce we call life, man is very much alone spiritually. Furthermore he appears to be implying that love, if it does exist, is ineffectual in breaking man's loneliness. In some ways Épisode de la vie d'un auteur substantiates what Anouilh says in Ardèle. In the latter play the grim and bitter reality of life finally predominates; in the shorter Épisode de la vie d'un auteur, not only is the sad world of existence shown but also the confusing one of fantasy. In neither sphere can happiness be found. The

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1. Ibid. p. 61.
2. Ibid. p. 61.
final comment from the author to the audience, in which he begs forgiveness for his mistakes and hopes the spectators have enjoyed themselves, suggests that in the final analysis the only joy left in life is, perhaps, to be found in the theatre. Here one can have a hearty laugh with other people and put on the side for a moment the sorrows that oppress and the loneliness that grieves.

The next play to be written by Anouilh, Cécile (1949), was performed once only initially, as part of the wedding festivities of the playwright's daughter. The play is in complete contrast of mood to Ardèle, being much gayer in tone; it does, however, follow on from what has gone before in a number of ways. First the setting is to be "aussi faux que possible"\(^1\), reminding us that the setting for the Épisode de la vie d'un auteur was to be, as we noted earlier, "aussi peu réaliste que possible". There are a number of references, in what had become a conventional manner for Anouilh, to playing roles; these are made mainly by Cécile's father, M. Orlas, who tries to talk to his daughter about the problems of growing up. She replies mechanically "Oui, papa" or "Non, papa", which, as M. Orlas remarks, is really no response at all:

Parce que je suis votre père et que vous êtes ma fille, nous nous croyons obligés l'un et l'autre de jouer des rôles tout faits. Ce que je vais vous dire est d'avance marqué dans votre esprit de banalité, de conformisme, d'ennui.\(^2\)

\(^1\) P.B. p. 487.
\(^2\) P.B. p. 507.
The attitude of mind he is chastising in his daughter, however, is visible in himself. When Araminthe, the governess, tries to persuade him to stop his daughter's midnight-elopeement by hiding in the garden and surprising them in the act, he at first scoffs at the idea:

Ah! Ah! la plaisanterie est drôle! Vous me prenez donc pour un benêt? Pour un père de comédie? Vous imaginez que je vais mettre un manteau sombre et prendre un rhume dans le jardin pour voir si je n'y trouve point d'échelle?!

Yet this is precisely what he does do, arming himself moreover with pistols, much to the alarm of his friend M. Damiens, likewise cloaked and secretive.

Araminthe, Cécile's governess, links this play with Anouilh's previous works in two interesting ways. First she, like Horace in L'Invitation au château acts as a meneur du jeu specifically telling Cécile's dispirited Chevalier that she will put matters right for him and will arrange his affairs. Secondly and more importantly Araminthe picks up from Anouilh's previous plays the note of self-consciousness, and sounds it three times in Cécile.

The first occurs when Araminthe is musing on the fact that M. Orlas will appear late at night in the garden, cloaked and armed, to prevent his daughter's elopement in spite of what he has said to the contrary. Perhaps he will catch a cold or maybe even find love:

Ou bien les deux. On verra bien! L'auteur ne le sait pas lui-même.

When, towards the close of the play, M. Orlas, the Chevalier, and

2. P.B. p. 505.
M. Damiens seem unable to resolve their differences, Arminthe steps forward and says:

> Cette petite comédie commence à se faire longue. Ne croyez-vous pas que nous l'avons tous assez dit?  

Having settled matters happily, Arminthe confesses to M. Orlas that she knew there was no need to worry:

> Jétais dans le secret de la comédie, monsieur, et au théâtre, tout se termine toujours bien.  

The implications of Arminthe's words are that, whatever uncertainty might face lovers bedevilled by problems in the outside world, within the theatre at least, if the author so wishes, everything can be brought to a happy conclusion. This, of course, is not to say much, but, by deliberately drawing the attention of his audience to what he has done, Anouilh has once again used technique both to entertain and to convey meaning. At this point the self-conscious theatricality is still to be found predominantly in individual phrases such as those noted above.

A further and final link Cécile has with its predecessors is in its brief use of a play-within-the-play. Cécile, realising that her father has mistaken her for Arminthe, assumes the role of her governess and has little difficulty in extracting a confession of love from him for the latter. The use of mistaken identity as a source of humour is in the comic tradition and, from that point of view, is not important in our consideration of Anouilh's technical development. On the other hand it is important in that it points towards the conscious adoption of the style as well as the text of another playwright. We have already

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2. P.B. p. 534.
seen the latter in operation in *Eurydice* when Anouilh borrowed from Musset. In the case of *Cécile* the playwright is Molière.

The first indication that the play is written in the spirit of Molière, for whom Anouilh has often expressed his admiration, is seen in the subtitle of the play itself, *L'École des Pères* - a parody of *L'École des Femmes*. Cécile's unmasking of her father, the family squabble, the lovers' tiff, the importance given to Araminthe, a servant in the household, together with the contrived happy ending, and the names of the characters, all are in the tradition of Molière.

No doubt the happiness of the occasion when the play was first presented accounted for much of the lightness of touch to be found in *Cécile*. This gaiety is significant in a further respect. By stressing the fun of *Cécile* and by giving reminders through its structure that audiences were watching a play whose outcome was bound to be happy, Anouilh has demonstrated the idea found at the close of *Épisode de la vie d'un auteur* that joy is to be found in the theatre.

The incorporation of a text by another playwright into his own had already been done by Anouilh in *Eurydice*; in *Cécile* he reproduced the mood and the style of someone else. Text, mood and style taken from another playwright were to form an important part of Anouilh's next work, *La Répétition*.

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1. See above p. 137.
The main story of *La Répétition au l'amour puni* (1950) tells how Tigre, the Count, is obliged to spend part of his life in an old mansion he has inherited. In order to while away the time he decides to produce a play, choosing Marivaux's *La Double Inconstance*. Tigre himself plays the part of the count and asks the young and innocent Lucile, governess to the orphans living in the house, to play the part of the simple Sylvia. While they are rehearsing Tigre is surprised to find that he does in fact fall in love with Lucile, discovering in the borrowed role a real emotion of which he no longer thought himself capable. When both as actor and as himself Tigre finds he is refused, he is perplexed. He interrupts his rehearsal with Lucile to exclaim:

C'est cela paraît! C'est tout simple. Vous m'avez menti, vous aimez quelqu'un. Quelque petit jeune homme qui s'occupe aussi de puériculture et à qui vous écrivez quatre grandes pages tous les soirs dans votre chambre.¹

Lest the audience should not have realised that the rehearsal has been temporarily suspended and in order to bring Tigre back to what he is supposed to be doing, Lucile tells him: 'Je crois que vous ne dites plus le texte.'² Other examples abound during the first two acts of the play where the Marivaux text slides into that of Anouilh easily and almost imperceptibly. The reason why the transition is so smooth is that the borrowed text is so appropriate both to the person speaking and to the situation in which the characters find themselves. Lucile says, as Sylvia, of the place where she is:

C'est quelque chose d'épouvantable que ce pays-ci! Je n'ai jamais vu de femmes si civiles, d'hommes si honnêtes. Ils ont des manières si douces, tant de réverences, tant de compliments, tant de signes d'amitié. Vous diriez que

¹. P.B. p. 385.
². P.B. p. 385.
ce sont les meilleurs gens du monde, qu'ils sont pleins de cœur et de conscience. Quelle erreur!

What is clear to the audience is that the words are equally applicable to the people living in the château itself and the situation in which Lucile has found herself. Anouilh has also succeeded in matching the words well to the person speaking them. Tigre's mistress, Hortensia, asks him whether she is speaking her lines with conviction, to which he replies:

Et comme vous n'avez jamais préféré le moindre peloton de laine à votre plaisir, en la donnant "sincère" vous avez eu l'air abominablement faux. C'était parfait. C'est ce que je voulais.

Whereas Hortensia had not recognised that the words she spoke and the character she portrayed were suited to the kind of person she was, Tigre and the audience could see their import. Failure to appreciate the full significance of the role played also applies to Tigre himself. He, however, does come to recognise that the emotion he is aping in the play for Sylvia has become actual for him in his attitude towards her as Lucile. One of the implications of Tigre's discovery is that it is only in the theatre that real emotions can be expressed (and here we are reminded of Vincent's discovery in Eurydice), but that once recognised these feelings can then be applied to life. Tigre is finding for himself the truth of his own words on the nature of theatre and life:

C'est très joli la vie, mais cela n'a pas de forme. L'art a pour objet de lui en donner une précisément et de faire par tous les artifices possibles - plus vrai que le vrai.

Many critics regard Tigre's words as an ars poetica of Anouilh

himself, the attempt to represent in the theatre everything in a way that is truer than true since life itself has no shape or form. Furthermore, the world of fantasy, which hitherto has been presented as a possible alternative to reality and in some cases preferable to it, is here suggested as perhaps the greater reality. What is certainly true is that in the formality of the Marivaux text Tigre became aware of the truth of his own feelings towards Lucile.

The use of the play-within-the-play in La Répétition, whereby he fuses two plays together in such a way that they form a perfect harmony, represents Anouilh at his most skilful. It is unfortunately true of this play that the playwright was unable to maintain the high standard of the opening acts.

The fourth act of La Répétition is particularly weak; Hero's long, verbose and ultimately successful attempt to seduce Lucile palls after a while. Anouilh himself, in a footnote to the printed text, has suggested that the act perhaps could be omitted with slight adaptations to the text elsewhere:

Peut-être que la pièce n'y perdrait rien, au contraire.¹

The fourth act is so different in tone from the other acts that it almost forms on its own a play-within-the-play. This time, however, the device, because of its tediousness and lack of necessity, is not well integrated into the rest of the play.

Although La Répétition is uneven in its dramatic qualities, it is nevertheless important in Anouilh's technical development because of its new variation on the play-within-the-play device.

¹. P.B. p. 442.
whereby he inserts into his own work the text of a play by another writer and hints that perhaps fantasy, particularly that of the theatre, is a greater truth than life itself.

When we come to *Colombe* (1951), we see that the introduction of a second script into the main text is again used by Anouilh. This time, however, the 'borrowed play' is one that Anouilh has written himself; it is nevertheless suited, as was the text of Marivaux's *La Double Inconstance* in *La Répétition*, to the characters speaking the lines. What is significant in this instance is that the characters are professional actors, people whose whole life is made up of gestures intended to create an impression as opposed to the amateurs of *La Répétition*. The purpose of the play-within-the-play based on a second script would appear to be, in *Colombe*, to examine actors at work and to comment on them. The way in which Anouilh does this will be examined in the first part of this section. Anouilh, however, uses other variations of the device in this play, one of which introduces an important advance in his technique. The second part of this section will analyse the ways in which Anouilh varies his use of the play-within-the-play device in *Colombe*.

The main plot tells how Julien, a young and impoverished pianist, who has to go on military service, reluctantly leaves his wife and child with his actress-mother and his brother for protection while he is absent. Julien, aware of the pretence that goes to make up the lives of those who have to do with the theatre, warns his wife, Colombe, of the sham that constitutes the dazzling existence of actors.
Innocently Colombe accepts what Julien says but also admits that she finds difficulty in seeing what harm there is in enjoying the pleasant things in life. The fact that she will later succumb to the temptation of her new way of life has thus been prepared.

Installed in her new milieu Colombe finds the attentions paid to her by the men of the company amusing and the role of actress to her liking. At rehearsal in the part that she is playing, she has to ask Armand, Julien's actor-brother, how he would respond to a confession that she loved him; his reply is that he would not believe her. A few lines further on, again in the play under rehearsal, he tells her:

"Petite fille, petite fille ... Tu as voulu jouer au jeu de l'amour. Et tu es prise au piège maintenant. Étonnée de te sentir pour la première fois toi-même!"

Both the exchange of dialogue leading up to the passage cited above and the quotation itself are ironic in their implications. A real-life Colombe and Armand were later to have an affair; the audience is never sure of the sincerity of her feelings in the matter. Certainly there is some truth in Armand's words, spoken as an actor, that Colombe has been caught in a trap and is about to discover a new side to herself of which she had not been fully aware previously. She is still, at this point of time, acting spontaneously, expressing what she feels; consequently she asks Armand whether acting is no more difficult than that. In her

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case, he replies, it would appear not and in his turn asks whether, when she performs her love-scene, she imagines herself in Julien's arms. Her answer reveals the complexity of her emotions for, while still being herself and expressing what she feels, she transposes herself into another Colombe, one who feels and thinks as she does in the particular stage-situation in which she finds herself. This for her is being fundamentally honest; she is shocked to think that Armand might believe her to be a liar.

What Colombe learns, however, is that the double standard of which she is at first but dimly aware forms part and parcel of her total make-up. In using the play-within-the-play to reveal to characters truths about themselves, Anouilh is not doing anything that he has not done already in La Répétition, but he has varied his technique by supplying his own play for the rehearsal. Furthermore he has shown the complexity of fantasy through Colombe's response to her new situation.

When the actual playlet does take place at the beginning of act four, it follows immediately Julien's discovery that Colombe has been unfaithful to him with his brother Armand. In her encounter with Julien, Colombe maintains that she is innocent but is eventually forced to admit that she has been with Desfournettes in his little room. She insists that she defended herself, hit him, and told him he was old and ugly. When Julien calls her a tart, like all the other girls who have passed through Desfournettes's office, Colombe faints. But the audience is left wondering how genuine is her swoon since, when La Surette calls for the actors to be ready for the first act, she recovers, miraculously.
Colombe does possess, however, a certain natural charm. It contrasts with the blatantly theatrical charm adopted by Madame Alexandre, Julien's mother, in the playlet. Julien is incapable of appreciating his wife's naturalness and spontaneity, but these are the qualities that endear her to seemingly unworthy and insensitive people of the theatre. Within the playlet the rose of Colombe and the noir of the theatre-folk come together, but in such a way as to blur the distinction, for Madame Alexandre in her role has acquired some of the charm of Colombe, while the latter in portraying a natural charm is in fact hiding her fundamental hypocrisy. The play-within-the-play has thus been used not only to comment on life in the theatre but to present Anouilh's double vision of life as both rose and noir at the same time. Robert Nelson in his discussion of Colombe makes a similar point, writing of the play-within-the-play as Ahouilh uses it here that it captures in a single dramatic image those two moments, those two images which have only alternated for us in the play up to this time: the superficial and the profound, the illusory and the real, the false and the true.\(^1\)

Whereas in the past Anouilh has used the play-within-the-play device as an escape from unpleasant reality either into an alternative present or a memory from the past, as a way for characters to learn the truth about themselves, or even as life itself, he has used it here as a comment on life and as an observation on actors' ability to pretend to be other than they are. Fantasy has again been presented as a possible alternative to life; Colombe may either dwell in the pretend world of theatre

with Madame Alexandre or accept the mundane existence of Julien. Neither choice is presented as attractive; the joy to be found in the theatre that had been suggested by Cécile appears to have given way to the unpleasantnesses and complexities of Colombe. Fantasy may exist in a very positive way, but it no longer is represented as certainly preferable to so-called reality.

In addition to the inner plays based on the use of a second script Anouilh also introduces into Colombe a playlet which uses no script at all. This is one of the variations on the play-within-the-play device referred to in the opening paragraph of this section.1 During the scene in which Julien endeavours to find out the truth about Colombe other members of the company eavesdrop in the corridor, miming their gestures and pushing each other forward when they are under discussion. The interesting point about this incident is that Anouilh has reversed the roles so that the actors have become spectators and the ordinary couple have been turned into actors. The switch becomes even more significant when it is realised that Colombe is in fact putting on an act for Julien in her protestations of fidelity. Her fidelity would seem to be similar to that of Manon Lescaut, emotional rather than physical. The audience by now is beginning to question whether Colombe could ever have really loved Julien. Anouilh supplies the answer in the final scene which also forms a variation on the inner play device.

In a flash-back the first encounter between Julien and Colombe is shown. He discovers that for the first time in his life he can be gentle with someone, while she realises that for once she does

1. See above p. 160.
not wish to poke fun at a young man. When the members of the company try to persuade her to join them, she cries:

Oh! vous me dégoûtez tous à la fin! Vous êtes trop vilains! 1

Although the question of Colombe's original feelings towards Julien may have been answered, several new ones are raised. Did Julien's severe moral standards drive Colombe to accept the life of the theatre? Was her double standard always there dormant within her, awakening when once Julien was no longer there to support her? The enigma of Colombe is never really solved.

The final flashback has a further impact in that it creates a sense of foreboding. The young lovers dash off hopefully into the future, but the audience knows what lies in store for the couple whose love has already been damned by the play that has just taken place.

For the first time in one of Anouilh's plays the time-sequence has been broken. Previously characters have conjured up the past in words as in Le Voyageur sans bagage, or have tried to hang onto the past by living out a memory as in Léocadia, or even re-enacted a scene from the past as in the Dulac, Eurydice and Petit Régisseur incident in Eurydice, but Anouilh has not before actually disrupted the chronological order of events in order to make a point. As we saw earlier, some reviewers criticised this use of the flash-back, 2 failing to understand the real significance of the device.

Anouilh's inclusion of the inner play device in Colombe to

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2. See above p. 55.
break the time sequence, coupled with his exploitation of a second text introduced into the main script as a means of commenting on the theatre and of presenting his double vision of life, makes this play important in the playwright's technical development.

Colombe was followed by La Valse des toréadors, written in 1951 and first performed at the Comédie des Champs Élysées on the 9th January 1952. Technically La Valse des toréadors looks back to Ardèle, some of whose characters re-appear in this play. It does not borrow from another text as have other plays in this chapter, but is linked with them in a number of interesting ways. General Saint-Pé is again the hero but the character has undergone certain modifications. He is presented as younger in La Valse des toréadors than he was in Ardèle. Once more he is tormented by an ailing wife; housemaids remain his prime consolation. He has, however, acquired two silly daughters, a secretary who turns out to be his illegitimate son, and a virtuous lady admirer who has adored him since he danced with her at the ball at Saumur when he was a young lieutenant.

In addition to the names many of the sentiments found in Ardèle have found their way into the later play. The General explains that all his bluff exterior is merely a pose, an empty shell to disguise the fact that deep down he is afraid and alone. It is this fear of life, he claims, that has turned him into the

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woman-chaser that he is; but he is bored by his affairs. Fear and loneliness, as we noted earlier in this chapter, are emotions that drove General Saintpé in Arèlé to find comfort in the bed of his house-maids.

Not only are characters and emotions common to both plays, but attitudes also. During the course of the General's lecture on life to his secretary in La Valse des toréadors, he advises the young man:

Vous comprendrez quand vous serez plus grand. Retenez seulement de tout ceci qu'il faut respecter les apparences.

In Arèlé the General had been reassured by his brother-in-law that, although the latter's marriage had broken up and his wife the countess had taken a lover, in the public eye appearances had been respected.

Further to these points can be added the repetition of the idea that life is a game with rules that have to be obeyed. In the same vein but slightly different is the General's lament about his wife to the doctor:

L'épousant, je lui fis renoncer au théâtre, pour mon malheur. Elle devait continuer à jouer pour moi tout seul.

The concept of the game of life and the game of theatre merging at a technical level appears in the play when the General and Mlle de Sainte-Euverte re-enact their original encounter,
speaking the words they then spoke, dancing the 'Valse des Toréadors', and humming its tune. This incident forms a minor play-within-the-play, recapturing the past rather as Vincent and the mother had done in *Eurydice*.

A further way in which *La Valse des toreadors* looks back technically to previous plays lies in its use of self-conscious theatricality. The second act is concluded by the maid who, having just read Mlle de Sainte-Euverte's letter to the General,

relève la tête un peu émue, enlève ses besicles et conclut au public: C'est très triste. Mais tout de même: c'est rudement bien écrit! ¹

Almost at the close of the play the General, having learnt that his secretary is his illegitimate offspring, finds that his sweetheart, who has remained faithful for seventeen years, now wants to marry this son. His position is farcical as he himself observes:

Mon rôle est de plus en plus ridicule. ²

When a few seconds later he finds himself pestered by his two daughters, he exclaims:

Allons, qu'est-ce que c'est encore? Cette comédie ne finira donc jamais? ³

The theatricality of the play and the theatricality of life are both further stressed in a conversation between the General and the doctor when the former asks how the situation in which he finds himself is going to end. The doctor replies:

1. P.G. p. 130.
Comme dans la vie, ou comme au théâtre, du temps qu'il était encore bon. Un dénouement arrangé, pas trop triste en apparence, et dont personne n'est vraiment dupe - et quelque temps après: rideau. ¹

The words of the doctor could well describe Anouilh's own attitude towards the ending of his play, for certainly no-one is fooled by the ending of La Valse des toréadors. The revelation that General Saint-Pé's secretary is his own unacknowledged illegitimate son is blatantly contrived, a situation that brings to mind the ending of Molière's L'Avare when Valère meets up again with his father and the rest of his family.

The total effect the audience receives from watching the various theatrical devices Anouilh has used in this play is that the stage appears to be filled with comic marionettes, an impression somewhat similar to that created by Ardèle though less "black" than in the earlier play. Furthermore they contribute to the spirit of play in the work, providing a mask behind which individuals can hide their very real and often distressing feelings. Bearing this in mind then, La Valse des toréadors may be seen to suggest that conventional reality is something to avoid and that fantasy, though often ridiculous, can sometimes provide a little protection (and indeed a few moments of joy) for those who suffer.

Although La Valse des toréadors does not mark an advance in Anouilh's technical development, and in spite of the fact that it is at times verbose, it does show the technical skill of the playwright; moreover it provides a pause before the exciting developments that were to appear in his next play, L'Alouette.

With L'Alouette, first performed in 1953 having been written a year earlier, Anouilh returned to the use of a story whose outline was already fixed. As a number of critics have shown Anouilh departs very little from recorded fact in his version of the story of Joan of Arc. In places he uses Joan's own words cited directly from the trial records: these instances have been carefully noted by Merlin Thomas and Simon Lee in their edition of L'Alouette. It is the use of borrowed dialogue that links this play firmly with the others that we have been considering in this chapter. The important development that has taken place of course in Anouilh's technical progress is that this time the text that he has borrowed is not from another play but from recorded history. The full impact of this fact will become apparent when it is considered in conjunction with the manner in which he disrupts the chronological order of events by the use of flash-backs, and by the way in which he draws the attention of his audiences to the fact that they are watching a play.

The opening stage-instructions place L'Alouette firmly in the realm of non-realistic theatre:

En entrant, les personnages décrochent leurs casques, ou certains de leurs accessoires qui avaient été laissés sur scène à la fin de la précédente représentation, ils s'installent sur les bancs dont ils récifient l'ordonnance.

The initial exchange of dialogue confirms the same impression for, when Warwick says that they will start with the trial of Joan for the quicker she is judged and burnt the better, Cauchon protests:

Mais, Monseigneur, il y a toute l'histoire à jouer.

2. P.C. p. 11.
3. P.C. p. 11.
The audience has yet to see the scenes depicting Joan's life at Domrémy when she hears her voices, the events at Chinon, and the coronation, in addition to her trial and martyrdom. When Warwick shows some anxiety that, if all the events in which Joan was involved are to be shown, some of the battle-scenes could be a little embarrassing for him, he is reassured by Cauchon who points out that the actors are not sufficient in number to perform the battles. Further reminders are given to the audience that they are about to witness a theatrical representation of Joan's life when someone asks who is going to play the part of the voices Joan heard, and when Beaudricourt steps forward too soon on a couple of occasions to play his part at the mention of his name, but finally misses his cue. The last incident is mainly farcical but it also adds to the theatrical reminders that abound in the opening exchanges of the play.

The final historical outcome of Joan's story is well known but, in case anyone in the audience may have forgotten it, a reminder is given early on by Warwick who says of Joan:

Je la juge et je la brûle.\(^1\)

Thus it is that Joan's fate and the things that she says are predetermined by historical fact. These things cannot be altered, as Cauchon points out to Frère Ladvenu when the latter screams at Joan's father to stop striking her with his belt:

Nous n'y pouvons rien, Frère Ladvenu. Nous ne connais\(\text{}\)trons Jeanne qu'au procès. Nous ne pouvons que jouer nos rôles, chacun le sien, bon ou mauvais, tel qu'il est écrit, et à son tour.\(^2\)

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It is within the short period of the trial that the incidents forming Joan's life are interspersed in the form of re-enactments of the past. Since Cauchon and Ladvenu did not know Joan at the time of her thrashing they cannot help her. In that these interruptions are deliberate re-enactments directed by the characters themselves, they form a series of minor plays within the main play.

These plays-within-the-play in L'Alouette are manipulated by Anouilh in a very skilful manner, expanding a method he first used in Eurydice. Throughout the play most of the actors are on stage, stepping forward when it is their turn to take part in a scene. After the opening exchanges between Warwick and Cauchon, it is decided that the first scene that will be enacted is that where Joan hears her voices while she is tending her flocks; the stage-instructions read:

Elle est restée accroupie à la même place, les personnages qui n'ont rien à voir avec cette scène s'éloignent dans l'ombre. Seuls s'avancent le père, la mère, le frère de Jeanne qui auront à intervenir.¹

This pattern is repeated throughout the play; actors advance and retreat as it is their turn to play a part in Joan's life. The use of the device in this way has the effect of making the actors become spectators for the moment, in rather the same way that they did in Colombe when they watched the scene between Julien and Colombe. The reversing of roles is perhaps less obvious in L'Alouette than in Colombe, but the technique does help to

establish a unity between the audience and the actors and, moreover, aids the impression the audience receives of being present at Joan's trial while at the same time seeing events in her history brought to life. As a result the audience can experience the play from several points of view at once, knowing the outcome, watching the past come into being, and seeing in the present a judgement inexorably reached. A related point is made by Thomas and Lee in the Preface to their edition of the play to which I have already referred. They write that the re-enactment of events at the trial furnishes

a perspective on the event simultaneously with the event itself. This technique of what we may call double perspective is perhaps the most striking single feature of the play, certainly one that best accounts for its theatrical qualities.  

The perspective that Anouilh has provided is multiple.

The most striking use of the play-within-the-play device that occurs in L'Alouette is the final scene when Beaudricourt rushes on stage and cries to Cauchon and the others present that the play cannot finish at that point since they have not yet played the coronation-scene which also formed part of Joan's story. Recorded history does not end her tale with her burning at the stake. Ultimately she has been accepted as a Christian saint; hers is a story that ended well and for this reason Anouilh is able to draw his play to a conclusion on a happy note of triumph. S. John in his article on Anouilh  accepts the author's possible reasons for

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ending his play as he did but rejects the consequent emotional impact. He argues that while the intercalated scenes from Joan's life follow the proper chronology of her story, they seem to be naturally integrated with the course of the trial. The same is not true of the final flash-back:

By reversing the normal order of events at the very moment of the burning, Anouilh powerfully reinforces in the minds of his audience the notion that they have witnessed, not some tragic and exemplary passion in which they were sympathetically involved, but the adroit manipulation of a theatrical illusion.1

John was quite right to draw attention to the technical brilliance of the author. The theatrical skill of the playwright is outstanding, as John and numerous reviewers of the initial performance of the play maintain. It may well be true that the attention of the audiences could easily be diverted away from the content of the play to its virtuoso techniques, for throughout the play the theatrical devices have certainly been used in a deliberate attempt to delay the passage of time, to halt the historically pre-determined burning of Joan, as well as to show how this came about. When the moment for her death does eventually arrive, the playwright makes one final effort to stave off the inevitable by returning to an earlier point in Joan's life. By stressing the fact from the very beginning that L'Alouette is a play performed by actors re-enacting an actual historical event, Anouilh allows himself more easily to juggle with time and use quite blatantly other theatrical devices. Certainly the fantasy that Anouilh provided at the close of his play would seem to be preferable to

1. Ibid. p. 116.
the actual burning of Joan that took place. The fact that Joan's story was ultimately to be one of triumph gives further support to the notion that perhaps, in the last analysis, greater truth is to be found in fantasy than in apparent reality. Furthermore, this emphasis on the story taken from history draws attention to the element of pre-determinism in his work. By using the play-within-the-play not only to portray that inevitability but also to attempt to frustrate it, Anouilh has given to the device a double function that it has not had in any of his previous plays.

L'Alouette brought to a head a development that took place in Anouilh's plays after Arđèle. They showed him exploiting the technique of self-consciousness by integrating it with a second text, usually in the form of a play-within-the-play. He used it mainly to convey the notion begun in Antigone that the pattern of life is pre-determined, as is the course of action of the plot of any play in the theatre. As Anouilh's skill grew his technique became more elaborate. Some critics have argued that, with this growth, the conviction underlying the ideas contained within Anouilh's plays diminished and that consequently the virtuoso aspects of his works began to predominate. The fact remains, however, that Anouilh further developed in these plays the method begun in Eurydice and Antigone of turning to other works as a basis for his own. His skill was such that in each play he was able to use what he had borrowed in new ways.
Chapter 7

The plays from Ornifle : ou le courant d'air to La Foire d'empoigne

The preceding chapters have traced a very definite line of development in Anouilh's technical skill. Avoiding from the beginning a slice-of-life presentation, he has played with his material in various ways. Two significant devices, the play-within-the-play and the inner play, emerged as more and more important in his works. A third element, direct references by the actors to the fact that they were performing in a play, was also firmly established. As this development was taking place, the plays themselves (Ardèle, La Répétition and Colombe, for example) became increasingly 'grinçantes' in tone. L'Alouette, the final play to be discussed so far, is an exception; the overall tone reverts to that of earlier plays like L'Invitation au château and Le Bal des voleurs, though a sombre and chilling note is struck by the scene in which Ladvenu, who speaks on Joan's behalf, is silenced by the Inquisitor sent from Spain. The latter insists on the dangers contained in human tenderness such as Joan displays; he favours Christian charity, which is a theological virtue. L'Alouette does reveal, however, the author's exceptional skill as a dramatist. By the time Anouilh had completed this play he had acquired an assured mastery of his art. He had, as it were, reached a watershed in his career; the period of development over, that of exploitation began.

One way in which the plays that followed L'Alouette are distinguishable from their predecessors is in the manner in which the relationship between fantasy and reality is treated. Fantasy, provided by one variation or another of the play-within-the-play
or inner play devices, represented previously a world into which characters could escape from the corrupting influence of reality. For the most part make-believe had proved preferable to actual existence; Gaston/Jacques (Le Voyageur sans bagage), for example, had chosen to live with the orphaned little English boy rather than his own family with its unpleasant reminders of the kind of person he used to be. On the other hand Colombe had sounded a note of warning that the distinction between fantasy and reality could not always be pinpointed and that to dwell in the land of fantasy had its dangers. After L'Alouette the emphasis changed; fantasy itself became increasingly 'grincante'. The play-within-the-play and inner play devices used to express this fantasy began to reinforce the grating quality of the works. The way in which this happens will be traced in this chapter.

Ornifle, written and first performed in 1955 at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, was not well received by the reviewers. Their antipathy, which began with Colombe, increased with La Valse des toréadors, and abated somewhat with L'Alouette, now increased again with the presentation of Ornifle. Robert Kemp, Jean-Jacques Gautier and Gabriel Marcel, all of whom normally spoke well of Anouilh, expressed their disappointment in the play, the last named going so far as to call it a catastrophe. As Gautier pointed out, on the other hand, the work is worthy of attention; it adds a nuance to our understanding of Anouilh's use of play and shows a shift of emphasis in its inherent significance since fantasy takes a new turn.

1. See above pp. 61-63.
The fantasy in Ornifle is contained largely in Anouilh's exploitation of costume. In the second act the characters appear wearing seventeenth-century attire; they recall Tigre and his amateur actors in La Répétition, when eighteenth-century apparel was worn though the setting was in the twentieth century. In that instance the characters wore costumes because they were rehearsing a play. In Ornifle the dressing-up is explained by the intention of the characters to attend a Molière festival that is taking the form of a fancy-dress ball. They are not expecting to take part in a Molière play, though the two doctors do, in fact, quote directly from Le Malade imaginaire. When Ornifle complains of being ill, his first doctor, Subites, attributes his patient's illness, no matter what the symptoms, to 'le poumon', as Toinette had done when Argan listed his sufferings. When Ornifle objects to his doctor's flippancy and insists that he feels unwell, Subites suggests that his colleague, Professor Galopin, should examine him. This doctor too, also dressed in seventeenth-century costume, merely repeats the charade, crying out 'le poumon'. In doing this, he provokes Ornifle into responding bitterly, 'Elle est bien bonne. Mais Subites me l'avait déjà faite.' Anouilh would seem deliberately to have included the quotation from Molière. The effect of putting on costumes is to emphasise the superficiality of the doctors; audiences are left wondering how seriously they can take men whose dominant interest is not in their patient but in aping fictitious quack doctors from another age.

In addition to the doctors Ornifle, too, dresses up, putting

1. P.G. p. 262.
on the costume of Alceste (Le Misanthrope). Dr. Subites finds
the fact that Ornifle is going 'en misanthrope' extraordinarily
funny and exclaims:

Toi en Misanthrope! C'est impayable! Je crois que
nous allons nous amuser beaucoup.¹

It would seem that the doctor has only been able to see in Ornifle
someone who constantly enjoys the company of other people; he has
failed to appreciate that Ornifle is wearied by the futility of
life. Elsewhere in the play the latter tells his friend, the
priest Père Dubaton, that

Cent fois j'aurais préféré aller me coucher avec un bon
livre—seul enfin dans mon lit...²

He goes on to say, however, that, when one is tempted to make love
to a woman (even though she may be a stranger), one still goes on
with the performance, making the same gestures over and over again,
until at last, the pleasure given and received, 'tu te retrouveras
tout seul à côté de cette viande inconnue, te demandant ce que tu
fais là.'³ Ornifle is seen hiding his world-weariness by putting
on an act. He continues the sham on other occasions, as when he
makes out that he is ill in order to seduce his son's fiancée; he
also feigns friendship to Machetu (his publisher) in order to dupe
him into marrying Clorinde (Ornifle's cast-off mistress), and, more
blatantly, goes through the gestures of confession to Père Dubaton.
The pretence on these occasions was for ignoble ends; in contrast
to this, dressing-up as Alceste began as fun. It ended as absurd.

¹. P.G. p. 258.
². P.G. p. 343.
³. P.G. p. 343.
When Dr Subitès is amused by Ornifle's choice of costume, however, he draws attention by his very act of laughing to the seeming ridiculousness of the situation—someone who apparently gets on well with people dressed as a misanthrope; the costume does not accord with the public image. The situation becomes absurd when his son, Fabrice, tries to shoot him. The gun fails to fire and Ornifle, still dressed as Alceste, collapses on the floor from a heart-attack. His would-be assassin, a student doctor, finishes by trying to save his life. The absurdity of the moment contrasts with the seriousness of Ornifle's situation; he is dying, he is faced with a belligerent son, and his real doctors are incompetent. The clash between these two irreconcilable elements, absurdity and seriousness, produces a grating quality in the play.

Another person who wears seventeenth-century costume is Ornifle's wife, the Countess Ariane. Though her life with her husband has been far from ideal, she still loves him in spite of his infidelities. Dressing-up, for her, is to provide a few moments of happiness at the ball. These instants are tempered with concern for her husband; she is anxious not to leave him since he feels unwell. When she talks to Ornifle about their married life together she is always serious. The gaiety, suggested by her fancy-dress and the ball for which it is intended, seems incongruous when family problems are being discussed. Such difficulties, however, have a timeless quality about them; sincere wives throughout history have sometimes been deceived by flippant husbands. Anouilh, by putting his characters in seventeenth-century costumes, may well be suggesting the eternal
nature of the situation. In this respect he is reversing the process he used in two earlier plays when, in Antigone, he recast an ancient play in modern dress and, in Eurydice, he retold an old story placing it in a contemporary setting.

The exploitation of seventeenth-century dress in Ornifle presents various characters with an opportunity to escape into a gay world of fantasy. The doctors, however, are made to look ridiculous in their costumes; Ornifle's attire underlines the absurdity of his plight; his wife's dress hints that her dilemma is far from new. In all cases there is an incongruity between the fun suggested by the apparel and the gravity of the situation in which it is worn. The doctors are flippant when they should be concerned; Ornifle is made to look absurd when in fact his condition is dire; the Countess has to discuss serious matters arrayed in fancy clothes. When fantasy (as seen in the make-believe of dressing-up) and reality (as shown in the sad plight of the characters) meet in Ornifle, they leave a final impression of the stupidity of the latter and the ridiculousness of the former, which no longer affords a happy escape for people but has become as absurd as life itself. This absurdity was to become embittered in Anouilh's next play, Pauvre Bitos.

The numerous references to Molière in Ornifle and, as many critics have indicated, the partial similarity to
Dom Juan suggests that Anouilh drew some inspiration for his play from his seventeenth-century predecessor. *Pauvre Bitos*, on the other hand, depended more on history and in particular the period of the French Revolution. Characters are not asked to perform a particular play this time but are invited to improvise on a theme loosely based on the Revolution; they are given, however, a few set lines to include in their dialogue. Their improvisation is not performed in front of an audience but takes place while the characters are entertaining a magistrate, whom they each dislike with varying degrees of intensity. The excuse for the party is that a wealthy but cruel aristocrat, Maxime, has inherited a stately home which he intends to sell to a petrol company for conversion into a filling station. Before the transaction is completed he decides to amuse himself by throwing a special party which would involve his guests in a form of play.

The purpose to which Anouilh puts this new variation on play is different from his aim on previous occasions. Maxime, the host, intends to humiliate one of the guests, Bitos, reducing him to a state of complete ignominy. Several times Maxime informs his friend Philippe of his intention. On the first occasion he says:

*Je suis en train d'ourdir une vaste machination pour perdre un petit jeune homme qui m'agace.*

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1. The similarities with Molière's *Dom Juan* are not very deep, as has been indicated by Philip Thody in his book, *Anouilh*, Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1968, p.74. However, the hypocrisy of the two characters (Ornifle and Don Juan), the fact that neither of them ever asks for mercy, the parody of Don Juan when Ornifle snaps to his secretary that he believes two and two do not make four, have led some critics to write that Anouilh's play is clearly inspired by that of Molière which it has transformed and modernised. See Philippe Jolivet, *Le Théâtre de Jean Anouilh*, Paris, Michel Brient and Co., 1963, p.127, and Clément Borgal, *Anouilh, la peine de vivre*, Paris, Éditions du Centurion, 1966, p.149.

A few moments later he adds:

Ce soir, il fallait que tout le monde joue le jeu.¹

The viciousness of his plan is made clear when he tells Philippe:

Il ne sortira pas vivant de ce que tu appelles ma petite 'surprise-partie'.²

Maxime cannot forgive Bitos the latter's plebeian origin, his excellence at school, his rigid outlook and his rigorous pursuit of an abstract ideal of justice. The extent to which Bitos followed this code led him to condemn a young man, during the period just after the second World War, to a heavy sentence for armed robbery. Ignoring all mitigating circumstances, Bitos, as incorruptible as Robespierre whose role he is playing, had done what he considered to be his duty. The fact thus emerges that neither Maxime, who has arranged the dinner in order to bait Bitos, nor Bitos himself, the victim of the feast, appear as sympathetic characters. Any possibility of sympathy for Bitos's highmindedness is destroyed when, at the end of the play, he is seen to accept the standards of the people he despises and is willing to go to a nightclub with them. Most of the guests participate in Maxime's attack on Bitos. The feast thus emerges as an opportunity for an unsympathetic host and his cronies to hurt one of the other guests. The latter is, as it were, tried, judged and punished by all the others present.

An element of fantasy is introduced by the head make-up that the characters wear at the dinner when each protagonist adopts the

¹. P.G. p. 378.
role of a particular participant in the Revolution. Anouilh with his usual care has thoughtfully matched the assumed and the actual characters so that the individuals are well suited to the roles they have to play. Disguise was, of course, no new device for Anouilh; he had just used it in Ornifle when twentieth-century characters wore costumes from the seventeenth century. The effect in that play had been to heighten the absurdity of certain characters. In Pauvre Bitos, however, the disguise has taken on a new form where only facial features are hidden, the heads alone being made up to look like particular people; the purpose for which the disguise is intended is changed, a dinner party as opposed to the Molière festival; the effect produced is also different. The characters appear to have donned ritual masks, almost as though they wish to hide from their victim the identity of his tormentors. Rather than making the wearers look comic, the head impersonations produce a sinister effect. Into this situation the victim, Bitos, is plunged wearing a complete outfit. Not only is he thus rendered conspicuous but also ridiculous, as he himself admits, begging leave to return home immediately in order to change his clothes. His absurdity is heightened towards the close of the play when he is caught bending over in order to have a split repaired in the seat of his trousers. Bitos thus emerges as an unattractive character, exposed to ridicule and laughter as a result of his raiment. The make-believe play element in Pauvre Bitos, as it appears through Anouilh's use of costume and masks, tends to suggest two things - absurdity and terror; fantasy, previously so desirable and joyful (though beginning to lose its appeal), is now seen not merely as
ridiculous but also as frightening. By bringing the costumed Bitos into conflict with his masked tormentors, absurdity and terror are seen to collide in a serious situation; the clash reinforces the grating tone of the play.

The roles played by the characters at the dinner party are carried over into the dream-sequence of the second act; thus Bitos becomes Robespierre, Maxime appears as Saint-Just, and so on. This is the first occasion that Anouilh has used the inner play device in this way. When he had wished, previously, to evoke events from the past, he had used either a conventional flash-back (Colombe), or characters stepping forward and re-enacting what had happened before (L'Alouette), or individuals living out in the present a previous adventure (Léocadia). In Pauvre Bitos Anouilh creates the situation by making one character fire a blank pistol-shot in Bitos's face. The latter faints and the dream begins. When Anouilh had used a similar sequence in Ornifle, the gun had failed to fire, and this for the simple reason that the cartridges had been removed. In that play Ornifle had not just fainted but undergone a heart-attack which, temporarily at least, changed his nature; he does not dream. In Pauvre Bitos the hero faints and his mind wanders; when he comes to, he remains unaffected. He is as rigid as ever.

Within the dream-sequence the similarity between Bitos and Robespierre is made quite clear; both had been ill-used and disliked at school; during their lifetimes both had seemed incorruptible; both were attacked by people whom they had helped, and both were unbending idealists. In the episode Robespierre is
seen in the process of eliminating all those who do not comply with his understanding of the ideals of the Revolution. His decisions are arbitrary but then, he claims, 'l'arbitraire des peuples ou de ceux qui le représentent est sacré.' He also maintains that he would fight for ever in support of the Revolution 'sans souci des hommes', and yet these are the very people for whom he is supposed to be struggling. He goes on to assert that he will create an inexorable legal machine that will take inevitable revenge on all who oppose the spirit of liberty. He cries that he will guillotine everybody and that 'il s'agit moins de les punir que de les anéantir'. The aims of the Revolution and the means by which they are to be achieved are made to appear terrifying. When Bitos regains consciousness and appears as himself again, he is provoked into making statements that resemble what he said in his dream. As Robespierre he had cried:

Beaux Français, beaux messieurs, beaux mâles, je vous le ferai passer le goût de vivre et d'être des hommes! Je vous ferai propres, moi!

He wants to do this because the people have acquired 'une incurable propension à la facilité'. Later, as Bitos, he expresses a similar urge to cleanse the French nation:

On m'a accusé d'avoir été dur à la Libération! Il fallait nettoyer. La France n'était pas propre ... Il

Befuddled with drink and teased by the womenfolk around him, Bitos appears despicable as he tries to excuse his earlier actions. Both within the dream and in life, he, the people who torment him and, indeed, existence itself are depicted as unpleasant.

The dream-sequence also serves to compare the period of the French Revolution and that of France in the years immediately following the cessation of hostilities in 1945. At both periods men of rigid principles had sought vengeance and this is presented as despicable. The situation is one that repeats itself throughout history. The dream-sequence of Pauvre Bitos had suggested the timelessness of Anouilh's theme; a similar effect had been achieved previously in Eurydice and Antigone through the modernisation of classical legends. The device thus not only shows the similarities between certain people and the events in which they were and are involved, but also portrays unsavoury aspects of those characters and their deeds.

As with the make-believe of the costuming and the head-pieces of the play, the fantasy of the dream-sequence does not provide a sanctuary to which characters may turn for relief. Fantasy thus becomes not a joyful escape-route into something truer than true but a state as horrific and tormenting as life itself. This idea was extended in Anouilh's next play L'Hurluberlu.

L'Hurluberlu was first performed in February 1959. It

continues the oscillation between literary and historical inspiration already noted in this chapter. Less obviously derived from Molière than Ornifle, L'Hurluberlu nevertheless contains certain affinities with two plays by the seventeenth-century comic playwright, Le Misanthrope and L'École des femmes. The General, the hero of Anouilh's play, has taken a dislike to the rest of mankind (like Alceste before him). His contempt for people is based on the facile attitudes that have crept into public life. Mockingly, he says to his doctor:

Nous pensons tous à nous procurer quelque chose qui pourrait nous la rendre plus agréable, plus facile à vivre, notre petite vie... Encore un peu de confort! C'est notre cri de guerre!¹

Unable to contain himself any longer, he blurts out:

C'est dégoûtant! Vous voyez où cela nous a menés! A la musique sans se donner la peine d'en faire, au sport qu'on regarde, aux livres qu'on ne fait même plus l'effort de lire (on les résume pour vous, c'est tellement plus commode et plus vite fait), aux idées sans penser, à l'argent sans suer, au goût sans en avoir (il y a des magazines spécialisés qui s'en chargent). Truquer! Voilà l'idéal.²

In its search for an easy life, mankind has given up thinking and this the General cannot forgive. The similarity between the General and Alceste is referred to within the text. The General's wife, Aglaé, explains why she loves her husband, contrasting him and his 'rigueur grondeuse' with her own father who was 'veule et léger'.³ She continues: 'A douze ans, j'étais amoureuse d'Alceste en classe de français,' and, a few lines later, asserts that she

1. N.P.G. p. 15.
2. N.P.G. p. 16.
will remain faithful to him: 'Je ne vous tromperai jamais'.\(^1\)

The General, however, reminds us not only of Alceste, but of Arnolphe too in that he has married a lady twenty years his junior. Unlike his seventeenth-century model, it is he who warns his wife of the dangers inherent in a marriage such as theirs; she, however, takes his warning lightly. Although she loves her husband, as she tells him on numerous occasions, he does irk her with his intransigent intolerance of people and their contemporary way of life. She tells him that she enjoys the company of younger folk:

> Et si Monsieur de Lépaud ne sait que courir les femmes, comme vous dites, du moins cela lui a-t-il appris à les distraire et à les comprendre. Je trouve que c'est un compagnon très agréable et, la pièce jouée, j'espère bien que nous le reverrons.\(^2\)

Let the General beware or he will discover that his wife, like Arnolphe's intended, will find her Horace. Behind the humour lurks a hint of disaster. This contrast, together with the misanthropy of the General, helps to disturb and produces a grating effect.

Anouilh's awareness of the spirit of Molière when he wrote *L'Hurluberlu* did not result in a play-within-the-play that can be directly related to one of the latter's works. There are, however, examples of the use of the device in the play; they are all short and introduced in a way that is new for the author. The General allows himself to be persuaded to take part in a play to be held in his grounds in order to raise money for a charity-fête. As a possible choice, a modern play by Popopieff entitled *Zim! Boum!*

\(^1\) N.P.G. p. 102.
\(^2\) N.P.G. p. 151.
is read out by David Mendigales, the current boy-friend of Sophie, the General's daughter. The occasion affords Anouilh the opportunity to poke some good-humoured fun at the contemporary theatre which is yet another example of man's predilection for the facile. The episode thus provides not only entertainment but a commentary on mankind.

The General refuses to be associated with the inanities of Zim! Boum! A Spanish Romantic play is finally selected; the rehearsal of this piece forms the second example of a play-within-the-play. In it Tante Bise, the General's sister, plays the part of Dame Marlotte. She ostentatiously rebuffs the advances of Ledadu, the General's dim-witted friend, rather as she had done in 'life'. Ledadu, as Lucador, courts her passionately, which, in her eyes, he had appeared to do already. The General, in his new role as in life, is made to look ridiculous; Aglaé, his wife, shows, with a few brief words, that it is really she who is in charge of the household; the doctor appears as the watchdog of society. Within the play-rehearsal the reality of the characters' lives has been exaggerated for comic effect. At first they may seem to be escaping into a moment of joy, but in fact they are merely extending their own lives in caricature. Only Aglaé really enjoys the play, but in taking part she is showing her husband, no doubt unconsciously, the dangers that exist in allowing her to meet young men.

The Spanish Romantic play not only shows the characters in slightly exaggerated form, but allows the General to equate the theatre with life in his talk to his son:
Maintenant, Toto, nous allons faire quelque chose qui est très important aussi, tout compte fait: nous allons jouer la comédie. Dans la vie[...] il faut gaîment jouer la comédie.

A little further on in the same conversation, he adds:

Eh bien, tu verras en grandissant, Toto, que dans la vie, même quand cela a l'air d'être sérieux, ce n'est tout de même que du guignol. Et qu'on joue toujours la même pièce.

In saying that life is little more than a repeated charade, the idealist is showing further signs of his disillusionment. Fantasy can no longer be a joyful escape for the General because he equates it with life. Since existence, for the most part, is despicable in his eyes, fantasy too becomes questionable. Make-believe thus takes on the same dark quality as life. This disparaging treatment of fantasy links it with the two plays already considered in this chapter.

In some ways the Spanish Romantic playlet is reminiscent of the play-within-the-play in Chekov's The Sea Gull. In both plays the playlet takes place on an improvised stage set up in a garden and they both contain discussions about whether people shall perform it or not. The means by which Anouilh has introduced the need for a playlet is new. Whereas in La Répétition, when the characters were rehearsing a play, the occasion was caused by the necessity of fulfilling the requirements of an eccentric aunt's will, in L'Hurluberlu the excuse is that the characters wish to raise money for charity. The events leading to the performance of the playlet follow in logical order; the characters are first seen

1. N.P.G. p. 159.
2. N.P.G. p. 159.
3. See above p. 15.
selecting a play, then rehearsing the chosen work, and finally performing it.

It is the final scene of the play proper, when the opening scene of the playlet is presented in the form of a tableau, that forms a third example of a play-within-the-play. Aglaé is seen in the arms of a young masked man who is kissing her, a final warning to the General of the fate that could well lie in store for him. The three traditional knocks that introduce the scene take on an added significance; they suggest that the real drama in the General's life is about to begin if he could but see it. The play-reading and the rehearsal are both superficially amusing; the closing moments of the play when the playlet begins suggest that there is fun in the theatre which audiences may enjoy. Each of the playlets also implies, however, a darker side, the ridiculousness of fantasy which may be fraught with danger if entered into too lightly.

The total effect of the fantasy element of the playlets is to highlight the disturbing quality of the play, and to underline the General's observation that to live is merely to repeat the same performance over and over again, just like acting in a theatre. The General himself has been invested with some of the qualities of a marionette. In this way life is made to appear as fantasy and a not-altogether-happy one; but beneath the sham, the characters have feelings that are real enough and often disturbing. The alternative offered to the pretence of being is the game of theatre (reality or fantasy); the latter is made to look either ridiculous (as in the Popopieff play-reading) or fraught with
danger (as in the Spanish Romantic play). Fantasy may have reached a point where it dominates existence, as seen in the daily life of the General; it may provide in addition possible alternatives in the form of acting, but it has inherent weaknesses and dangers. On the other hand it does have its attractions, especially as it occurs in the theatre. Bélazor, a friend of the General, makes this point when he says, 'C'est merveilleux de jouer la comédie. On est tellement plus naturel que dans la vie.' He goes on to explain this by adding that in the theatre one has less to hide with lies, one can concern oneself uninhibitedly with the situation prescribed by the author. Though fantasy into which one can escape through play may have weaknesses, nevertheless, it has other attractions. The clash between joy and sadness found in the various aspects of fantasy produces a grating effect which makes audiences wonder whether they should have laughed or not at the playlets and at the General.

By using fantasy to augment the grating tone of his work Anouilh has continued the strategy seen in Ornifle and Pauvre Bitos. The actual tactics whereby he has introduced the device into his play (the charity-fête, the search for a suitable work, the rehearsal) reveal a dramatist of immense theatrical inventiveness.

The grating quality of Ornifle, Pauvre Bitos and L'Hurluberlu is less in evidence in Anouilh's next play, Becket, written in 1958 and first performed the following year. The work, however,

does exploit a new relationship between fantasy and reality with regard to time. It reveals a new inventiveness on the part of the author and, conforming to the alternating pattern traced in this chapter, shows a switch from literature to history for inspiration and derivation. On this occasion Anouilh drew his material from Augustin Thierry's *La Conquête de L'Angleterre par les Normands* which, as the playwright admits in his programme-note to the play, he bought because he was attracted by its green cover. The historical inaccuracies of his source-information were of little concern to Anouilh since he was writing for the theatre. Scholars might be distressed by the errors that they saw in his play; Anouilh expressed the hope that the general public would not be.

Play, that has had such an important role in Anouilh's theatre throughout his career, takes on even greater significance in *Becket* where it is seen in various guises. He makes effective use of caricature to portray some of the characters, a non-realistic setting, blatantly sham properties, and a contrived structure whereby an immense inner play becomes virtually the play itself. The concentration of the devices in *Becket* produces a highly intense form of theatricality. This theatricality serves to underscore the fact that what happens on stage is a demonstration of the thoughts of one of the characters. Since imagination may be fanciful, so may the presentation.

The structure of the play is such that the main theme (the birth and death of the friendship between Thomas Becket and King Henry) forms an inner play reminiscent of the play-within-the-play construction of *Antigone*; the opening and closing scenes of
Becket form a prologue and an epilogue, the two outer panels of a triptych on which are painted the preparations for Henry's act of contrition and the flogging he received at the hands of the monks. On the centre-panel the events that led to the situation depicted on either side are represented. If we try to accept the play at a simple realistic level, then there are certain intellectual objections. If, for example, Anouilh switched the time-sequence of his play and reverted, after the initial exchanges of dialogue, to the beginning stages of the friendship between Henry and Becket merely for theatrical effect, then he has weakened the intellectual impact of his play through an appeal that is primarily to the senses. As an entertainer out to stir the emotions of his audience Anouilh was, of course, quite at liberty to do this. If he intended, however, the flash-back to be an accurate portrayal of the King's thoughts as he suffered his chastisement from the hands of the Saxon monks, then there is still a weakness in the construction. In this case the sequence must only contain information that could reasonably be supposed to be within the King's knowledge since he is thinking over the past events of his life. In Becket, however, the King's reminiscence contains conversations Henry could have known nothing about; for example, there are those between King Louis and Becket, and between the Pope and his adviser. If, on the other hand, we interpret the play at a non-realistic level, then the construction becomes acceptable in that Anouilh may have intended the flash-back to form part of the general theatricality of Becket. The thoughts that flash through the King's mind can then be as fanciful as the author
wishes. The other theatrical devices that the author uses help to contribute to the imaginative fancifulness of the King's thought-patterns. The King's imaginings, as demonstrated through the inner play, occupy the major part of the work. Virtually the whole of the performance can be seen, therefore, as an excursion into fantasy, within whose world all things are possible and wherein a whole range of human emotions may be experienced.

When Anouilh had introduced the thoughts passing through the mind of one of his characters previously (as in Pauvre Bitos), he had done so by making the character faint after having had a blank shot fired in his face. In Becket the thoughts are triggered off by the appearance of a ghost. The purpose to which the two sequences are put is also different. In Pauvre Bitos Anouilh underlined, through the device, the similarity between certain characters and events in the French Revolution and those in France in the mid-to-late nineteen forties. In Becket he used it to create a sense of pre-determinism and logical inevitability. When he had tried to produce this effect previously in Antigone, he had used a play-within-the-play with a prologue and epilogue to introduce characters who were to enact the story of the heroine. In the opening scene of Becket the King is seen talking with the ghost and the audience learns from the conversation that the play is to be about the rupture of the friendship between the two men. The King goes on to tell of the time when they used to be friends, 'au début, quand nous étions amis,' stressing this friendship by such phrases as 'je ne pensais qu'à travers toi,' and 'tu m'as tout appris.'¹ He makes absolutely clear what the ending of their

¹ P.C. pp. 146 - 147.
friendship will be:

Quelle fin, pour notre histoire! Toi, pourrissant
dans ce tombeau, lardé des coups de dague de mes barons
et moi, tout nu, comme un imbécile, dans les courants
d'air, attendant que ces brutes viennent me taper dessus.

The setting of the play, after a moment of total darkness,
switches back in time to when the King and Becket were friends;
the story slowly unfolds, until the final scene of the play is
cleverly introduced, when the murderous, flailing arms of the
barons turn into the tormenting, flogging fists of the monks. The
waiting is now over, the punishment finished. The King repeats
the words almost verbatim with which he began the play; 'Tu es
content, Becket?' The end, as decreed by history and as foretold
in the short prologue, has inevitably been reached. The sense of
inevitability occasioned by the structure of the play has served
to emphasise the theme, namely that, given the very different
nature of the two men, their interests were ultimately bound to
clash and their ways to part.

The inner play device is also used in Becket to affect the
audience's awareness of time. Normally an audience is conscious
of two aspects of time within the theatre. The first is the
actual length of time each spectator is present in the building
itself; the second is the period covered by the events they see.
The time-span between the moment when Becket is seen rubbing the
King dry with a towel at the beginning of the flash-back and the
Archbishop's dying seconds, when he is martyred, covers several
years. The effect of this is that actual time appears to have been

expanded, though it does not pass at a uniform rate and contains gaps. This expansion is in keeping with some of the implications of the play as a whole, in which wide issues are at stake since the leaders of nations and of churches are involved. A similar effect is produced by the movement between countries and various locations in different scenes. A sense is thus created that the lives of people far beyond the immediate action (Saxons and Normans, French and English) will be affected by what happens. Although the events of the flash-back appear to take place over a long period of time, the flash-back itself is made, paradoxically, to occur apparently within a few moments, the time needed for the Saxon monks to flog Henry. This contraction of time tends to concentrate attention on the moment and on the two main characters directly involved, whose story the play unfolds. By structuring the inner play to give a two-fold quality to time in Becket, Anouilh has used the device to give a new emphasis, though, of course, this feature of the play recalls in some measure the double perspective on events noted by Thomas and Lee in their discussion of the theatrical qualities of L'Alouette.

Within the fantasy of the King’s thoughts events follow their chronological order. The people involved in them, however, are not always portrayed realistically. Indeed the use of caricature is an important aspect of the theatricality of the play and is one in which the grating quality of Becket is to be found, though it is less in evidence than in some of Anouilh’s previous works. This effect is produced when audiences find themselves laughing at

individuals or situations and yet feel possibly uncomfortable for having been amused. These moments occur in Becket in the domestic scenes when Henry is seen in confrontation with his family, and in the interlude when the Pope is in discussion with his adviser. Anouilh's portrayal of the royal family depicts a grotesque situation, as for example when Henry sets his son upon an armchair as though it were a throne and pretends to pay homage to his terrified, stupid child. He berates his mother and his wife; finally, unable to bear their presence or their grumbling any longer, he literally kicks his son out of the room and chases the two women away: 'Elles sont sorties en désordre, dans un grand froissement de soie.' They are not allowed a dignified exit as would befit royalty. Previously he had grumbled at them, growling that they, as opposed to his dear friend Becket, had not been blessed with any intelligence. When his mother reminded him that he was speaking of members of the royal family, he replied:

Cela n'empêche rien. L'intelligence a été distribuée autrement.  

His wife, he claims, has never held any sexual attraction for him:

Votre ventre était un désert, Madame, où j'ai dû m'égarer solitaire, par devoir. Mais vous n'avez jamais été ma femme.

He holds her in contempt. Throughout, the members of the family are made to appear ridiculous. The Pope, too, is presented in an unsympathetic way; he is described as 'un petit homme remuant et maigre qui a un abominable accent italien'. His swarthy Cardinal

2. P.C. p. 223.
is said to have an even worse accent. Their conversation about Becket turns on their self-preservation, their self-interest, and their farcical system of spying on each other. The stage instruction for this interlude reads: 'Le tout fait un peu crasseux, dans des dorures.'¹ On the other hand the barons are presented in a purely comic manner as unthinking morons. Indeed one of them asserts: 'Un baron qui se pose des questions est un baron malade.'² At one point they are described as a 'petit manège comique,'³ good for a drunken orgy and blindly obedient. Beneath their amusing exterior they are deadly. Gone from the barons, the Pope and the royal family is the genial amiability that surrounded characters like Tarde, Thérèse's father in La Sauvage, or the extravagant duchesses of some of the early plays, characters who were notable for their theatricality. In Becket fantasy is being used to disguise a sinister reality.

The theatricality of Becket is also underlined by the use Anouilh makes of properties and setting. In Léocadia these had both been important, but in that play the Duchess had transported the actual taxi and café used by the Prince during his affair with Léocadia to the garden of her estate. In Becket, on the other hand, Anouilh introduces properties that are deliberately theatrical. In the encounter between Henry and Becket on a wind-swept plain in France, when a reconciliation is attempted, the two men are seen riding hobby-horses. When the play opens, the setting is described as 'un décor vague avec des piliers partout.'⁴ By

¹. P.C. p. 254.
². P.C. p. 189.
clever lighting and the use of flying pieces lowered from above the stage, by ingenious draping of curtains and telling sound-effects, the pillars can become in turn columns in a cathedral, or trees in a forest, or can form part of rooms in a palace. Anouilh may thus, whenever he wishes, rush his audiences along from one scene to another rather in the manner of some Shakespearean plays. This in itself tends to destroy the illusion of a slavish reproduction of reality. Anouilh had twice before created backgrounds that could serve as a multiple setting for different scenes. In Antigone he had done this by using a simple back-cloth whose neutral grey tones could represent in the imagination of audiences the various rooms of Créon's palace. When Anouilh had wished in L'Alouette to be able to whisk his spectators along he had done this not through the setting, but by the structure of the play itself, whereby characters stepped forward and re-enacted past events. The importance given to staging in Becket provides a further example of Anouilh's technical inventiveness, and reminds audiences that Anouilh is not trying slavishly to retell a story, but is taking particular incidents that reveal the break-up of a friendship between two men and illuminating those moments.

This skill, with which the author invested his play, was highly praised by the critics at the time of its first production. Poirot-Delpech and Leclerc found the artifice of the technician, on occasions, too obvious; other critics could only speak well of it.¹ Such commendation was becoming rare for Anouilh during the nineteen fifties; indeed it waned once more when he

¹. See above pp. 71-73.
presented his next play, La Grotte, wherein the disruption of the time element re-emerged as a notable feature of Anouilh's theatrical style, and in which the 'grinçante' quality of his play pushed itself once more to the fore.

First produced at the Théâtre Montparnasse-Gaston Baty on the fifth of October 1961, La Grotte (written the previous year) provides a completely new example of theatrical structure for Anouilh. The play was clearly influenced by the works of Pirandello, and in this respect the author continued the pattern already noted in this chapter of alternating between literary and historical sources for inspiration and ideas. Indeed Anouilh himself drew attention to the similarities, but hastened to add at once that his play was not exactly the same as those of his Italian mentor.¹ The author-character in the play goes on to say that any resemblances only serve to show that he and Pirandello had problems in common when writing their plays.

La Grotte apparently shows an author in the throes of creation. He talks about his play, rather in the same way that the stage-manager does in Thornton Wilder's Our Town, and introduces the characters to the audience, but he does not know quite how to begin his tale of rape and murder. He tries one scene, but decides that he ought to have started sooner in the sequence of events, for one of his most interesting characters is dead before she has spoken a word. The author had at one time considered an alternative beginning to his play. Suddenly he takes a decision: 'Allez!'

¹. N.P.G. pp. 166 - 167.
On va le jouer aussi, l'autre début.¹ When that scene has been played, then the author will see where he will go from there. By showing an author trying to make up his mind about the sequence of events in his play, Anouilh has employed a new means of presenting a play-within-the-play. He has likewise been able to play with the time-sequence; while the author-character is speaking, the time is in the present, but, when the scenes are tried out, they do not occur in chronological order. They take place when they will most aptly demonstrate a point under discussion. A result of this method is that the murder story (which, the author-character claims, was his original plot) becomes a play-within-the-play presented in the form of a series of flashes forward and backward. When flash-backs had been used by Anouilh previously they had usually occurred in the form of inner plays. In La Grotte, however, they have acquired a director (the author-character) who causes them to happen. In one way this technique can be seen to be an extension of the construction of L'Alouette, where the play at the primary level was Joan's trial and the plays-within-the-play were the re-enactments of incidents from her life taking place under the direction of the court. A side-effect of this technique is that the author is able to consider issues from various points of view, rather in the same manner that a novelist employs when he uses the letter-writing technique. The two opening plays-within-the-play already mentioned are a case in point. In them the author is indirectly considering the question of the starting-point of his story. He wonders whether it is when the police-inspector arrives

¹ N.P.G. p. 184.
after the murder of the cook and asks questions of the count about the circumstances in which the latter found the dying woman and his previous relationship with her. An alternative, the author decides, would be to begin earlier while the cook is still alive. This would allow audiences to learn at first hand something of the victim and to see in more detail the kind of existence led in the kitchen. The structure of the play is further complicated by the fact that within the play-within-the-play two levels of society are depicted, those who live 'belowstairs' and the others who occupy the rooms 'upstairs' — the servants and the masters. In the theatre the two are physically separated by a split-level stage. A link between the two is formed not merely by the stairs joining them but also by those characters who are allowed to move from the one to the other. The theme and the setting have thus been ingeniously linked by Anouilh; the two levels of society are revealed by the two levels of the stage, which remains a stage, when all is said and done, for the play is taking place in a theatre.

At the primary level, then, the play shows an author wrestling with the problems that face him in establishing the structure and setting of his work. Allied to this are the difficulties encountered in handling the characters he has created. At the secondary level is the murder story itself with its inherent comment on society. The levels of the play are linked, just as the two strata of society within the play-within-the-play are joined, by the actors who are able to move from one section to the other, as, for example, the butler, the police-inspector, and the seminarist. A curious situation is brought about by structuring
the play in this way. When the author appears on stage, audiences are aware that they are observing a playwright at work within a theatre. The latter, normally associated with make-believe, is thus presented as reality. When fantasy in the form of the author's play is seen, it is intended to give an illusion of reality - the home of the family and its servants. The usual presentation has thus been reversed. Within the illusion of the play-within-the-play, however, attempts are made to show that the apparent reality of the home is in fact only pretence. In this respect the split-level stage is important since it is so obviously theatrical. After describing the kitchen below and the drawing-room above, Anouilh goes on to write: 'Rien n'a l'air de vrai ni dans l'un ni dans l'autre décor.'¹ Later on, when Marie-Jeanne, the cook, lies dying, the scene becomes even more unreal: 'La cuisine semble plus obscure ... Cela devient un lieu fantastique avec des ombres insolites.'² Some of the characters, too, who inhabit the house, are presented in a non-realistic manner. Indeed the butler reminds the author of the use the latter has made of him in previous plays:

Monsieur est très bien bon de s'en souvenir. J'ai beaucoup servi Monsieur, en effet. Le Voyageur sans bagage, 1937; Léocadia, 1940; Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, 1941; L'Invitation au château, 1947; Monsieur a toujours été très satisfait de mes services.³

By making what is usually considered as real to appear as make-believe, by making the converse equally true, and then by cloaking the apparently real with seeming fantasy, Anouilh has, through a Pirandellian type of play, found a new way for him of blurring the

¹. N.P.G. p. 165.
². N.P.G. p. 286.
³. N.P.G. p. 236.
distinction between fantasy and reality.

Whereas the means by which Anouilh created the situations he wished to portray reveal new dramatic insights by the author, the tone of La Grotte is very much in line with that of other plays written during the nineteen fifties. On the one hand it can be entertaining as a result of its clever structure, its lively and amusing characters, and its racy dialogue; it can also be very moving by its apparent simplicity (as in the scene when a young seminarist and a kitchen maid re-enact the moment when they first met) and it can be laughable (as when the shallow son of the count, Baron Jules, and his wife, La Baronne, flit about the stage). On the other hand the tone of the play can be very sombre, as when Adèle, the kitchen maid, tells the young Alexis, the scullery-help preparing the vegetables, that life is a matter of dominating those who are weaker than yourself; she says to him:

Fais ton travail et ne salis pas ma cuisine, si tu tiens à la peau de tes fesses. Quand tu seras grand, tu en battras un plus petit. C'est la justice. Et c'est ni toi ni moi, qui la changerons.¹

Adèle's life within the household is distressing; she is pregnant and wishes to abort her child; she is despised and ill-treated, having to scrub and clean from early morning to late at night. The only person to feel any real affection for her is the seminarist and his mother forbids any relationship between the pair, even resorting to physical violence to make him do as she wishes. A tense atmosphere similar to that in the kitchen is found in the upstairs-rooms where the marriage of the count is not altogether happy. Any attempt by the inhabitants of the one level to mingle

¹ N.P.G. p. 195.
with those from the other is bound to lead to further unhappiness, for life has to follow certain patterns, as the butler maintains:

Il y a un jeu à jouer suivant certaines règles – et pour tout le monde – sinon, tout s'écroule.¹

These rules give stability to life and must be observed: otherwise disaster ensues. One of these rules would appear to be that everyone has his place and must keep to it, as the Count points out to his wife: 'Chacun doit jouer son rôle là où le sort l'a placé.'² Fate has placed her in the upper room where she should stay; but she descends to the kitchen with the well-meant but ill-conceived intention of asking Adèle to act as god-mother to her child. The countess is horrified by the vehemence of the refusal she receives and Adèle's loathing even to touch the baby. The rules of social contact have been ignored with dire consequences, as the Count in his youthful encounter with Marie-Jeanne, the murdered cook, had previously learnt. Just as the infringement of the rules in any game is penalised, so must the non-observance of the rules of life be chastised. Within the fantasy created by the author, it would seem that lasting happiness is not to be found, either 'upstairs' or 'downstairs'. Neither does there appear to be any hope of a compromise, for, when attempts are made to bring the two sections of society together, further misery ensues.

A similar tone is to be found in the apparently real world of the author. He talks to the audience about the problems he has had in ordering the scenes of his play, in controlling the personages

¹ N.P.G. p. 239.
² N.P.G. p. 229.
he has created, and of the distress he feels when he thinks of the pain he will cause some of the characters in his play:

Ah, Adèle! C'est ma tristesse et mon remords. Tout ce qui va lui arriver, je le porte sur mon dos comme une honte.¹

When he can no longer think what to do he calls for an interval, on the advice of the police inspector, but asks the audience not to take the opportunity of slipping away. When the second act begins, the author is shown to have less and less control over what is happening; he cries:

Mais maintenant, depuis qu'ils ont parlé tout seuls, ils font ce qu'ils veulent. C'est bien simple, je ne sais plus où l'on va!²

The young seminarist tells him that the actors wish to play out their parts, however painful they may be, and no matter how reluctant the author may be to allow them to do so.³ In despair the author sits with his head in his hands. When he sees the course that events are taking, he blames himself, exclaiming that he ought never to have begun his play. Alternating between anger and a feeling of ridiculousness, he laments that his story is one of useless cruelty, crying out:

Inutile! C'est une histoire qui n'aurait jamais dû exister, voilà tout. Je ne peux pas croire que la vie soit aussi laide que cela.⁴

In spite of all the wishes of the author the story he has written is a sad one in which the characters suffer. He has tried to rid himself of his task but failed. It would seem that fantasy, once

¹. N.P.G. p. 196.
². N.P.G. p. 248.
⁴. N.P.G. p. 279.
it is roused, cannot be controlled, and that characters who have been imagined have an existence that cannot be expunged. Make-believe thus takes on a reality of its own.

The relationship between reality and fantasy in La Grotte has, it would seem, become very complex. Both are disturbing and at times amusing; both are true in their own way. The nature of truth, however, is not easy to establish. It is not, as the inspector tells the count, an absolute: 'La vérité: c'est un dossier qui se tient.' He repeats the idea several times during the play and tells the maid while he is questioning her that 'la vérité, c'est vague.' He never conclusively establishes who the murderer is; his banal announcement at the close of the play that it was the coachman is unconvincing since the confession was only extracted after 'trente-cinq minutes d'interrogatoire avec deux collègues, méthode américaine, la lampe dans le nez.' The vagueness of truth is further illustrated by the apparently arbitrary order in which the episodes occur, following the whim of the author rather than a chronological sequence. From the point of view of theatrical impact, the author's choice is as valid as the natural order of things. By showing an author at work as he tries out various possibilities and gives life to the characters that his imagination has conjured up, Anouilh has found new ways of exploring the relationship between fact and make-believe.

The final lines of the play, spoken by the author, take up the theme of the difficulties of creation; he craves the audience's

pardon for all his mistakes:

Excusez les fautes de l'auteur, Mesdames et Messieurs.
Mais cette pièce-là, il n'avait jamais pu l'écrire.¹

The audience knows very well, however, that the author has written the play and may well wonder whether he is trying to dupe them. It might occur to the audience that the whole play has been a gigantic hoax. In one way, of course, it has been, for the playwright has been forced to ask himself how he could entertain his audience while at the same time obliging them to watch the unpleasant view of life he was presenting. His answer was to say to his audiences that they were only watching a play after all. Anouilh's intention here would seem to bear some similarity to that in La Valse des toréadors, where the author was previously faced with the problem of rendering acceptable what was basically unpalatable. His solution then was to use farce; in La Grotte he emphasises structure. The final words of the play cited above are self-consciously theatrical; they recall the close of the Épisode de la vie d'un auteur, but with the great difference that the latter stressed the farcical side of life, while La Grotte accentuates its sordidness.

The author states that he originally conceived the play as a simple thriller; it was this tale that became the play-within-the-play. The simple tale became embroiled in an entangled weave, for Anouilh evidently sees life as complicated; his apparent belief that the theatre should reflect life's complexity, if not its details, is reflected in the complicated structure of La Grotte. By employing the play-within-the-play device as a means of viewing

¹. N.P.G. p. 292.
the same event from different angles and by using self-conscious theatricality to show the author in the throes of creation, Anouilh has succeeded through his technique not only in underlining the intricacies of existence, but also in showing the relationship between make-believe and fact from a new point of view, namely that fantasy, once activated, exists in its own right and may well dominate so-called reality. The life of the author is shown as problematic and at times painful; the condition of the servants is distressing and often quite harrowing; the lot of the upper classes is a little better but not to be envied. Only the flippantly unthinking remain unaffected by trouble, but they are not depicted as people to be copied. Reality at every level is unpleasant; but it is constantly presented in terms of theatre. The make-believe of the latter may on rare occasions afford some relief and a little entertainment but, even in the fantasy of play, the unhappy remain miserable and even the amusing police-inspector cannot be sure he has solved the crime he is investigating. The emphasis on the fun to be found in the world of pretence that exists in the theatre, as expressed in such plays as Cécile and Épisode de la vie d'un auteur, has disappeared in La Grotte; the disturbing, grating tones of Ardèle and Pauvre Bitos have taken its place.

The year 1962 saw the production of two more of Anouilh's plays, the short L'Orchestre and the more important La Foire d'empoigne. They were both staged at the Comédie des Champs Élysées on January 11th, though the former had been written several years earlier (in 1957), while the latter dated from 1961. Both plays are non-realistic in their technique.
L'Orchestre, which contains farce and bitterness, is presented in a non-realistic manner. In it a group of musicians are seen performing in a restaurant; they, like the Tarde family before them, are frustrated and of limited talent. They have had a few past moments of glory as Mme Hortense, the leader of the orchestra, reminds her players. Some of them had played before royalty or before famous pianists who in turn praised their performance; when Tarde had spoken of his success in *La Sauvage*, all he could boast was second prize at the Arcachon festival. They chatter while they are playing and between performances; their conversations centre on cooking, sex, and family matters; their comments to each other are biting. Anouilh's skill is evidenced by his ability to keep the different conversations going and at the same time interrelate them. Life, as lived by these wretched musicians, is made to appear ridiculous; but it will go on, come what may. One of the group commits suicide in the toilets; she is in love with the pianist, but despairs at seeing a successful outcome to her affection. Her beloved, like the Generals in *Ardèle* and *La Valse des toréadors*, is married to an ailing wife. After the news is broken to the members of the orchestra, however, they don comic little hats and continue playing. The final curtain falls on this grotesque scene as a waiter and a doctor dash round to the lavatory to see whether the girl can be revived.

Anouilh has not previously portrayed the grimness of life by showing people making unpleasant comments to each other while they were at work, nor has he used a sordid suicide - though other characters had taken their own lives (the lovers in *Romeo et Jeannette* who drown themselves in the rising tide, and Orphée who
allow himself to be taken away by M. Henri in Eurydice, for example). The element of farce that he introduces is done so by the donning of comic little hats. The incident recalls the way in which the characters in Épisode de la vie d'un auteur wore false noses. Whereas there was no intrinsic reason why the characters should wear the false noses, the hats are put on for the specific purpose of entertaining the onlookers. The effect in both cases is similar; the characters are rendered ridiculous and to a certain extent grotesque. They are dehumanised. Anouilh has used costume before, of course, in Ornifle to underline the farcical nature of the doctors, but then the characters wore full attire to go to a fancy dress ball. The paper hats are put on by the musicians in L'Orchestre to add humour to the score they are about to perform. These characters are faced with grim reality; their only hope of relief is to hide behind a facade of comic fantasy. In doing so they appear to be despicable, unfeeling, and ridiculous, for while an unpleasant death is being investigated they put on apparel that is normally associated with party games. It would appear that reality, life, is sordid and grim, while fantasy is comic and despicable.

Although L'Orchestre is only a short play it reveals the fertile imagination of Anouilh and also his ability to make audiences laugh at events and situations that are basically unpleasant. This quality in the play contributes to its 'grating' quality, through the clash of the irreconcilable elements of humour and sordidness, farce and bitterness.

On the programme with L'Orchestre was the longer La Foire d'empoigne, which, like Ardèle, was presented without a break.
The manner in which Anouilh plays with his material in La Foire d'empoigne can be clearly seen in the portrayal of the Emperor Napoleon, whom he depicts as a person whose whole life is made up of performing. Napoleon's actions represent a kind of play-within-the-play, taking place against a background of existence composed of the lives of ordinary folk, the Smiths and Duponts of the world. They represent reality; Napoleon, though aware of their presence, cannot recognize them individually. Faced with life, Napoleon puts on a performance which he hopes will bring men to fear him. Indeed he asserts: 'J'aime les héros qui ont peur de moi.' He is, as John Harvey states, 'an opportunist devoid of any conviction, a soulless actor who bases his every move on the impression it will create.' This idea is stressed by Pouché, who says to his son, prior to the Emperor's return to France from Elba:

Vous l'imaginez finissant comme un chef de bataillon en retraite entre ses mille hommes, à l'île d'Elba, un acteur pareil? Vous ne connaissez pas le théâtre. Il sait qu'il est perdu mais il vient se faire une sortie. Il l'avait ratée la première fois.

It is clear that Napoleon sees himself in the role of an actor, for he tells d'Anouville:

Mon petit ami, nous ne sommes pas au théâtre. Ou plutôt, si, nous y sommes ... mais pas dans la tragédie, dans le mélo, comme au boulevard du Temple. Moi, je suis un acteur de drame historique.

He is a despot whose system of government is based on a set of rigid principles; he decides to rid himself of some of his enemies.

by means of an 'épuration'. The guilty will be those whom he chooses, following his personal whim: 'Les coupables seront ceux que nous aurons désignés ... J'ai déjà noté Raguse.' The presentation of Napoleon as an actor unable to recognise his own soldiers but promising promotion to all whom he encounters is caricatural. Indeed, the opening stage-instructions concerning all the characters read: 'Tous les personnages ont les traits un peu grossis, des ventres exagérés comme sur les caricatures anglaises de l'époque.' A consequence of this method of presentation is that the whole of life appears as a charade, with the politician Napoleon standing out as the arch poseur.

Another actor in the political game is Louis XVIII, the Emperor's successor. He, too, is depicted as an opportunist willing to use Napoleon's successes. He is content to do this because those victories were achieved by Frenchmen in the name of France. The difference between the two men is that Louis claims sincerity, adding:

Je vais travailler, pendant les quelques années qui me restent à vivre, pour le bien de la France et non pour le mien.\(^3\)

He later reiterates the idea, expressing himself in more figurative language: 'Et c'est moi maintenant qui suis chargé de la cuisine. [\...\] Je m'en vais fricoter, pour le bien commun.'\(^4\) In order to achieve this end, he is willing to abandon rigid principles; he will not, for example, agree to blowing up the Pont d'Iéna merely because it celebrates a victory by Napoleon — the cost of

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replacement would be too great. He is willing to play the part of friend to his allies, but at the same time set one against the other so that, in their squabbles among themselves, they will forget their claims on France itself. By presenting both the King and the Emperor as actors, Anouilh seems to be suggesting in this work that, in a world where one and all appear to be playing roles, the greatest poseurs are the leaders of society. These men are both opportunists who will sometimes work for the good of mankind and sometimes not. The intransigent Napoleon is selfish; Louis, apparently more adaptable and considerate (he does tell d'Anouville that the best aim for a young man is to find himself a suitable partner and settle down to a happy married life), is an astute politician who believes in survival. Anouilh may be seen to be implying here that only the abandonment of rigid principles can form a sound basis for government. This denunciation of rigidity recalls the holding up to ridicule of Bitos and Maxime in Pauvre Bitos.

The theatrical nature of both Napoleon and Louis received emphasis by the fact that both parts were performed by the same actor at the initial presentation of the play. There is no inherent reason why this should be done in this manner as there is in L'Invitation au château, where the twin brothers are both played by the same actor. However, the effect of making one actor perform both parts is to stress that, though governments may differ in detail or even be totally opposed, nevertheless, they have certain qualities in common; Napoleon and Louis emerge as opportunist leaders of an amorphous mass of ordinary people and are prone to putting on a show, thus losing touch with reality.
The technique of caricaturing both men as pot-bellied performers emphasises that, though there may be differences between the two men, there are certain fundamental similarities.

In presenting Napoleon and Louis, especially the former, as men whose daily lives embrace pretence, Anouilh shows new insights into the possibilities of technique. He has modified the situation where pretence is a form of escape from reality, as it had been for Lucien (Roméo et Jeannette) or Ornifle when they spent their lives acting out roles. In La Foire d'empoigne, role-playing has become the means whereby characters fall into the danger of losing touch with ordinary existence; fantasy, of necessity, breaks contact with reality. In so far as Anouilh makes his audience laugh in the face of these dangers and makes Heads of State look ridiculous, thus imperilling the lives of millions of people who depend on them, the playwright can be said to be producing a grating effect. This quality is less in evidence perhaps in La Foire d'empoigne than in some of his previous plays since the misery of ordinary people is not stressed. Nevertheless the threat of disaster is there and audiences are invited to laugh at it.

An interesting but incidental point revealed by this consideration of the plays from Ornifle to La Foire d'empoigne is that Anouilh appears to have alternated between literary and historical sources for partial inspiration for his plays during this period. They are also notable for their diversity. Their themes have ranged over the futility of the spirit of revenge (Pauvre Bitos), the facility of living (L'Hurluberlu), friendship (Becket), the problems of artistic creation (La Grotte), and the
satirical exposure of political opportunism in his final play *La Foire d'empoigne*. Where Anouilh has used the play-within-the-play device, he has done so twice in the form of dream-sequences (*Pauvre Bitos* and *Becket*), once in the form of a play-reading, and once as an actual play performed on stage (both in *L'Hurluberlu*). He has juggled with time (*Becket* and *La Grotte*), given importance to costume (*Ornifle* and *Pauvre Bitos*, and to a lesser extent *L'Orchestre* when the musicians don their comic little hats), and introduced in all his plays characters who have strutted like marionettes across the stage. This is to be seen also in the further complexities in the relationship between fantasy and reality that are illustrated by Anouilh's use of play. Nowhere is the reality of life demonstrated as enjoyable; but neither is fantasy. Indeed it appears at times as frightening, ridiculous, or even absurd; these elements are seen at times to collide, as in *Pauvre Bitos*. The use of the play-within-the-play to express unpleasantness is a notable feature of the plays from this period. Indeed with their stress on the dark side of existence, which extends even into fantasy, the plays accentuate the grating quality of earlier plays. This effect is increased still further when Anouilh invites his audiences to laugh or be amused by situations that are basically not funny. Because both make-believe and existence are shown as unpleasant, the distinction between them is not always clear. This idea finds expression in the structure of some plays, particularly *La Grotte*, in which the dividing-line between what constituted the authentic world of life and the illusory existence of the theatre became blurred. Indeed the possibility that everyday life may be simply an extension of life in the theatre was suggested in a number of plays through reference
to it as a game or play, and through the assertions by some characters that they had roles to perform. The variety of ways in which Anouilh exploited various aspects of theatricalism was not always appreciated by the reviewers of his plays.\textsuperscript{1} Their hostility became increasingly severe with the result that Anouilh did not stage a new play of his own for a period of six years. When he did at last break his silence, as we shall see in the next chapter, his skill had in no way diminished.

\textsuperscript{1} See above, p. 90.
Chapter 8.

The plays from *Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron* to *Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit*

After a period of six years, during which Anouilh did not stage a new play by himself, he finally broke silence in 1968 with *Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron*. In the years that followed, until 1972, a further four plays by Anouilh were given their initial performance, *Cher Antoine, Les Poissons rouges, Ne réveillez pas madame*, and *Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit*. Of these five plays, the first is given a family background, while the remainder centre on a playwright, the theatre and its actors. Thematically the plays form a coherent whole in that each deals with a family in which the personal relationships between the adults have broken down; the effect of this estrangement on the other members of the family is considered from various angles. Structurally they are linked by the fact that each one includes examples of inner play and play-within-the-play introduced and used in new ways by Anouilh. Two of them, *Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron* and *Les Poissons rouges*, have been included in a further volume of the author’s collected works under the title of *Nouvelles Pièces Grinçantes*. The grating quality that was indicated in the plays considered in the previous chapter has carried over into his latest works, and can be seen not only in the reality of existence but also in the fantasy to which people turn for relief. The peace that they seek they do not find, often confusing the fantasy with reality because they are so similar.
The first of the plays in Anouilh's latest cycle, Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron, was presented initially in Paris on the 13th November, 1968 at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées. In his Nouvelles Pièces Grinçantes the author dates his play 1966. This year might be acceptable as a date for completion but note must be taken of the fact that the opening speech of the play appears, with slight variations and in the form of a poem called La Baignoire, in Anouilh's collection of Fables. The "Avertissement Hypocrite" to these poems is dated September 1961. This would seem to suggest that the germ of the idea for the play, if not the actual text, existed by 1961 at the latest.

Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron, when considered at a simple story-level, tells of a family in which the relationship between husband and wife has broken down. The couple are seen together at table, in bed, and generally around the house. They squabble constantly; the wife in particular shows regret for her lost youth; she laments her vanished beauty and the fact that her husband no longer takes a sexual interest in her. His attitude is expressed in his outburst when he shouts at her that he finds the idea of conjugal duty disgusting. Still shouting, he adds:

Tu veux que je te dise le fond de ma pensée, une bonne fois? C'est répugnant, le mariage! Il n'y a que le désir qui puisse justifier une pareille gymnastique. Avec le désir tout passe. On peut faire n'importe quelle acrobatie, tout est simple, tout est gentil, tout est pur. Mais de sang-froid!²

This distaste for the physical manifestation of affection has already been seen in Anouilh's plays; Ardèle is an example for in

it the General accepted his sister's affair with her fellow hunchback until it expressed itself in love-making. In the same play the General's wife was obsessed by the thought of universal copulation. In Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron, as in Ardèle, the effect of discord between husband and wife on children is demonstrated. The fact that the children suffer as a result of their disputes is recognised by Adolphe when he answers his wife's request to make her happy:

Et je voudrais que les enfants le soient aussi. Ils sont inquiets. Le regard de Toto m'angoisse. Il a des cauchemars toutes les nuits. Après tout, nous sommes leurs parents!

The reality of life for each of them, wife, husband and child, has become dull, prosaic, at times frightening, and unbearable. The only relief they have lies in their fantasies and their dreams, some of which turn into nightmares. In order to express these forms of escapism, sought by each member of the family who in turn cause and thus in a way direct what happens, Anouilh uses the device of the play-within-the-play. A consideration of these examples reveals the playwright once more playing with his subject-matter and emphasising theatricality as a technique of drama.

The day-time fantasies of the characters disclose their desires and their regrets. The wife, Élodie, stocks her world with romantic lovers all of whom vaguely resemble one of her former boyfriends. They defend her from the lecherous eyes of gondoliers, control the European stock-markets, take her to smart restaurants, desire her passionately and have had exciting adventures in such dashing guises as a naval captain or smart club-man. They are, in

1. N.P.G. p. 440
fact, all the things that her husband is not and that she would wish him to be. She further imagines herself as an heroic mother surrounded by elegant personal maids, luxurious dresses, exotic head-waiters — a Walter Mitty type of existence in which she sublimes her frustrated longings. Anouilh's skill in presenting these fantasies consists in his ability to stage both dream and reality simultaneously. As Élodie prepares to dress for the day, she lapses into one of her dreams. The stage-directions read:

Quand elle est presque nue, un homme très élégant, très clubman, en complet pied-de poule et fleur à la boutonnière, surgit dans la chambre et la prend dans ses bras par derrière, lui caressant les seins.1

It is he who tells her of the gondolier who desired her, reaffirming the erotic nature of her escapism already revealed in the stage directions. Her husband, Adolphe, crosses the room but does not see the lover, Adonard, obviously because the latter exists only in the imagination of the wife.

Adolphe's escapism consists of imagined, erotic affairs with beautiful women; it also forms a relief from his daily work, allowing him to reverse a situation where he is normally dominated by an overpowering employer, M. Fessard-Lebonze, to become himself the oppressor. He is presented as a successful, tyrannical business-tycoon, utterly without mercy. The presentation of his daydreams, however, is slightly different from that of his wife's fantasies. In this instance they are partially verbalised, the stage-directions reading: 'Adolphe qui compulse ses journaux rêve à haute voix.'2 In contrast to this, those of his wife are all

1. N.P.G. p. 343.
visualised. After beginning Adolphe's dream with a monologue, Anouilh reverts to a visual demonstration of what is going on in the husband's mind, presenting reality and fantasy simultaneously.

Toto's daydreams derive mainly from the reading of history he has to do for homework; they consist for the most part of a confused jumble of facts that he has culled from his books, intermingled with his reactions to the squabbles of his parents. He has been told by his teachers to read about Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI. In order to show this Anouilh presents the child sitting silently on stage with his book while slides of its pages are flashed on the backcloth, showing scenes from that period of history. At the same time a voice is heard from off-stage reading the text of the book. The royal family is described as united by its adversity:

Son courage et sa dignité dans le malheur semblent avoir fait naître, dans le coeur de la Reine, un sentiment d'amour pour son mari que, dans sa coquetterie de jeune femme insatisfaite, elle avait tendance à négliger et même à mépriser en des jours plus glorieux.¹

In his imagination Toto sees his mother and father; this is demonstrated visually when they come onto the stage dressed as Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI. In their adversity they are tender towards one another and Toto imagines his mother saying to his father:

Mais, vous voyez, depuis que nous sommes dans le malheur, je m'aperçois que vous êtes vraiment un chic type. Et je voulais vous dire que je vous aime très fort, Louis. Voilà!²

The language of course is that of a twentieth-century child, not that of a former queen of France. The contrast between the

¹. N.P.G. p. 387.
². N.P.G. p. 388.
language and the character helps to reinforce the theatricality of the fantasy.

To present the day-dreams of his characters, Anouilh has employed three techniques. In the case of Élodie, actors performed her thoughts on stage; in so far as she was responsible for their creation and determined how they should be enacted, she could be considered as their director. The presentation of her imaginings, therefore, can be considered as a variation on the use to which Anouilh has put the play-within-the-play. He has of course previously shown the thoughts that were passing through the minds of characters, as in the dream-sequence of the second act of *Pauvre Bitos* and in the structure of *Becket* when the King's thoughts were shown as he waited to be flogged. In those two instances, however, chronological time was suspended while the sequences took place. In *Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron*, the fantasies of Élodie and the reality in which she lives are seen on stage together. Anouilh adopts much the same procedure for Adolphe but adds at the beginning of the latter's chimera a picture in words, as the husband talks about the character into which he projects himself in his mind's eye. In order to present Toto's mental activity, Anouilh has recourse first of all to mechanical tricks, using a slide-projector and a voice off-stage to demonstrate the child reading. As the latter allows his mind to wander, his mother and father come on stage clad in eighteenth-century dress. The contrast between their costumes and the twentieth-century setting serves to reinforce the make-believe element of fantasy.
Anouilh not only presents the waking dreams of the family but also shows the sleeping dreams of Adolphe and Toto, which sometimes turn to nightmares. Élodie figures in them and often seems to share them with her husband. Reality and fantasy so merge (particularly in the scene when Adolphe, clad in top-hat and night-shirt, is seen getting remarried) that it is not always immediately clear whether it is Élodie or Adolphe who is dreaming or whether they are both awake and arguing in their bedroom. In his dream Adolphe sees himself preferred to Fessard-Lebonze by the latter's charming secretary whom he decides to marry. He awakens to find himself standing in front of his cupboard searching for his wedding-outfit. He and his wife squabble further. When they both finally drop off to sleep again, he is seen divorced and then remarried. When he lifts the veil from his new wife's face, he finds, to his horror, that his bride is none other than Élodie.

Even in his dreams he cannot escape the shackles of his actual marriage. With these dreams Anouilh does not present reality and fantasy simultaneously as he had done with the day-time flights of fancy. Here fantasy and reality alternate as moments of sleeping and waking succeed one another. When Adolphe is awake, however, and arguing with Élodie, he appears to be almost as unreal as when he is seen in his dreams. Indeed his wife tells him that he looks ridiculous and is acting like a character out of a bad play.¹ The moments when he is dreaming and those when he is alert become so fused that it is often difficult to distinguish immediately between them. Furthermore both reality and fantasy, into which all the

¹ N.P.G. p. 438.
characters take flight, are presented as equally undesirable (in both cases Adolphe is unhappily married) or in some instances equally despicable (in both areas the gratification of sexual desire figures to a large degree).

When Anouilh reveals Toto's dream in the final sequences of the play, the technique he employs is to present on stage the characters who have played a part in his parents' fantasies together with others whom he has come to know from his own reading, cowboys, Indians, and the like. The unfortunate child is tormented by a confused jumble of thoughts that he has gleaned from here and there. He imagines that he and his family are attacked by Red Indians and a wicked bandit (the dreaded Fessard-Lebonze); he sees himself gagged and bound to the foot of his bed, arms outstretched like Christ on the cross, while his parents are taunted and finally shot. He likens his family to the historical one of his daydream, united in the love each member has for the others; he attributes the following words to his mother, who speaks them to her husband just before she dies:

Moi, j'ai toujours été heureuse avec toi. Heureuse et satisfaite de tout.¹

The sad joy that Toto experienced from this statement, sad because it came so late in their lives but joyful because it was at least made, is continued into the moment when he is finally rescued by a handsome cavalry officer; the latter is none other than the romantic lover of his mother's dreams. Toto, grieved by his parent's death, derives some comfort from the kind words spoken by his rescuer, who praises the parents with the assertion

¹ N.P.G. p. 454.
that they were basically good people. Although these words are mock-heroic, they confirm, no doubt, what Toto would like to think about his mother and father:

Toto, ton père était un homme fort et courageux - et ta mère une bonne femme. Ils se sont aimés et ils ont souffert comme tous les hommes et comme toutes les femmes - et ils sont morts maintenant.

When Toto sees his parents dead in his dream, he is perhaps expressing his own fears that they may die and is wondering what will happen to him if he does lose them. He seems to idealise them, wishing for them a happy life together rather than the troubled one they had. It may well be that, just as in *Eurydice* it was implied that perfect love could only be enshrined in art, so in this play the suggestion is that perfect parents can only be found in story-books such as those that are read by Toto.

The visual presentation on stage of the characters' thoughts simultaneously with the main action, the mechanical tricks used to show Toto reading his history books and his reaction to them, the frequent lowering of a gauze screen which creates the effect of watching everything as though from afar off, and the sudden appearance of exotic characters on stage, all form part of the theatricalism of the presentation of the fantasies underlying the non-reality of their nature. Within these imaginings the characters cast themselves in roles of their own choosing - Élodie sees herself as a young and charming seductress, Adolphe plays the part of a hard, successful business-tycoon, while Toto casts himself as the tragic child. But in real life, too, they have to play certain characters; these are imposed upon them by others.

1. N.P.G. p. 454.
Elodie the neglected wife, Adolphe the humiliated clerk, Toto the buffeted son deprived of affection. In seeking refuge in dreams they are merely switching one role for another - and, although they may sometimes seem to relish the exchange, to the spectator the swap may rarely seem worthwhile in terms of either the small joy it brings or the calibre of the choice. Neither reality nor fantasy are presented as particularly attractive.

The concept of role-playing is taken a stage further when living is likened several times during the play to a performance in a theatre. Adolphe asserts quite firmly that: 'il n'y a que les vaudevilles qui [...] ressemblent à la vie.'\(^1\) He adds to this that vaudevilles are tragic and that this is because they show man at his most ridiculous and also at his greatest. Expanding this idea still further, he continues that only Feydeau and Pascal had spoken about the human condition; they had dealt with human feelings and thoughts, unlike many modern avant-garde writers who merely produced words and startling effects. Every time that man reaches a high point, Adolphe maintains, he is knocked down again and made to look foolish. If this is all there is to life, then he (Adolphe) wishes he had been forewarned; he would not, in that case, have made any effort, except perhaps to blow his brains out. He feels as though he is acting in a poor play that profits no-one:

> Je me produis dans un mauvais répertoire et en plus je ne fais plus mes frais. Je perds à chaque représentation. J'aime mieux fermer.\(^2\)

Anouilh has once more introduced vocabulary connected with the theatre and continued his vision of life as play-acting. Towards

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the end of the play he uses this to sound a note of self-conscious theatricality. During the course of Toto's nightmare Adolphe threatens to kill Fessard-Lebonze. The latter merely replies: 'Quand? La comédie est sur le point de se terminer.'

In this way Anouilh has drawn attention to the fact that his audience is watching a play. The effect of the bandit's statement is also to heighten the apprehension of the spectators, who are thus encouraged to ask themselves how the family is to survive if the play is nearly over and no help is possible. Audiences are thus pulled in two directions; on the one hand the words may make them worried by the nightmarish situation described, but on the other the statement provides a reminder that the action is taking place in a theatre.

The disturbing effect produced by comments such as that by Fessard-Lebonze, quoted above, reflects the tone established generally by the structure of the play. The reality of the family-life is unbearable with its constant squabbles; the fantasy of the escape into dreams distresses the spectator, too, for in it there is no real joy, merely pathetic eroticism or painful nightmares.

What is noticeable about the structure is the technical skill with which Anouilh has utilised the device of the play-within-the-play to present reality and fantasy side by side.

Anouilh's next play, Cher Antoine, was first performed at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées on the 1st October, 1969. The author

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has not yet published it with any of his collected works and so no precise date for composition can be ascribed to it. Anouilh has taken a playwright, his family, friends, and acquaintances from the theatre as the subject of his play. The latter contains two clear examples of inner plays, both in the form of flash-backs. The final sequence illustrates Anouilh playing in a new way with his material.

The main story tells how, after the death of a renowned playwright called Antoine, there is a reunion of his widow, former mistress, doctor, friends, and a theatre critic. They gather to hear the reading of his will in a Bavarian château where Antoine has spent the last few years of his life. The first two acts show to the audience the characters reacting to one another in this situation; the third act, using the flash-back technique, shows how Antoine imagined they would cope when facing one another. The fourth and final act shows the characters trying to escape from the situation in which they find themselves, and finally succeeding in spite of various theatrical impediments put in their way. The play closes with the voices of the guests lingering on in the house, echoing phrases already spoken. Antoine's purpose in gathering his friends, lovers and family together is to discover whether they really did love him, and whether they really were the kind of people he had imagined them to be from his experience of living with them. The question posed by the play is how far people can know each other, even people who are apparently very close one to the other. The play also queries to what extent people are true to themselves or whether they adapt to the image others form of them. The answer given would seem to be ambiguous.
Certainly the people in the play do act as Antoine had foreseen. Whether this is because he had known them sufficiently well to be able to predict accurately, or because he had conditioned them into acting as he wanted them to perform, is never very clear.

Since Antoine is dead before the play begins, he can only be seen in retrospect. This is done by means of flash-backs, the first of which occurs in the second act when the assembled friends are discussing Antoine and attitudes to life. They try to imagine why he treated them as he did, and recall his fiftieth birthday. Marcellin, his old friend and doctor, describes the occasion; with a subtle change of lighting the scene switches to the day of the party. The time change that has taken place is quite clear. During the conversation that ensues Antoine expresses his disillusionment with growing old and at having reached an age when other writers retire, giving as his examples, Shakespeare, Molière, and Racine. He goes on to say that authors always write about what is going to happen and that, on waking that morning, he had had an idea for a play:

Un homme vient de mourir - n'ayant pas donné beaucoup et n'ayant pas reçu beaucoup non plus - étant passé en somme, peut-être par sa faute, à côté de l'amitié et de l'amour. Le jour de l'enterrement, tous les personnages de sa vie se retrouvent, après le cimetière, pour le petit repas traditionnel dans sa maison - ce sont des moeurs de campagne. Et ils font un bilan, de lui et d'eux. C'est tout. Mais ce sera assez comique.

Antoine is at this point acting like the chorus in a play informing the audience what is to happen. He is speaking in a way more fitting to a prologue than to someone nearly half-way through a play. The work, he announces, is to be called "Cher Antoine ou

1. Cher Antoine, p. 110
When the flash-back is over, Marcellin expresses the opinion that on that occasion Antoine had been trying to ask his friends whether any of them loved him. The doctor concludes that it had been a question to which none of them had been able to reply. What is said during the birthday-party flash-back indicates the mental stresses that Antoine underwent during his life, particularly with regard to growing old and the pressures of creativity. His friends seem insensitive to these strains. The effect of the technique is to allow audiences a glimpse of some of the fundamental reasons behind the situation in which the characters find themselves – effect and cause, revealed in that order.

The second flash-back occurs in the third act of Cher Antoine, when the playwright hires actors to play the parts of his friends and perform a script he has prepared for them. The episode forms an inner play rather than a play-within-the-play since it has no director, simply beginning, unannounced, at the commencement of the act. In this it differs from the first flash-back, which was introduced by the speech from Marcellin. The unheralded beginning of the second flash-back may well cause some confusion for audiences, who may not at first realise that there has been a time-switch. This effect would appear to have been deliberately planned by Anouilh, for the stage-directions read:

Frida introduit les personnages, encombrés de plaids et de valises, dans des costumes de voyage un peu voyants. [... ] Ils sont les mêmes et pourtant on ne comprendra pas tout de suite pourquoi ils sont différents.

2. Ibid. p. 121.
A hint is soon given, however, that the situation has changed, when one character speaks of the tremendous heat whereas the play had originally begun in the winter, a fact stressed in the dialogue and by the inability of the characters to leave the castle where they are held up by an avalanche caused by a snow storm. The audience may come to understand that a flash-back is taking place from the conversation of the actors. This realisation is confirmed when Antoine himself appears, for, as has already been established, he died before the play began. The audience having recovered from its initial bewilderment may then wonder what the purpose of the incident is. One effect of presenting the flash-back in this way is to create a sense of surprise and wonder.

The reason why the actors have been assembled in the château is explained by Antoine who says that for once he would really like to be able to control his friends, to make them say what they actually thought, to dismiss them if he felt like it, to do with his friends the things that one normally does not do in real life.\(^1\)

It is the script that Antoine has written for the actors that anticipates what his friends will say when they are gathered together for his funeral service. His forecast turns out to be accurate almost word for word. By using the flash-back as a form of prognosis Anouilh produces in this instance a curious effect, for the audience knows, as the prediction is being made, that it has already come to pass.

At first sight it might appear that Antoine knew his friends well, but he begins to have doubts. He wonders whether the text

\(^1\) Cher Antoine, p. 157.
he has written for the actors merely reflects how he imagines his friends would act. He cannot know for certain what they would do and say:

Ce n'était pas vous qui parliez: c'était vous, vous par moi. On n'en sort pas! On est en cage. On ne connaît les autres que par l'idée qu'on se fait d'eux. Quel monde incompréhensible les autres ...

The italics are Anouilh's own. Because Antoine cannot be sure that he really understands his friends and family, he invites his actors, who have studied their parts and therefore know the kind of people they are trying to portray, to improvise. The actors are surprised and discover that, after exchanging a few banalities, they have nothing further to say: 'On est sans mots!' Antoine looks to the actress playing the role of his widow and, realising she can tell him nothing, asks: 'Je n'ai donc plus aucune chance de savoir qui vous étiez - ma veuve?' Antoine's experiment appearing in his eyes to be a failure, he discontinues the rehearsal; the flash-back is over. At this point the audience learns that the flash-back has been a visual presentation of a speech by a German notary whose function has been to assemble Antoine's friends and family in the château, where he is to read them the will. He takes over the dialogue as though he had been relating the incident that had occurred some months previously. His speech finally makes clear that the episode has been a flash-back. In doing this Anouilh has reversed the procedure he adopted in the second act when the flash-back was introduced by Marcellin. He has thus provided variety in the means whereby he has included

1. Cher Antoine, p. 158.
2. Ibid. p. 163.
3. Ibid. p. 165.
the two examples of his use of the device.

The effect of the second flash-back is to reinforce the theme that people act as they do because they have been conditioned to think of themselves in certain ways, seeing themselves cast in particular roles ascribed to them by other folk. The point is made clear by Antoine's first wife, the old actress Carlotta, when she is told by Estelle, Antoine's young widow, that she is wearing too much make-up. Carlotta agrees:

Ma chère, c'est exact, je me peins. Mon modèle est Carlotta. Et je peins, chaque matin, le portrait de Carlotta telle que ses admirateurs ont l'habitude de se l'imaginer. Il ne saurait être question pour moi d'avoir de la discrétion, et de me faire une tête de petite bourgeoise comme il faut -- comme vous. Personne ne me reconnaîtrait.¹

She is as she is because this how others see her. If the parts have been allocated by a playwright, then existence is given a certain order and stability. At one point Antoine compares life in the theatre with what is normally regarded as life, the things that happen in the outside world:

Ah! qu'on est bien dans des coulisses, entouré de comédiens! Croyez moi, il n'y a que là qu'il se passe quelque chose ... Quand on met le pied dehors, c'est le désert - et le désordre. La vie est décidément irréelle. D'abord, elle n'a pas de forme: personne n'est sûr de son texte et tout le monde rate toujours son entrée. Il ne faudrait jamais sortir des théâtres! Ce sont les seuls lieux au monde où l'aventure humaine est au point.²

Within the theatre everyone knows what is going to happen for the text is prescribed. In the outside world on the other hand nothing is inevitable, life could be other than it is. Only when people take on recognisable roles is there any sense of security, otherwise there is only disorder.

¹. Cher Antoine, p. 29.
². Ibid. p. 128.
The flash-back of the third act has served to demonstrate also the order of a text-directed dialogue in contrast to the arid exchanges of a free interchange of expression. It has helped to confirm that life outside the theatre (as seen in the first act of Cher Antoine) can coincide with life within the theatre (the rehearsal of Act 3). This similarity is recognised by both Valérie (Antoine’s former mistress) and Cravatar (the critic). She says: 'On dirait que nous jouons une de ses pièces,’¹ and repeats a little later on: 'Je vous ferai remarquer que nous jouons de plus en plus une pièce d’Antoine.’² Cravatar makes a similar point further on, adding that Antoine has created the situation in order to thumb his nose at them all.³ The theatricality of the situation has a further implication still. In a play actors cannot escape the plot and the text set down by the author. The visitors to the château are caught in the position Antoine has created. In this instance the theatricality serves to underscore the helplessness of the individuals trapped within it. This receives further emphasis when, in the rehearsal of the flash-back, Antoine allows the actors the opportunity to escape from his text and they find, as we saw above in a different context,⁴ that they cannot do it. Ultimately, however, Antoine rejects and abandons the rehearsal when he realises that he is not going to learn anything about his friends and family, since they only appear as he understands them. By his action he is not merely expressing his disappointment; he is implying, too, that he prefers the

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1. Cher Antoine, p. 29.
2. Ibid. p. 35.
3. Ibid. p. 44.
4. See above p. 251.
uncertainty of originality to the ossification of conformity which produces people incapable of thinking. In this small respect he may be compared with the General in L'Hurluberlu who was angered by the fact that so many people accepted ready-made ideas without thinking for themselves.

In order to stage his rehearsal Antoine has been obliged to hire some actors. His intention had been to try to obtain a better understanding of certain people and to imagine how they would react to a particular event. When Anouilh was faced with a similar situation previously in Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, he made his hero, Georges, hire the actors for quite a different purpose. George's aim had been to enthrall and seduce a young woman by impressing her with the charm of his family background. In this instance the personages as depicted in the fiction of the charade differed critically from the parents as they were in actual fact. In Cher Antoine the actors' performances coincide with the reality of the characters they are depicting. This difference reflects the opposing purposes of Georges and Antoine; the former was trying to provide an alternative present, the latter to anticipate the future. Antoine is endeavouring to clarify his understanding of his friends and family; Georges, under no illusion about his wife and family, was trying to cover them up. Not only are the purposes of the hiring of actors in the two plays different, but the means whereby they are introduced also vary. In Le Rendez-vous de Senlis Anouilh has included the actors as part of the contemporary scene, while in Cher Antoine they are only seen in the flash-back.
In addition to the two flash-backs Anouilh plays with his material in a further way during the closing scene of the play. All the characters have at last succeeded in escaping from the chateau, the windows have had their shutters closed (recalling Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard*), but the sound of their voices can still be heard repeating snatches of their previous conversations. The lingering voices suggest a number of possibilities. It would seem that there is little hope of people changing, for they will still go on saying the same things. The voices somehow seem to be linked with the house itself and remind the audience of the opening speech of the play when Estelle, Antoine's young widow, told of her husband's habit of buying houses after each of his love-affairs in order to try to capture his confidence in family life: 'Les murs, c'était sa façon de croire à la famille.' The effect of listening to the voices from the past is in some ways similar to that of returning in time to events of the past. In the latter case the audience receives the impression of entering a corridor of mirrors; in the case of the voices the impression given is that of walking down a corridor of echoes. The further one proceeds down either corridor, however, the more confusing can be the effect, so that ultimately the reality of life and the reality of fantasy are so fused that they are barely distinguishable.

The fantasy of the voices reinforces that of the flash-backs in a subtle way. One of the effects of the flash-backs was to suggest that current events are rooted in the past, since the way in which people act depends on the conditioning they have undergone.

1. *Cher Antoine*, p. 10.
from other people. The present, however, inexorably becomes the past and as such will affect what is to come. The lingering voices suggest that they are not going to fade away and will in their turn influence the lives of others. Since Antoine's lonely life was not particularly happy, causing pain and distress to those people whose voices are echoing in the walls of the house, the hope for a future, based on such a past, is grim. Although Anouilh did not include Cher Antoine in his Nouvelles Pièces Grinçantes, he might well have done; the theme of shattered marriages and their unfortunate effect contrasts with the humour of much of the dialogue and the entertainment-value of the structure to produce a grating effect.

Four months after the opening night of Cher Antoine a further play by Anouilh was staged in Paris. At the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre on the 21st January, 1970 Les Poissons rouges was presented for the first time. It was jointly directed by Anouilh himself and Roland Piétri with scenery and costumes by Jean-Denis Malclès. It was first published as a single volume in the Éditions de la Table Ronde in 1970, but has since been included in the volume of Anouilh's collected works entitled Nouvelles Pièces Grinçantes (1970) where he dates the play 1968. During an interview with Nicholas de Rabaudy for Paris Match, Anouilh confirmed this date for his play, saying that it had been his intention to stage it before Cher Antoine but no actor had been willing to play in it.

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Les Poissons rouges takes up the theme seen in the previous two plays of a couple whose marriage is in the process of breaking up; it shows the effects of this disintegration upon their children, expressing these ideas in a highly theatricalist manner. In particular flash-backs are used to advantage. The play has as its main character an author, Antoine, whose home-life is strained; he squabbles with his wife, turns to mistresses for comfort, his teenage daughter is pregnant. Anouilh looks to the causes of adult behaviour, as he had done to a certain extent in Cher Antoine. This time he sees the answer less in the effect that contemporaries have on each other than in the repercussions of the way individuals are treated in childhood. To express this idea Anouilh shows various episodes from the life of Antoine; events follow each other in an apparently bizarre order. The first scene opens with a snatch of dialogue from Antoine's childhood when he was chastised for passing water in his grandmother's goldfish-bowl; the scene then flashes forward to a time three weeks before his daughter's wedding, then back to his college-days when he went cycling with his friend, La Surette, along the Loire valley visiting the chateaux. The play returns to a time just prior to the daughter's wedding, possibly on the afternoon of the fourteenth of July or a little before. The second act starts as another flash-back, this time to the year 1940 when Antoine and La Surette (once again riding their bicycles) were escaping from the German soldiers. The act ends with a further leap backwards to 1925 when Antoine sees his mother going off to a ball with a lover. The whole of the third act takes place in 1960. The fourth and final act starts vaguely on Antoine's wedding-night, but
becomes confused with the babyhood of his daughter, Camomille, and her later wedding; the scene shifts to the post-war era and the purges that followed, and the play finally ends with Antoine riding his bicycle (again) with his son, seeking a torchlight procession celebrating the fourteenth of July.

It is not until the final scene is reached and the audience sees Antoine trying to communicate with his son that the full significance of the stage-directions at the beginning of the play become apparent and the seemingly illogical order of events can be understood. Anouilh writes of the play on the title-page:

La scène est en Bretagne, au bord de la mer, le 14 juillet, et dans la tête de l'auteur.¹

As Antoine has been riding along with his son, deciding that he will try to avoid inflicting on him the misfortune that beset himself as a result of his own childhood, he recalls events from his past life. His daughter's unhappiness had been occasioned by them; his son must escape them. The incidents, both recent and distant, have affected him and his attitudes. In presenting these thoughts Anouilh could ignore chronological time and show events as they came into the mind of Antoine in a sequence that was important for him. Each lapse into fantasy forms a variation on the inner play device. By juggling with time in this way Anouilh has presented on stage a device that is normally associated with the novel, that is to say, he has depicted in dramatic form the stream of consciousness, as ideas pass through the mind of one of the characters. The use of the device in this way is partly

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¹ N.P.G. p. 457.
reminiscent of the structure of *Becket* which showed Henry's thoughts as the Saxon monks were flogging him. In *Becket*, however, the presentation of the King's train of thought proceeded in one continuous, chronological flow; in *Les Poissons rouges*, on the other hand, Antoine's memories are presented in a series of single incidents occurring in random order.

Antoine figures in each of the incidents mentioned above. Most times he is on stage when they begin, though not always – as, for example, when the ladies begin their tea-party in the first act. The manner in which each episode is introduced is usually through the theatrical device of a sudden blackout; when the light returns there has been a scene-change and with it a shift in the time-sequence. The result of this method of presentation is to emphasise that each episode, though related to the others, is complete in itself, forming individually an inner play in its own right. The brief opening sequence is an example of what is meant. Antoine, though grown up and wearing adult clothes except for a child's collar, is playing with a meccano set. His grandmother enters and, treating him like a little boy, looks to see that he is behaving himself and doing his homework. Suddenly she starts to beat him and cries: 'Et les poissons rouges? Qui a pissé dans les poissons rouges?'

She warns that he will end up in a bad way. What has happened needs no further explanation at this point; the consequences of the grandma's actions are far-reaching, affecting the whole of Antoine's future. Never has he been able to do just what he wanted because he felt like it. Ultimately this leads him to condone his son's behaviour in wetting a lady's dress simply

because that is what he wanted to do. The opening sequence of
the play thus stands on its own but is directly connected with
what happens elsewhere.

The pattern just outlined, a sudden blackout followed by a
change of scene and time, is normally the one used by Anouilh in
Les Poissons rouges. In the fourth act of the play, however, he
uses a different approach, but one which is also theatrical.
Antoine recalls his wedding-night but, to his surprise, discovers
that he is already a father: 'Comment? Nous avons déjà un bébé?
[... ] Mais c'est notre nuit de noces!'\textsuperscript{1} A few moments later he
learns, and can hardly believe, that he is involved in events on
the eve of his daughter's wedding (the babe grown up). He
exclaims: 'Le mariage de Camomille? De qui se moque-t-on ici?
Elle a fait ses dents?'\textsuperscript{2} Although time, in a highly theatrical
manner, has become very fluid at this point, the incidents
themselves form a coherent whole round the theme of a wedding-
night. The confusion of the sequence of events reflects the
confused state of Antoine's mind; in this respect the structure
of the play underlines an intellectual and emotional state. Antoine
does try later to establish time precisely when, after a sudden
dimming of the lights, he finds himself quizzed by La Surette
about incidents supposedly taking place in 1944. Antoine tells
his former friend:

\begin{quote}
Je te ferai simplement remarquer que je suis en tenue
de mariage et que, comme j'ai marié Camomille en 1960,

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] N.P.G. p. 557.
\item[2.] N.P.G. p. 565.
\item[3.] N.P.G. p. 584.
\end{itemize}

La Surette remains unimpressed, and Antoine still finds himself
involved in an incident from his past when he was helping an ungrateful, crippled doctor. Realising that he is facing death, he exclaims: 'Mais c'est absurde. C'est absurde! J'ai marié ma fille en 1960. Tu ne peux pas m'avoir tué en 1944, imbécile!'

At this point the episode closes and another moment from Antoine's past life is over. To present this sequence of events Anouilh has used two techniques, the sudden plunging of the stage into darkness and the giving to the transition of time an unusual fluidity; both means increase the theatricality of the play through their lack of realism. Two results of the techniques are to underline the completeness of each incident, and also to augment the dreamlike quality of the play, in keeping with the fact that the episodes are taking place 'dans la tête de l'auteur.'

A different variation on the inner play device, still linked with Antoine's recollection of the past, is used by Anouilh to present Toto (Antoine's son) on stage. At regular intervals the child tries to recite Victor Hugo's poem "Mon père, ce héros ..." The incident would seem to imply that Antoine would have his son see him as an heroic person, hence the vision and the choice of poem. In his heart of hearts, however, Antoine knows that he is imagining a sham and so, whenever he visualises his son reciting the heroic poem about a glorious father, he cannot perceive him finishing the recitation. Anouilh makes no attempt at realism in presenting these occasions; Toto steps out from between the drawn curtains and into a spotlight. The theatricality of the incidents helps to contribute to the notion that what is happening on stage

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is not a slice of life, but the thoughts of an individual presented visually.

The air of non-reality, created structurally by Anouilh's variations on the inner play device in *Les Poissons rouges*, is augmented in a number of ways by the theatricality of the presentation. When the play opens, the stage-directions read that there should be 'un décor vague.' Later, when Antoine is riding his bicycle accompanied by La Surette, he is 'sur une route que semblent indiquer les paravents.' The lack of scenic realism during the journey is further emphasised by the entrance of a tree. When the scene changes to the ladies' tea-party, Anouilh suggests that: 'peut-être les actrices apportent-elles elles-mêmes leur chaise en entrant.' Their stylised gestures throughout their conversation recall the ballet movements of *Le Bal des voleurs*:

> On servira le thé et toute la scène se jouera avec un jeu, en marge du dialogue, de petits doigts levés sur les anses des tasses et de petits fours picorés avec des gestes mutins, aux moments les plus inattendus de la conversation.

The theatricality of the presentation of these events further underlines the programme-note that all is happening in the mind of the author.

At one point in the play Antoine sits with his wife, Charlotte, and his mother-in-law, Madame Prudent. They are each lost in their own intellectually erotic dreams, which they verbalise.

Antoine thinks of his mistress, Edwiga Pataques: 'Au fond, c'est la peau de ses cuisses qui m'attache à elle.' Madame Prudent recalls her sex life with her first husband and how she was sometimes ashamed of the pleasure she received, for pleasure never leaves an honest woman with a clear conscience. Charlotte, in her longings, sees herself with a lover, bronzed, athletic, making passionate love to her on a bear skin rug in front of a log fire, and then engaging her in pseudo-intellectual conversation as they drink whisky. Just as Flaubert's Emma Bovary sublimated her disappointment in her husband, Charles, by escaping into romantic dreams, so Charlotte compensates herself for her frustration with Antoine by exotic imaginings. As the three characters talk to themselves a state of non-communication exists between them; the situation recalls some of the non-consequential dialogue of Ionesco's La Cantatrice chauve. The technique that Anouilh has used here of verbalising the thoughts of his characters is similar to the one he used when Adolphe (Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron) began to imagine himself as a business-tycoon. Both he and Antoine hide themselves behind a newspaper. The difference that Anouilh has introduced to the situation in Les Poissons rouges is that, in this instance, there is not just one person who dreams, but three whose thoughts are intermingled. Their accounts of their dreams pass unheard by the others; only when Antoine sighs or Charlotte counts the stitches of her knitting are they heard by each other. The theatricality of such a situation, in which certain remarks are audible and others (equally

loud) are not, encourages audiences to accept that what they are seeing is something other than a slice of life.

Through the numerous scenes, each complete in themselves, that oscillate to and fro in time and go to make up *Les Poissons rouges* Anouilh has introduced numerous variations in his employment of the inner play device. Supporting these variations with other theatricalist techniques he has adapted them to suggest a stream of ideas flowing through the mind of one person. The thoughts tend to occur in a personal order of importance and to merge one into the other. If audiences fail to appreciate Anouilh's intention (and, as I have said, this does not really become clear until the final scene, and perhaps not even then if the spectators have not read the programme-note), they can still enjoy his technique at the simple level of entertainment.

Nine months after the opening of *Les Poissons rouges* Anouilh staged *Ne réveillez pas madame*; it was presented for the first time in Paris on the 21st October, 1970 at the Comédie des Champs Élysées. As yet it has only been published as a single edition in 1970 by the Table Ronde. It is a work in which theatrical tricks, particularly the play-within-the-play, abound. The same skill that Anouilh showed in the previous plays of this latest cycle, in introducing and using the devices in new ways, is again apparent.

*Ne réveillez pas madame* is a play about actors and the theatre. The story-line is thin: a twice-married actor, Julien, who is also the producer of the company, attempts to revive with his
second wife in the leading role a play that he had originally staged with his first wife as the heroine. A combination of his irritable demands and the artificiality of life in the theatre alienates both his wives. He has had certain minor successes with his plays — certainly his latest effort brings him sound financial rewards — but never has he achieved anything sublime. His ambition, which he has been fostering for ten years is to produce an outstanding performance of *Hamlet*; his endeavour to stage the play founders. Both in his home-life and in his activities within the theatre the gap between his aspirations and his achievements is enormous.

The general themes of the play are not new to Anouilh. He deals with man's loneliness, the breakdown in personal relationships (in particular those between husband and wife in middle-class society), the harm done to children in these circumstances, and the special liability of actors to squabble since their lives tend to lose a basis once they stray from the security of an ordered text. These themes find expression through a very complex structure which uses the device of the flash-back on three occasions, dream sequences twice, and plays-within-the-play nine times. These are introduced in a variety of new ways.

In the first flash-back Julien is seen rehearsing with Rosa (his first wife) the play he is now staging with Aglaé (his second wife). The incident occurs immediately after a soliloquy by Tonton, the prompter of the company. His speech in which he observes that people become so embroiled in the moment that they lose sight of life as a whole acts as an introduction to the episode. Tonton sees a repetitive pattern in existence, in which
questions asked early in youth are only answered later in life. The flash-back that follows demonstrates visually the ideas verbalised by Tonton. During the episode the audience recognises that the quarrelsome partnership they had seen between Julien and Aglae in the first act was little more than a continuance of the discontent that had existed earlier between Julien and Rosa. The audience also learns that Rosa, like Aglaë, was promiscuous. During the flash-back the arrival of Aglaë in the theatre for the first time is shown; the incident recalls the arrival of Maureen, the Irish maid, that the audience has already seen. The initial adoration of Aglaë and Maureen for Julien further emphasises the similarity of the two moments of time. Anouilh has used the flash-back in this instance to illustrate the repetitive nature of Julien's existence.

The whole of the second act is constructed in the form of a flash-back; it commences, with no introduction, a few days after the arrival of Aglaë at Julien's theatre. The promiscuity of Julien's mother is made clear, together with the strained relationship that exists between her and her son. Within this flash-back there is a further withdrawal in time, a flash-back-within-the-flash-back. Julien is seen as a little boy, together with his deceived father, witnessing one of his mother's infidelities. The incident underscores the repetitive nature of the collapse of the family-unit, since not only have his own marriages foundered, so too had that of his parents. The flash-back involving Julien and his father is introduced by Tonton, who briefly explains to the public how Julien's parents had met and
how, in despair at seeing his wife have so many affairs, the father had tried to shoot himself, failed, and eventually died from diabetes. As though to substantiate what Tonton had said, the flash-back takes place. An unusual variation that Anouilh introduces into this flash-back is the way in which the actor who takes the part of Julien remains on stage, although a young performer comes on to play the part of Julien as a child. It is the older actor who speaks the lines of the child Julien. The father and boy are described in the stage-directions as 'un peu fantomatiques.' The effect of Julien’s presence on stage and the unreal appearance of the two characters is to suggest that what is happening is a representation of the thoughts that are passing through the mind of Julien as he thinks over his parents’ life together.

The three flash-backs (all inner plays since they have no director) create the impression of a regression down a corridor of mirrors all of which reflect a similar image. The picture is that of a family breaking up. Through the device of the flash-back, the fundamental idea is thus demonstrated that married couples, especially those in the theatrical world, are bound to become estranged: they always have done so, and it is their children particularly who suffer.

The progress of linear time is further impeded by two dream-sequences both of which occur in the final act. Left alone on stage for a moment, Julien reflects on the sorrowful stage of his marriage. He has just quarrelled with his wife, Aglaé, because he

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1. Ne réveillez pas madame, p. 102.
would not accompany her to a party; he has also been reminded by one of his actors, Bachman, that he (Julien) should not try to carry on acting his stage-roles in his private life. Fessard, his stage-manager, has just told him that life is difficult for everyone, but that people, even some actors, manage to accommodate themselves to it. These incidents initiate a train of thought for Julien in which he recalls how he and Aglaé first met, remembering her sweet innocence and her cry that, if ever she came to love a man and marry him, she would look after him faithfully. Her initial intention contrasts with the woman she has become. It is in fact only on stage, in the role of the pastor's wife, that Aglaé is able to become such a person. Julien thinks over the argument he has just had with his wife. The real crux of their dispute is to be found in her final lines:

Dans la troupe. Dans la troupe de Paluche. J'en ai assez d'être la femme de Paluche. Je voudrais être moi, enfin! ¹

Neither in the theatre nor in the home has she been able to be herself; always she has had to be as someone else imagined her, and this she has resented, a lament, as we have already seen earlier in this chapter, uttered by other characters in this latest cycle of Anouilh's plays.² The day-dream shows Julien rationalising his own infidelity; he contrasts what Aglaé said she would be like with how she has developed, without asking himself why events followed the course they did. The whole episode is akin to the stream-of-consciousness device that we noted was

¹. Ne réveillez pas madame, p. 166.
². See above p. 259.
used by Anouilh in *Les Poissons rouges*. An air of unreality is given to the incident from its beginning when a piano is heard playing mysteriously in the background and Aglaé is described as a 'fantôme en robe de mariée.' The effect of these stage-directions is to encourage the audience from the start to believe that what is being seen represents Julien's thoughts. His first thoughts are pleasant enough and the tone of the passage is gentle; but when he switches to thoughts of the present and his argument with Aglaé, then the tone becomes dark again and grating.

The second day-dream shows Julien, in the closing minutes of the play, thinking back to his childhood for a brief moment after he has abandoned his plans to stage *Hamlet*. His mother, as a young woman, tells him that he is a big boy, that he can look after himself, and that he must not disturb her as he goes off to school in the morning (drawing attention incidentally to the title of the play). Herein lies the root cause of all his distress and dilemmas — the lack of true maternal affection and hence, possibly, the *Hamlet*-syndrome. The day-dream here, as in the first example, has been introduced by an unfortunate incident that caused Julien to think back to past events. Although similar in this respect, the two episodes differ in that the first dream is caused by an argument with his wife while the second is stimulated by his disappointment with his attempts to stage a play.

In a way the two day-dreams and the three flash-backs complement one another. The latter reveal to the audience that unhappy family-life such as Julien suffers may well result from

1. *Ne réveillez pas madame*, p. 162.
previous experience; the former show Julien coming to the understanding that one cause of his own distress is the way his mother treated him as a child. The effect of the revelation on the audience may well be disturbing, for Julien's dilemma is repetitive and apparently insoluble since its causes are fixed in an unalterable past. A possible means of escape for Julien and his friends is provided by the make-believe of the theatre in which they are all involved. On nine occasions in Ne réveillez pas madame extracts from plays are performed. Each of these, directed by Julien, is a play-within-the-play. Structurally they are interesting because of the varied way in which Anouilh has introduced them.

Ne réveillez pas madame is, of course, about actors. It is not surprising, therefore, that the troupe should be seen rehearsing plays nor that, when reminiscing about former times, individual members of the company should recite to each other snatches from other plays that they have performed together.

One of the plays, which in fact occurs three times, is an extravaganza about two lovers named Roussia and Smelov, with hints of English puns and of a parody of Chekov. In it Aglaé wears a white wedding-dress that symbolically mocks the relationship that exists between herself and her husband; she has long since lost the purity whose symbol she wears. The prime cause of her loss of innocence has been the marriage itself. The effectiveness of the symbolism of the white dress derives from the contrast between what it stands for and the real situation of the marriage. The playlet itself makes its impact through the similarity between its situation and that which exists between Aglaé and Julien – Roussia
is about to enter into a marriage that is doomed to failure since there is no depth of affection involved, and she is courted by a young man who merely desires her body. Aglaé is bound to a man she does not love and is courted by a series of actors whose interest in her is only carnal.

When the 'Roussia' playlet recurs in the flash-back of the second act with Rosa and Julien in the leading roles, its purpose is to show how Rosa, a good actress but a woman of very easy virtue indeed, could play a role of sweet innocence and love to perfection. The scene stands in contrast to the squabbling episode that had just preceded it and reveals also the different abilities as actresses of the two wives.

The incident occurs a third time when Aglaé acts as understudy to Rosa. The piquancy of the third repetition lies in Aglaé's initial innocence as opposed to her later promiscuity and in her final outburst, when, affected by the situation in the play, she cries out that she would quit the stage for love of any man she were to marry out of true feeling and affection.

The means by which Anouilh has created each of the 'Roussia' plays-within-the-play differs on each occasion. The first time the playlet occurs Anouilh shows Julien preparing a revival of a play he had successfully staged earlier. When the playwright introduces it a second time, he does so through the flash-back with the added change of Rosa, Julien's first wife, in the title role. The third performance results from Julien's need to rehearse Aglaé as Rosa's understudy.

A fourth example of Anouilh's use of the play-within-the-play
device in *Ne réveillez pas madame* is when he makes Aglaé recite the "Maximes"¹ from Molière's *L'École des Femmes*. Whereas the 'Roussia' playlet was introduced because Julien was preparing a play for stage-production, the "Maximes" episode occurs as a result of the need to train Aglaé for the stage. In the seventeenth-century play they form a parody of a situation that existed; Anouilh by borrowing the scene is paying homage to Molière, and is himself giving a parody of the conduct of a dutiful wife since neither Aglaé, nor the mother who has coached her, nor Rosa, are faithful wives. Anouilh's use of the play-within-the-play device in this instance is most skilful in that it contrasts an actual situation, the unfaithfulness of the wives in the play, with the precepts that are laid down for their behaviour.

As Aglaé draws towards the end of her recital of the "Maximes", Rosa and Bachman (one of the actors of the troupe) come onto the stage. Bachman recognises the mother with whom he had performed *Andromaque* many years ago. Anouilh uses this encounter to allow the mother to quote the speech from Racine's play in which the queen tells her captor, Pyrrhus, that she is going to see her son for the one visit that she is allowed each day. The ironic contrast of the loving visits of Andromaque to her child and the money-seeking trips of Julien's mother, who only appears at her son's home on pay-days, is all the more effective because it is Julien's mother who recites the words. The incident recalls the moment in *Eurydice* when the mother and Vincent recited extracts from a play they had performed together in the past. In both plays

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¹. *Ne réveillez pas madame*, pp. 88 - 91.
the incidents represent a couple trying to escape from their present misery into a past moment of love and joy, but, whereas, Vincent lapses into Musset's text without realising that he has done so, Julien's mother consciously quotes from Racine.

The mother is also involved in the playlet that forms the flash-back-within-the-flash-back. The child Julien has just been taken away from the theatre by his father because the latter did not wish his son to suffer the embarrassment of seeing his mother performing. The father's concern is understandable when the play itself is seen. Anouilh introduces the incident by making the mother say she is unsure of an extra bit that the author has added to the play. She insists that she needs to practice the new lines. The extract shows a rich nobleman, Norbert Von Krantz, passionately courting the mother; she makes a slight show of refusing him but succumbs, only to be seen by Julien at the moment of embrace. Although acting, the mother is in truth flirting and Julien is aware of this fact. The play, like the mother, is superficial and fancifully romantic.

There remain three further examples of the use of the play-within-the-play device in Ne réveillez pas madame. At the beginning of the third act Julien and Aglaé rehearse a short extract from a play entitled La Femme du pasteur. The playlet begins without introduction. In it Aglaé is able to be the kind of wife she had said she would like to be if ever she met a man she could love. Through the pretence of theatre she has sublimated her unfulfilled desires; she has not been able, however, to rid herself of her inhibitions. This stands in contrast to Anouilh's
suggestion in an article quoted by Pol Vandromme that, if people were forced to act upon the stage after returning home from work, they would become gentle:

On ferait alors une énorme économie d'assassins, de femmes adultères et de dictateurs. Ayant exprimé chaque soir après l'usine ou le bureau pour du semblant ..., leurs possibilités de crime, d'autorité ou de passion, les hommes redeviendraient le reste de la journée ce qu'ils sont au fond; des animaux assez inoffensifs.1

Aglaé, like Colombe in Anouilh's earlier play, has had her passion stimulated rather than assuaged by her life in the theatre. Anouilh gives no clue as to which is the real Aglaé, the 'animal assez inoffensif' who first came to Julien, or the 'femme adultère' that she became.

The final two examples of the play-within-the-play device both stem from Hamlet. For many years Julien had nursed the desire to stage the Shakespearian play. Anouilh introduces the extracts by using Julien's dissatisfaction with his shallow existence; the actor decides to do something worthwhile for once even if it means losing money on the venture, and so makes up his mind to fulfil his ambition. He rehearses the play and the first extract to be seen is where the Prince, supposedly feigning madness, lectures Ophelia on honesty, beauty, love and fidelity. The words when applied to the innocent Ophelia are inappropriate; when Julien speaks them to Aglaé they are instructive though unheeded. The interpretation Julien gives to the whole scene turns it into a melodrama; Aglaé objects, saying it is stupid. For Julien, on the other hand, it is this quality that renders the play all the more real, since

1. "Lettre à une jeune fille qui veut faire du théâtre."
Reproduced in Pol Vandromme, Jean Anouilh, au auteur et ses personnages, pp. 210-211.
reality for him is stupid, as in melodrama. The episode presents
the contrast between the innocence of Ophelia and the lack of it
in Aglaé; it also points to a similarity between Hamlet and
Julien in that they are both verbose and accusing. The characters
learn nothing about themselves from the parts they play; on the
other hand the audience has had its knowledge of the nature of the
main characters and the situation that exists between them further
clarified.

Julien then moves on to rehearse a second extract from Hamlet,
the scene when Hamlet implores his mother to sleep no longer with
his uncle; it is a reminder that Julien, too, has a mother
unfaithful to his father's bed. In Julien's interpretation of
the scene the Prince speaks to the queen not in anger but in
compassion, as to an ordinary woman pulled apart by her desires
and her duty:

Quelle humilité gentille pour lui donner ce conseil
tendrement, malgré sa honte ...

Elle avait l'air d'une petite fille endormie, Fessard,
une petite fille qui voulait vivre, elle aussi, et qui a
composé maladroitement, comme elle a pu, boitant comme
tout le monde, un pied dans le devoir, un pied dans le
désir.2

These words stand in contrast to what Julien has said earlier about
life:

Bien sûr c'est difficile. Mais nous ne sommes plus
petits, il faut nous faire à cette idée.3

1. Ne réveillez pas madame, p. 190.
2. Ibid. p. 160.
3. Ibid. p. 96.
Hamlet's mother had remained a little girl in her inability to cope with the situation in which she found herself, and it is for this reason that Julien felt sympathy for her. On the other hand he is saying that we cannot remain as little children all our lives, but must learn to face our responsibilities as adults.

Anouilh has introduced the two Hamlet extracts on the excuse of a rehearsal. He has, of course, previously used this means of presenting plays-within-the-play. The reasons for the need to rehearse, however, have differed each time. In La Répétition Tigre had rehearsed Marivaux's La Double Inconstance to while away the time he was obliged to spend in an old house under the terms of a will in order to receive his inheritance; in Colombe the rehearsal had been necessary because Colombe was a newcomer to the theatre; L'Hurluberlu had seen amateurs rehearsing a play that was to raise money for charity. In Ne réveillez pas madame the playwright has shown further inventiveness by using Julien's desire to do something of value, no matter what the cost, as a means of introducing his playlet.

The nine playlets, three flash-backs and two dream-sequences of Ne réveillez pas madame combine to form a highly intense form of theatricalism. Together they occupy so much of the text that there is very little time available for the playwright to develop the play at the primary level and, indeed, very little happens in the way of plot on-stage. Julien hires a servant to look after his children and rehearses extracts from three plays. In between times he ponders his present situation and its causes, finding little to bring him comfort in either. Only in La Femme du pasteur, a scene of gentle domesticity, did any semblance of calm appear. Perhaps
Anouilh was implying by this extract that only in rare instances of a certain type of drama is real married bliss to be found. Elsewhere there is only the pain, superficiality and disillusionment of the 'Roussia' playlet or *Hamlet*. The gravity of the theme contrasts with the humour of parts of the text and the entertaining structure of the play, producing a grating effect beloved of Anouilh for so long during his career.

The skilful introduction of a play-within-the-play was again in evidence in Anouilh's next production, *Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit*. This work was first performed on the 17th January, 1972, at the Théâtre Antoine. At the primary level it is composed of two parts; the one comprises a group of actors who, from time to time, comment on a play that they are performing; the other consists of a company of inferior musicians who accompany the production and compare their own lot with that of the characters in the play. At the secondary level there is the performance of the Electra theme by the actors for which Anouilh has partly used (and slightly adapted) Paul Mazon's translation into French of Aeschylus's *The Choephoroi*. Included in the playlet are some of the ideas and in a few instances the actual words from a fragment Anouilh wrote entitled *Oreste*.¹ This text was included by Robert de Luppé in his book on Anouilh.² The critic records that the fragment was first published in 1945 in the third issue of the periodical *La Table Ronde*; the playwright dates *Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit* the 16th July, 1969. Evidently Anouilh relied

¹. See appendix A.
heavily on his own earlier fragment and the translation of the Classical play when he wrote his own work.

Whereas *The Choephori* deals with the problem of justice and vengeance, touching upon the relationship of the one to the other, *Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit* is more concerned with hatred and vengeance. This can be clearly seen when the extracts from the Aeschylus play borrowed by Anouilh are examined. Altogether he quotes three times at length from the Classical play and briefly on one further occasion. The first extract deals with the return home of Oreste who has come from exile in Daulis in order to avenge his father's murder. The extract also includes the warnings of the Chorus that once blood has been let it is difficult to staunch the flow. This is followed by Électre's prayer, asking for advice from her handmaids, and by her plea for the safe return home of her brother. Électre recognises Oreste and together they recall the murderous deed of their mother and her lover. The brother and sister affirm their sure intent to inflict upon their parents 'la récompense de leur crime.' The Chorus momentarily picks up the theme of justice: 'que tout finisse par la Justice.' The concept of justice is not pursued; the other assertion that hate begets hate in a never ending cycle is taken up and built into the structure. The second extract from *The Choephori* shows Oreste pretending to be a stranger, calling at the palace while on his way to Argos, with news of the death of the

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2. Ibid. p. 134.
3. Ibid. p. 34.
4. Ibid. p. 39.
5. See Infra 282.
queen's son. Anouilh follows Aeschylus's version fairly closely until Clytemnestre recalls the similarity in age and appearance of the stranger with how her son might look, had he been alive. In the second half of the play the murder of Égisthe, the announcement by the slave of the king's death to Clytemnestre, and the beginning of her confrontation with Oreste are quoted with minor omissions by Anouilh from The Choephori. Only when Électre steps in again to stop her brother from being duped by his lying mother does Anouilh move away from the classical text. Briefly, for one short speech, Anouilh returns to the words of Aeschylus when Oreste tells his mother to rejoin Égisthe on his death bed:

Rentre le rejoindre puisque tu es sa femme, et couche-toi près de lui. Vivant tu l'as préféré à mon père, mort tu ne le quitteras plus jamais.¹

On each of the occasions when Anouilh has used the words of the classical play (Oreste's return home to avenge his father's murder, his manoeuvre to enter the palace, and the act of revenge itself) he has introduced extracts closely connected with the idea of vengeance.

The spirit of hatred receives further reinforcement through the extra importance Anouilh gives to the role of Électre in the play-within-the-play. Every night until it was dark she has awaited the return of her brother (as she tells Égisthe) on the outskirts of the city, for she is sure he will come to help her.² As part of her act of revenge Électre has also humbled herself in order to humiliate her mother and stepfather and remind them of their crime.³ When she is sure that she has her brother back,

1. Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit, p. 134.
2. Ibid. p. 20.
3. Ibid. p. 27.
trained to kill, she talks of slaying Clytemnestre and Égisthe and asks her brother how he will put them to death. She has a willing ally in Oreste who replies:

Ce sera comme tu voudras, petite soeur. Moi je suis là pour les tuer, mais je n'ai pas de préférence.¹

It is Électre who pleads with her brother not to listen to the lies of their mother as the latter tries to win over her son, for their father, she says, was not heeded when he tried to speak.² The effect of her words is to reinforce Oreste's determination to take revenge.

During the course of the play-within-the-play the audience learns that apparently Oreste's attitude towards Égisthe has changed. The latter points out that as a child Oreste had been such a nice little boy; he uses the phrase that Anouilh chose as the title of his play. The king cannot understand why the child had turned against him. Oreste explains that he had seen his mother giving herself to her lover in the gardens of the palace. The effect of this on him had been to turn him into a killer and fill him with hatred. In this respect Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit picks up a theme seen in some of Anouilh's previous plays, namely the disastrous effects the breakdown of a marriage has upon children. When a similar situation had faced Toto (Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron), he had been tormented as a result with nightmares; Julien (Ne réveillez pas madame) had seen his mother flirt with actors and consequently had found himself unable to form stable relationships with other

¹. Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit, p. 50.
people. Although Anouilh presents similar situations in his plays, he finds new things to say about them.

The theme of hatred found within the play-within-the-play is found in the play at the primary level also. The lady-musicians are so incensed by the fact that Oreste has murdered his mother that they attack the actor, just as the Furies had done in Aeschylus's play. The previously prim and proper violin-cellist, fired by hatred, screeches:

Il faut lui couper ses choses! Il faut lui couper ses choses! Je l'ai vu faire à la Libération à un officier allemand! Coupez-lui ses choses et mettez-les lui dans sa bouche! Ça lui apprendra! C'est à cause de lui si on a massacré les juifs, sale boche! 1

In the heat of the moment she loses control and cannot distinguish between the past and the present. From the point of view of the structure of the play, the intrusion of the musicians onto the stage of the actors merges the play at the primary level with that of the play-within-the-play and tends to suggest in this instance that reality will eventually impinge upon fantasy, and that both within the latter (as represented by the Electra playlet) and in the former (as exemplified by the lives of the musicians) hatred and revenge exist; neither fantasy nor reality are to be envied.

The structure of Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit illustrates a further aspect of the theme of hatred and revenge, in that it suggests that hate begets hate in a never ending circle. The idea finds actual expression in the words of the Chorus when he says that: 'C'est une loi que les sanglantes gouttes, une fois répandues à terre, appellent un sang nouveau.' 2 The concept is

1. Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit, p. 149.
2. Ibid. p. 39.
visually demonstrated by Électre's presence on stage when the curtain first rises, as she sits waiting for her brother's return to inflict vengeance. When the final curtain falls, she is again seated on stage; when told by the pianist that the play is over, she replies: 'Non. Ce n'est pas fini. Tout recommence.
J'attends Oreste.'\(^1\)
Her story is without end; it will, like the playlet in which she is taking part, be repeated over and over again and form part of life (just as her performance had gone to make up the totality of *Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit*).

The theme of the repetitive nature of existence is stated early in the play when Égisthe is told by Électre that she is waiting for Oreste; this prompts the king to ask: 'On va tout redire encore ce soir?'\(^2\) Her reply that they are going to go over it every evening is chilling. At this point the Aeschylus play has not yet begun but the actors of the play-within-the-play have become so imbued with their roles, from having performed them so often in the past, that they have begun to think and talk like the characters whose identity they have assumed. The pianist comments that: 'Depuis le temps qu'elle les préoccupe, leur histoire, ils ne peuvent s'empêcher d'en reparler.'\(^3\) The danger for the actors is that they may confuse fact and fiction, becoming unsure whether they are performing of living; indeed Clytemnestre has to be reassured on this very point. She becomes so distraught at the idea of her imminent death that Égisthe has to calm her down, saying:

Tais-toi, je t'en prie. Tais-toi. Calme-toi. De toute façon ce n'est pas pour tout de suite ... Et puis tu sais

\(^{1}\) *Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit*, p. 157.
bien que nous ne mourrons pas vraiment, que cela recommence tous les soirs.1

Although she is taking part in the play-within-the-play she has arrived at the point where, emotionally, for her the distinction between reality and fantasy has ceased to exist. Indeed the confusion is such that the fiction of the play-within-the-play (which has suddenly become reality) has to be temporarily abandoned so that the real world can be restored.

In order to separate clearly this real world (as represented by the musicians and their mundane chatter) from that of fantasy (the playlet of the actors) Anouilh suggests in the stage-directions that the setting should be one in which most of the stage is occupied by a platform on which the Electra play is performed. This setting recalls the first act of La Sauvage, set in a café, where the greater part of the stage was taken up by a platform. It was here that Tarde and his musicians performed, whereas in Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit the orchestra perform in front of the platform. In both plays the dais represents the world of fantasy but, whereas in La Sauvage the musicians represented the inhabitants of make-believe, in the later play they live in the real world. The effect of the setting is to reinforce the theatricality of the Electra playlet, reminding audiences that they are watching something (a play, in this instance, about hate and revenge) that is repeated.

When the actors are about to perform on the platform, their theatricality is stressed by each of the various ways in which they are introduced by Anouilh. Sometimes one of the musicians

makes a remark such as: 'Attention, ça va être à nous. C'est l'entrée d'Oreste,' \(^1\) or 'C'est la scène d'Égiste.' \(^2\) At other times there is a change of lighting and the orchestra plays: 'Sur un signe discret du pianiste, l'orchestre a repris une sorte d'ouverture tragique.' \(^3\) Where there is no immediate introduction, as on the first occasion when Égiste and Électre speak, the beginning of the playlet is clear from the costumes of the actors. Anouilh's stage-directions on this point are interesting; he states that they should be 'habillés comme un roi et une reine de Shakespeare avec des couronnes dorées de théâtre.' \(^4\) The effect of stressing the theatricality of the play-within-the-play through the costumes and the setting is to reinforce the idea that the musicians, who watch and accompany the playlet, represent reality. As has already been noted, however, they become embroiled in the playlet when they attack the actor who performs Oreste; \(^5\) he is so shattered by the experience (reality forcing itself upon fantasy) that he forgets momentarily which role he is acting. The reality of the musicians' world and the fantasy of that of the actors have become intertwined, and in a sense inverted, since the musicians and actor have for a moment stepped into each other's realm. The consequence of moving from one sphere to another is disaster, as the Countess discovered in La Grotte when she tried to enter the lives of the folk in the kitchen.

The two worlds of reality and fantasy, inhabited respectively by musicians and actors, represent two levels at which Tu étais si...

\(^{1.}\) Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit, p. 62.
\(^{2.}\) Ibid. p. 107.
\(^{3.}\) Ibid. pp. 122-123.
\(^{5.}\) See above p. 281.
gentil quand tu étais petit exists. They are not the only ones, however; the play-within-the-play itself contains two clearly discernible facets. As I have noted, there are on the one hand the extracts from the Aeschylus play,¹ while on the other there is the dialogue written by Anouilh, easily distinguishable from the Classical original by the tone and the language used. An exciting feature of Anouilh's script is that it contains quotations from his Oreste fragment written some twenty-five years previously. Altogether I have noted fourteen occasions where the playwright has turned to his earlier work.² These extracts, conforming in tone and style to the rest of Anouilh's script, do not form a playlet in their own right; they do, however, serve to link the play-within-the-play with the play at the primary level, through the similarity of language and tone in both parts. Together with the extracts from the original Classical play and Anouilh's other additions, they serve to make up the play-within-the-play of Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit.

The various elements of which Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit is composed do not always blend together; this disharmony disturbed some critics, notably Jean-Jacques Gautier as was discussed earlier.³ His argument was that the different levels of the play did not operate as well as he would have wished. Anouilh's intention, however, may well have been to make the separate worlds of the actors and musicians grate against each other. In this way he could emphasise through the very structure

1. See above p. 278.
2. See Appendix A.
of the play the discord brought about by hatred, which had been his theme. When Anouilh had treated the same subject previously in *Pauvre Bitos*, he had produced a somewhat similar effect by placing side by side the irreconcilable elements of comedy and terror through his use of costume.\footnote{Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit} presents two groups of people, easily distinguishable from each other through their language, dress and actions; they symbolise fantasy and reality, and rarely work harmoniously together, although they are supposed to be working towards a common end, the performance of a play. More usually they clash whenever they come together. Anouilh's theatricalist approach has thus served to demonstrate that society is composed of fundamentally opposing sections, to portray the conflict between illusion and actual existence, and to emphasise the grating quality of his play.

This study of the five plays that have been staged by Anouilh during the latest cycle of his works has shown the importance he has given to the device of the play-within-the-play, the variety of purposes to which he has put it, and the numerous ways he has introduced it. In *Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron* it was used to demonstrate the dreams experienced by people of all ages, both during the day and at night, whereby they can try to escape, with varying degrees of success, their cares and their worries. *Cher Antoine* employed the device as a means of answering

\footnote{Bitos, incongruously and rather ridiculously clad in full eighteenth-century dress, was baited by the other guests at Maxime's party and by the host himself, all of whom wore only head-masks. See above p. 200.}
the question posed by the play, whether individuals could ever fully know each other, while Les Poissons rouges introduced a further variation whereby the play-within-the-play expressed in theatrical form the stream-of-consciousness device normally associated with the novel. In Ne réveillez pas madame, the device showed the propensity of actors to lose touch with reality, while Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit revealed through it the recurrence of hatred and revenge throughout history. In all of the plays Anouilh stresses the lasting harm inflicted on children by parents who quarrel, a harm that affects them in fact throughout the whole of their lives. Furthermore what has emerged from the study of these plays is the inventiveness of Anouilh in the purposes for which he has used the devices discussed, and also in the manner by which he has introduced them. Clearly, after having discovered for himself in his early plays the suitability of the play-within-the-play device, inner play, and self-conscious theatricality to explore his interest in fantasy and reality, Anouilh has gone on to exploit them imaginatively and has provided through them a form of drama that is significant not only on account of its vision of life as an extension of the theatre, but also because of its highly intense theatricalism.
CONCLUSION.
Conclusion.

By tracing the attitude of critics over the years to Anouilh's theatricalist approach to drama, a pattern was established showing how initially many reviewers wrote in praise of his works because they saw in him a young playwright of distinct promise. They did have some reservations, mainly concerned with certain excesses of theme and language which the reviewers at that time were prepared to excuse on the grounds of his youth. By the nineteen-fifties, however, the attitudes of most critics were hardening. Anouilh had been writing by then for about twenty years and the reviewers no longer seemed willing to tolerate what they called his lack of taste. Their attacks on his technique became particularly severe when they reviewed plays whose subject-matter they did not like. Pauvre Bitos and La Foire d'empoigne are prime examples of plays that incurred the disapproval of critics, the first because it appeared to attack the French Resistance Movement and the purges that followed the Liberation of France in 1944 and the second because it was a bitter, satirical attack on two figures in French history. In both cases Anouilh's theatricalist approach was criticised. Although reviewers recognised Anouilh's skill, they were not always aware of the validity of the techniques employed to express the subject matter of the plays in which they occurred.

Although Pauvre Bitos and La Foire d'empoigne were criticised, they reveal that Anouilh had complete mastery of his art as a dramatist. Already, with Le Bal des voleurs, Eurydice and Antigone, he had shown that he could write plays based on fantasy that were
not only entertaining but meaningful in themselves. Part of the entertainment-value of his plays, which from the first had shunned a slavish imitation of reality, lay in their use of variations of the play-within-the-play and inner play devices. Among the most entertaining of those plays that used these devices extensively prior to 1950 was _L'Invitation au château_, with its complex intrigue and suggestion that the world is a theatre in which the characters play many parts. It was in this particular play that the theatricality of the presentation became noticeably intensified, when certain comments within the text itself acknowledged the play to be a play. _L'Invitation au château_ was generally well received by the critics. Its immediate predecessor, _Roméo et Jeannette_, fared less well. It was criticised for the bitterness of its theme (the parody of love) and because it seems to show Anouilh locked in his old obsessions of family strife, shame, poverty and the corrupting influence of life on individuals.

The charge of repeating old ideas was again levelled at Anouilh on the production of _La Répétition_. After praising the way in which during the first two acts he had interwoven his own text with that of Marivaux, the critics went on to say that the play deteriorated into a bore. His skill was further queried in his next play, _Colombe_, which ended with a flash-back. This play was also criticised because it was seen as a veiled attack on Sarah Bernhardt, an instance of Anouilh being accused of showing less respect than he ought to the French culture he had inherited. His works were denigrated from two points of view; on the one hand his themes were heavily criticised, while on the other his dramaturgy
came under fire. The attack on his choice of topics increased to the point of bitterness at times with plays like _La Valse des toréadors_, _L'Alouette_ and, more especially, _Pauvre Bitos_ and _La Foire d'empoigne_. His technique in manipulating the structure of his plays was censured by some critics of _La Répétition, La Valse des toréadors, La Grotte_ and _Ornifle_. The hostility of the critics to these plays coincided with a period when Anouilh was not only showing exceptional craftsmanship but was enjoying remarkable success in public esteem, with some of his plays having initial runs of several hundred performances.¹

The attack on Anouilh from nationalistic grounds is perhaps somewhat jingoistic; certainly the critics did not make similar comments when Thomas Becket and Henry, King of England, were inaccurately presented. Nor was there any reason why they should, for Anouilh created the kind of characters that suited his purposes in the play. Reviewers also criticised Anouilh's seeming repetition of themes and techniques, but their attitude to Anouilh's theatricalism seemed to be related to their acceptance or rejection of the play as a whole, and this in its turn depended on whether they liked its theme or not. The reviewers rarely took into consideration the variety of use Anouilh made of devices like the play-within-the-play and inner play, the many forms of them he employed, and the variety of ways that he introduced them. These two important aspects of his dramaturgy developed from an initial concept of role-playing. The latter

continued to form part of his theatricalism, but waned in importance in comparison to the other devices.

When the play-within-the-play device first became significant, it provided a means of escape from the tedium of existence. Lady Hurf (*Le Bal des voleurs*) arranged her little charades and encouraged those of the thieves, because she was bored and sought some relief from the monotony of existence. When Gaston/Jacques in *Le Voyageur sans bagage* endeavoured to stage his charade with the little English boy, he did so in order to provide an alternative future; his actions derived not from boredom but from horror at the truth he discovered about himself. In both of these plays the devices were used to provide an alternative to life; in *Eurydice* on the other hand Anouilh used the technique to create a world beyond the present into which the characters could escape from the corruption of life. *Eurydice* also introduced the idea of using the play-within-the-play technique to recreate the past when *Eurydice*'s mother and Vincent re-enacted the joyful moment when they first met.

Anouilh's attitude towards the world of fantasy appeared, at this point, to be that it was preferable to reality; certainly Georges (*Le Rendez-vous de Senlis*) found that the family of his imagination was more attractive than the one with which he was obliged to live. Only the Prince in *Léocadia* proved an exception when he learnt that a real life with Amanda was much more acceptable than the fading inaccurate memory he had of Léocadia. The role of fantasy changed as time went by and the grating qualities of the plays increased. The relief and pleasure that
was to be found in make-believe waned; the latter became as sordid and distressing as life itself. At whatever level *La Grotte* was considered, whether it were that of the author grappling with the problems of telling a tale and coping with the characters he had imagined or that of the story itself, both fantasy and reality were presented as equally undesirable. The author-character discovered that the characters he had created in the fantasy of his mind became uncontrollable and were plunged into a misery far worse than he had intended. When Adolphe and Élodie (*Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron*) tried to find solace in dreams, they discovered that the latter turned into nightmares or were merely an erotic extension of the present. Indeed the dividing line between fantasy and reality became more and more blurred, so that at times Adolphe could not be sure whether he was awake or asleep. In a way this idea picked up a thought expressed early on in Anouilh's career, but in lighter mood, when the thieves in *Le Bal des voleurs* had mistaken play-acting for life itself.

The use of the play-within-the-play and inner play devices to present on stage the thoughts and dreams of the characters (as had been the case in *Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron*) became increasingly important in the plays of the late nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies. The effectiveness of the technique derives very largely from the fact that it enables Anouilh to demonstrate visually what otherwise might develop into static verbal pictures. Fantasy, through the medium of structure, thus becomes a means in Anouilh's plays of avoiding simple discussion.
Although the exploration of the relationship between life and fantasy in its various guises was perhaps the major function to which Anouilh put the play-within-the-play and inner play devices, he also used them to create situations in which characters were able to discover truths about themselves. The Prince in *Léocadia* learnt through Amanda's play-acting that he really no longer remembered the girl of his past adventure, and Tigre discovered through the rehearsals he staged in *La Répétition* that he was in love for the first time in his life. In some of the plays the truths were not always recognised. The characters in *Pauvre Bitos* had the opportunity to discover something about themselves but learnt nothing. Although Bitos plays the role of Robespierre, he fails to appreciate the folly of absolute intransigence. In a way this function of the play-within-the-play and inner play devices is a further extension of the exploration of fantasy and reality mentioned in the previous paragraphs, for it is through the pretence of make-believe that characters have been able in most cases to learn a little more of the reality of their own nature.

A different purpose to which Anouilh put the play-within-the-play device was seen in *Antigone*, where the playwright used it to suggest that life is predetermined, just like the roles of actors in a play. No matter how near we may approach to altering the plot (the confrontation between Antigone and Créon does at times pose the possibility that she might after all accept her uncle's demands) the final outcome, as pre-ordained, will logically and inevitably be reached. Elsewhere this concept was further expanded to suggest that life is most stable, when it coincides
with the world of the theatre. Many times Anouilh indicates that actors in particular have a problem in this respect and that once they stray from the security of an ordered text (as in Cher Antoine where they are invited to improvise, or in La Grotte when they start after the interval without the author to guide them) they can only produce trivialities or dry up completely. Furthermore their whole lives are so based on pretence that they are often unable to distinguish, like Vincent in Eurydice, between the words they have spoken in previous productions and what they want to say off-stage. This develops to the point where, in Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit, Électre and Égisthe are so imbued with their roles that, as actors who have spoken their lines so many times previously, they begin to think like the characters whose parts they are taking. In this play, however, the mingling of fantasy and reality when the actors invade the stage causes chaos, with the result that audiences may well be left wondering whether the relationship between life in the theatre and that in the outside world can coincide after all.

This analysis of Anouilh's apparent intentions in employing the devices of play-within-the-play and inner play has indicated their use as an exploration of the changing inter-relationship between fantasy and reality, as a means of escape from the boredom and misery of existence, and as an expression of life's inevitability and pre-determined nature. They have also demonstrated the thoughts and dreams of individuals, allowed different people to find out more about themselves, and indicated that from some points of view life within and without the theatre
Each of these broad headings was further refined; the impact of varying kinds of dreams was shown, for example, and different reactions to self-knowledge revealed. These multiple headings listed above would seem to indicate that the devices of play-within-the-play and inner play, as they have occurred in Anouilh's theatre, have been put to a wide variety of purposes. An examination of the ways in which he has used the devices is similarly revealing.

Starting from the simple concept that individuals were cast in different roles, Anouilh developed the idea that these parts could be enacted in concert with one another. Sometimes these playlets, though easily discernible for an audience, were not always so for the characters taking part. This was because the playlets formed part of the main stream of the action and were not separate incidents taking place on a dais erected on stage. An early example of this type of use occurred in Le Bal des voleurs, which was composed of a series of incidents in which the characters were obliged to perform and, in some instances, did so without fully realising the manner in which they were involved. Where the playlets were so interwoven into the fabric of the main play so as to become almost indistinguishable from it, Anouilh introduced a number of variations by sometimes using the characters who happened to form part of the general intrigue (Le Bal des voleurs, Eurydice) or by specially creating characters to participate, as with Isabelle in L'Invitation au château when she was engaged to play a specific part. She and Amanda (Léocadie) are amateurs invited to play particular roles. In Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, on the
other hand, Georges varies the pattern by hiring professionals to pretend to be his family.

More traditional is Anouilh's introduction of the text of another play into his own in the form of an actual playlet performed on stage. Sometimes the text is one he has made up, sometimes it is taken from another playwright. *L'Hurluberlu* provides examples of the use of the device in this manner, where amateurs are seen both rehearsing and finally presenting a play. Amateur actors are also seen, of course, in *La Répétition*; professionals, on the other hand, figure frequently in his plays and are often presented in somewhat mocking terms (*Colombe, Cher Antoine, Ne réveillez pas madame*, inter alia). Where actual playlets are performed they are introduced by a variety of means, ranging from the desire to raise money for charity to the need of professionals to earn their living, from the requirements of an old lady's will to the desire of an actor-manager to produce a play that would bring him intellectual satisfaction as opposed to mere monetary gain.

Different again is Anouilh's use of the devices of play-within-the-play and inner play to portray the thoughts, aspirations and dreams of his characters. In this respect, too, there is no simple slavish adherence to a single pattern nor to an identical means of creation. In *Becket* the flogging of the king stimulates him into considering the events that led to the situation in which he finds himself. The structure of the play is such that the passage of chronological time appears to be suspended while his thoughts are demonstrated. Anouilh's inventiveness is again
Some other ways in which Anouilh employed plays-within-the-play and inner plays are concerned with the re-creation of the past. This he did by sometimes using a traditional flash-back when the time sequence is not merely interrupted but put completely out of joint, as in Colombe, the final scene of which reverts to a moment before the opening sequence of the play. At other times Anouilh made characters already on-stage step forward to re-enact consciously events from the past. This was the case, for example, in L'Alouette. Elsewhere the re-enactment of the past was spontaneous, as in Eurydice when Vincent and the mother burst into a repetition of the words they spoke when first they met, or when General Saint-Fé (La Valse des toréadors) reminded Mlle de Sainte-Euverte of their first waltz together. The re-creation of the past in Léocadia took on a somewhat different form, when not only the events of the Prince's whirlwind love-affair were recalled but the actual scenery was produced. In this instance the present became a constant repetition of the past.

Not only then did Anouilh show great variety in the purposes to which he put the play-within-the-play and inner play devices (which we looked at first in this chapter) but also in the many distinct ways he used them. At various times they have appeared
as playlets, rehearsals, dreams, day-dreams, nightmares, thoughts, flash-backs, integrated episodes, and the re-enactment of the past in the present; they have been performed by amateurs, by professionals and by fantasy-figures.

Anouilh's imaginative skill as a dramatist is also apparent in the numerous means by which he has introduced each of the various uses he has made of the devices. In the early plays they are usually occasioned by the deliberate action of one of the characters, as for example Lady Hurf's decision that all should participate in the ball dressed as thieves (Le Bal des voleurs), or George's instructions to the hired actors to perform the part of his parents at the meal he had arranged (Le Rendez-vous de Senlis). Later Anouilh began to use more mechanical means, as in Colombe when the final flash-back occurred unannounced but introduced by the sudden dimming of the lights. To these specifically mechanical means can be added a host of individual variations which are as numerous as the incidents they introduce. The dream and thought sequences, for example, occurring in a number of plays, resulted from a pistol shot (Pauvre Bitos), the appearance of a ghost (Becket), the reading of a book (Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron), a cycle-ride (Les Poissons rouges) and the aftermath of a rehearsal (Ne réveillez pas madame). Considered from a different point of view the individual differences are apparent in the way that the central play of Antigone was introduced by a Prologue, or the episode of La Grotte by an author, the scenes from Électre (Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit) by the leader of an orchestra, and the
invitation to dress up and take part in a dinner-party (Pauvre Bitos) by a spiteful host.

From whichever of the three aspects discussed in this chapter Anouilh's dramaturgy is considered, whether it be the purposes to which he put the devices of the play-within-the-play and inner play, or the ways in which they have been used, or the means by which they have been introduced, the impressive inventiveness of the playwright is clear. Throughout his career these devices have formed part of his technique, increasing in importance over the years and forming part of his deliberate avoidance of what is normally thought of as realistic drama. Combining with his use of music, caricature, exaggerated gesture, mixing of genres, combination of poetic dialogue and trenchant wit, and with his stylised use of decor and costume, the play-within-the-play device and inner play have helped to contribute to Anouilh's general theatricalism. The latter, together with Anouilh's frequent juxtaposition of humorous and serious scene to produce a grating effect, has helped to convey the bitterness, the joy, and the farce of life which the playwright apparently sees around him. These techniques can provide audiences watching his plays with enjoyment at the simple level of entertainment. The support that the public gave his works would seem to indicate that his skill was much appreciated. The plays, however, offer much more than entertainment. The French critic Paul Ginestier in his book entitled Jean Anouilh has already argued that there is more

depth to Anouilh's understanding than he has been given credit for and that in many cases he has used techniques and expressed thoughts in advance of other writers who have been hailed as thinkers and innovators. Ginestier does not make this a central point in his argument, but during his discussion of individual plays, draws attention to examples, as he sees them, of Anouilh as a precursor of later writers. He does not argue that Anouilh should be compared with playwrights such as Camus, Ionesco, Sartre of Beckett as a philosophical thinker or writer, but that more credit should be given for the techniques he has used and the devices he has explored before them. Among the examples that Ginestier gives is that of Jézabel, whose plot tells how a wife murders her husband in order to facilitate an adulterous love affair, an epic story, he maintains, to be compared with that of Hamlet or Agamemnon. Critics slated Jézabel for the sordidness of its details. Ginestier points out that the cocktail mixture of epic/sordid qualities lay at the heart of Samuel Beckett's success notably in such plays as En attendant Godot and Fin de Partie. Ginestier also likens the ending of Ardèle, when the two children scream at each other and accelerate their dialogue until it becomes uncontrollable, to the similar technique used later by Ionesco for the ending of La Cantatrice chauve which critics admired for its breathtaking originality. There is an intellectual content to his plays but he is not a philosopher, nor does he claim to be. He has a 'world view' to which, with a poet's sensitivity to life, he has

2. Ibid. p. 94.
given expression in his plays.

At first sight it would appear that Anouilh takes nothing seriously and this includes his own thoughts because everything in life is apparently fortuitous; ideas, events and persons all happen, take place and develop quite arbitrarily. We may be Christian; we might just as easily have been atheist, poor or rich, coarse or aware; Joan of Arc was burnt at the stake; her story could have ended with the coronation of the king (it is Joan the king-maker who is perhaps remembered best); the dual personality within us could have developed just as easily in one direction as in another; a play could begin with one scene or another - the fact that a particular scene is chosen depends on the chance whim of the author who decides to try for a certain effect. As we move further into the world of Jean Anouilh we see that the gap between reality and fantasy lessens; what is and what might have been fuse; the difference between what was and what we imagine to have been becomes obscured.

Over the years Anouilh shifted his emphasis while basically maintaining the same note. In this respect he is not unique, for Molière himself often repeated his themes and ideas. But there is an evolutionary process: whereas in Anouilh's early plays there is certainly a mood of theatricality (as revealed by the lack of any attempt to reproduce realism, the deliberate avoidance of the "slice-of-life" type of play), in his later plays this virtuosity becomes more and more self-conscious - the subject-matter of the plays becomes the plays themselves. A similar movement can be seen of course during the twentieth century in
certain novels, as for example in Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* published in 1926, and also in some poetry since Baudelaire. The developmental nature of Anouilh's total theatre is further revealed in the less intransigent attitude the French playwright adopts towards accepting life, while still pointing out the mediocrity of existence, and in the deepening quality of his technique.

The key to a full appreciation of Anouilh's plays would seem to lie, therefore, not in seeking out the niceties of his thought, but in recognising, though not necessarily agreeing with, his outlook on life, in recognising that the clowning is merely a mask hiding a deep concern and anguish for all mankind - the heroes whose "pure" ideals are unobtainable, the grotesques who disturb us because they are in fact only slightly removed from people whom we know, and the compromisers who have come to uneasy terms with life. These all represent people playing out a role of some kind in life. It is this point of view, that life is a game and is most meaningful when it is well structured (like a play which, for all its seeming lack of plot, fluidity and apparent freedom nevertheless carefully establishes entrances, exits and dialogue) that is crucial to Anouilh's theatre and brings us face to face with an important paradox to which his theatre gives expression: that not only is there a gap between literature (in this case theatre) and existence, but that the latter becomes truly meaningful only when it approaches closely the illusory life of the theatre.

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1. The point is made by Germaine Brée and Margaret Guiton in the Introduction to their book *An Age of Fiction*, London,
Once we have attuned to Anouilh's way of looking at life we can understand more easily why it is that he writes his plays in the manner he does. The various techniques he employs (the interruption of the time-sequence, the devices of the play-within-the-play, the grotesques, the lack of realism, the flash-backs) cease to be merely the slick devices of a competent dramatist as suggested by many reviewers and revel themselves as an integral part of the attitudes and ideas to which Anouilh, with his poet's sensitivity, is giving expression.

Anouilh's plays are thus dramatic metaphors illustrating the arbitrariness of life. Since nothing is certain, there is little point in taking anything seriously; life must be accepted lightly otherwise it becomes intolerable. Existence can be given some shape if people are directed in certain roles, rather in the same way that actors need a playwright to put words into their mouths and to arrange their entrances and exits. If no director is available, if preferred, some individuals are able to fashion their own lives and cast themselves in roles of their own choosing. Pervading the whole of Anouilh's theatre is his sensitivity not only to the arbitrariness of life but also its pathos; at the heart of his plays is his deep-felt anguish at the condition of mankind.

It is Anouilh's poetic sensitivity, of which self-conscious theatricality and the skilful use of the play-within-the-play and inner play devices form part, that raises his status above that of mere theatrician, as Harvey sees him, and above that of simple entertainer, as Anouilh says he sees himself.

Appendix A.
Appendix A.

Comparison of extracts from *Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit* and *Oreste*.

In the following lists the page numbers refer in the case of *Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit* to the edition published by La Table Ronde in 1972, and in the case of *Oreste* to the fragment included by Robert de Luppé in his book *Anouilh* published by the Éditions Universitaires in 1959.

**Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit.**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p. 21</td>
<td>Égisthe. Moi aussi j'attendais Oreste au bout de la route, tous les soirs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>p. 21</td>
<td>Électre. Tu suais de peur dans l'ombre, tous les soirs, tout près de moi et je ne le savais pas?</td>
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<tr>
<td>p. 26</td>
<td>Clytemnestre. Nous pouvions commencer a vivre malgré Électre. Elle ne quittait pas la cuisine, il suffisait de l'ignorer. Et quand elle aurait été un peu plus grande, on l'aurait mariée à un jardinier, qui lui aurait fait une portée de lapins. Ce n'était qu'une fille après tout.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. 27</td>
<td>Électre. Je le faisais exprès pour qu'on dise: 'Ils lui font faire la vaisselle à la petite Électre, la fille du roi qu'ils ont tué! Et le soir, ils la font coucher dans les soupières, au dessus des écuries, sur une paillasse, à même le sol!'</td>
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**Oreste.**

<table>
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<th>Text</th>
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<tr>
<td>p. 107</td>
<td>Égisthe. Je te regardais attendre tous les soirs jusqu'à ce que l'ombre t'efface. Moi aussi, j'attendais.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. 107</td>
<td>Électre. [...tu avais peur dans l'ombre près de moi tous les soirs et je ne l'ai pas su</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. 102</td>
<td>Électre. Tu t'es dit: une fille, une fille cela ne peut rien. On lui fera faire la vaisselle, on la traitera comme une servante et plus tard on la mariera à un paysan qui lui fera douze garçons bêtes comme une portée de lapins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. 105</td>
<td>Électre. Ne me plains pas, j'étais payée quand les autres disaient: 'Ils la mettent sous les combles avec les filles de cuisine', quand je me le disais moi, surtout le soir avant de m'endormir, le matin en m'éveillant en regardant mes murs galeux: 'Sous les combles avec les laveuses de vaisselle, la petite Électre, la fille du roi qu'ils ont tué!'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C'est toi qui le voulais !

Électre.

Oui, je le voulais !

Au début les garçons d'écurie avaient peur de me sentir là - ils se demandaient ce que cela voulait dire... Et puis, avec le temps, ils se sont enhardis; ils venaient gratter à ma porte la nuit, me crier des choses sales à travers la fente... Et je pensais, un jour où ils auront trop bu, ils l'enfonceront la porte et ils la violeront sur la paille, la petite Électre, la fille du roi des Rois !

Clytemnestre.

Tes cousines étaient propres, pomponnées, parées de rubans, et il fallait te supporter en loques ! Jamais lavée ni peignée. Ah ! Je n'ai pas été une mère heureuse !...

Électre.

Il n'aurait plus manqué que cela ! Est-ce que j'ai été une fille heureuse, moi ?

Tu le voulais, tout cela !

Électre.

Oui, je le voulais, de toutes mes forces !

Et quand j'étais plus grande, les garçons d'écurie qui avaient commencé par avoir peur, au début, s'en venaient coger à ma porte et me dire des mots sales, le soir avec une drôle de voix. Ils me suppliaient : 'Électre, petite putain, ouvre, tu en as envie. Ouvre donc, ouvre donc, Électre, petite putain, on s'amusera bien'.

Je pensais : 'Une nuit, ils s'enfonceront la porte et j'aurai beau crier, ils me mettront leurs grosses mains sales sur la bouche et ils la violeront, la petite Électre, la fille du roi des rois sur la paille, et après je me tuerai.'
Elle avait tendu son voile pour qu'il s'y empêtre les jambes, ils l'ont fait tomber de tout son long! Avec sa cuirasse qu'elle n'avait pas fini de lui enlever, dans un grand bruit ridicule de casseroles... De tout son long sur les dalles, notre père qui était si fort!

Égistle had taught Oreste, as a child, to ride, and had been generally kind to him. He wanted to know why Oreste's attitude had changed. The latter replies:

Je vous avais vus, tous les deux.

Égistehe points out to Oreste that he used to play with him and had taught him to ride. He could not understand why the child would not talk to him. The latter eventually replies:

Je savais tout. Je vous avais vus une fois tous les deux.

D'abord, j'ai cru que vous la battiez. J'aurais pu alerter les soldats de la garde, ils étaient mes amis, ils me sculptaient des bêtes dans des morceaux de bois - j'aurais pu aller leur crier: 'Venez vite! L'affranchi Égistehe bat la Reine, ma mère!' Mais quelque chose en moi m'a dit que ce n'était pas une vraie lutte, que ce n'était pas des gémissements de douleur qu'elle poussait.

When Clytemnestre tries to placate Oreste, Électre cries:

Ne l'écoute pas, petit frère! Ils n'ont pas écouté notre père lorsqu'il a essayé de leur parler.

When Clytemnestre and Égistehe try to placate Oreste, Électre cries:

Ne les écoute pas, ne les écoute pas, Oreste! Ils s'emparent de l'innocence, ce soir, comme du royaume de ton père autrefois.
Appendix B.
Appendix B.

Initial performances of Anouilh’s plays.

For details concerning the initial performances of the plays from L’Hermine to La Foire d’empoigne I am indebted mainly to the information given by Philip Thody in his book Anouilh. The particulars relating to Le Bal des voleurs and Le Rendez-vous de Senlis occur in L.C. Pronko’s book The World of Jean Anouilh. The number of performances for the initial runs of Anouilh’s plays from Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron onwards has been supplied to me directly by the management of the theatres concerned.

L’Hermine: Théâtre de l’Oeuvre, 26 April 1932; 37 performances.

Mandarine: L’Athenée, 17 February 1933; 13 performances.

Y avait un prisonnier: Théâtre des Ambassadeurs, 21 March 1935; 65 performances.

La Sauvage: Les Mathurins, 10 January 1938; 100 performances.

Le Bal des voleurs: Théâtre des Arts, 17 September 1938; 200 performances.

Léocadia: La Michodière, 30 November 1940; 173 performances.

Le Rendez-vous de Senlis: L’Atelier, 29 January 1941; 167 performances.

Eurydice: L’Atelier, 18 December 1941; 90 performances.

Antigone: L’Atelier, 4 February 1944; after the Liberation performances began again on 29 September 1944. By 1947 it had had 475 performances.

Roméo et Jeannette: L’Atelier, 4 December 1946; 140 performances.

L’Invitation au château: L’Atelier, 5 November 1947; 334 performances.

Ardèle ou la marguerite: Comédie des Champs Élysées, 3 November 1948. By 1963 it had had 577 performances.

La Répétition ou l’amour puni: Théâtre Marigny, 26 October 1950 remained in the repertoire of the company for two years.

Colombe: L’Atelier, 10 February 1951; 190 performances.

La Valse des toréadors: Comédie des Champs Élysées, 9 January 1952; 200 performances.

L'Alouette: Montparnasse - Gaston Baty, 15 October 1953; 608 performances.

 Médée: L'Atelier, 26 March 1953; 32 performances.

Cécile ou l'école des pères: Comédie des Champs Élysées, first performed once only on 11 December 1952 for Catherine Anouilh's wedding guests. Later revived at the same theatre from 29 October 1954 onwards; 106 performances.

Ornifle ou le courant d'air: Comédie des Champs Élysées, 3 November 1955; 368 performances.

Pauvre Bitos ou le dîner de têtes: Théâtre Montparnasse, 11 October 1956; 308 performances.

L'Hurluberlu ou le réactionnaire amoureux: Comédie des Champs Élysées; 430 performances.

Becket ou l'honneur de Dieu: Montparnasse - Gaston Baty, 2 October 1959; 618 performances.

La Petite Molière: Odéon-Théâtre de France, 12 November 1959; remained part of the theatre's programme for six months.

La Grotte: Montparnasse - Gaston Baty, 5 October 1961; 150 performances.

La Foire d'empoigne: Comédie des Champs Élysées, 11 January 1962 (preceded by L'Orchestre); 92 performances.

Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron: Comédie des Champs Élysées, 13 November 1968; 173 performances.

Cher Antoine: Comédie des Champs Élysées, 4 October 1969, 317 performances.


Ne réveillez pas madame: Comédie des Champs Élysées, 24 October 1970, 564 performances.
Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit: Théâtre Antoine, 17 January 1972;
40 performances.

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   E. Books on the theatre.
   F. Other books consulted.
   G. Reviews and articles on initial performances of Anouilh's plays and on some revivals.
   H. A selection of articles from those consulted.
   I. Dissertation Abstracts.
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I. Dissertation Abstracts.

Archer, M.S, *Vision poétique de l'existence dans le théâtre d'Anouilh*,


Summary.

The first part of the thesis considers reviews of Anouilh's plays in the order in which they were first performed. The examination shows how the critics at first encouraged Anouilh as a young playwright of talent but later showed only partial sensitivity to his style and technique, their judgements on his theatricalist approach often being affected by their emotional reaction to the content of his plays. Throughout Anouilh's career reviewers have noted new devices and developments as they have occurred.

The second and more important part of the thesis examines the plays, again in chronological order, this time noting in greater detail how Anouilh's style develops and the way in which play increases in importance. There is a progression from simple references to role-playing, through individuals performing parts either alone or in concert with others, to the use of extracts from other works, flash-backs, dream-sequences and the like. This investigation also shows that as Anouilh's exploitation of play became more complex, so the mechanics of his theatre became more exposed.
Each example of a variation in Anouilh's use of play is further discussed in terms of its significance to individual plays and to his theatre as a whole. This discussion reveals that he uses play to probe various aspects of the relationship between truth and fantasy. The conclusion reached is that after some hesitation and with numerous doubts, Anouilh's theatre seems, in general terms, to assert that fantasy is not only preferable to reality but even, perhaps, the greater truth. Life is depicted as degrading, but also as something that in the end has to be borne.

Anouilh has imbued the device of play with surprising variety and expressed numerous ideas through it. Pervading all flows his apprehension of mankind's unhappy condition, to which, with the sensitivity of a poet, he has given expression in the form of drama.