

The Plays of Jean Anouilh

THE PLAYS OF JEAN ANOUILH

By

Edwin H. Shreffler

Bachelor of Fine Arts

1941

Bachelor of Arts

1947

Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College

Stillwater, Oklahoma

Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages

Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

1948

APPROVED BY:

R. S. Bailey

Chairman, Thesis Committee

Anna L. Overster

Member of the Thesis Committee

A. B. D. D.

Head of the Department

D. G. W. Dintosh

Dean of the Graduate School

232623

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. Introduction	1
II. Philosophy: <u>Pièces Noires</u>	4
III. Philosophy: <u>Pièces Roses</u>	20
IV. Characters	28
V. Sources	30
VI. Conclusion	38
Bibliography	40

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Jean Anouilh was born the 23rd of June, 1910, at Bordeaux, France. While young he moved to Paris where he attended school at the Ecole primaire supérieure Colbert, le Collège Chaptal and a year and one half in the law school at Paris. He spent some time in the military service and worked for a publicity house. After the presentation of his first play he decided to live from the theatre and the cinema. This was the year that he was twenty-two, 1932.

In 1932, with the production of l'Hermine, at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, the critics of France hailed what seemed to them to be the most promising playwright of the present generation. Jean Anouilh had with his first production established himself as a dramatist of talent. Two later works, Mandarine and Y avait un prisonnier, gained him praise for his ability, even though the critics regarded them as plays of little merit. In 1937 M. Anouilh ceased to be promising and became, in the eyes of the critics, the outstanding dramatist of the generation when his play le Voyageur sans bagage was produced at the Théâtre des Mathurins. With the

presentation of Antigone in the United States his reputation became international. His Antigone was much discussed but little was said about his other plays, his philosophy or his position in French literature. It is with these things that this thesis is concerned.

Using the statement "Je suis né le 23 juin 1910 à Bordeaux et ma biographie n'a aucun interet. Elle se resume à peu près à la liste de mes pièces."¹ as a point of departure perhaps we can learn something of the author as expressed in his plays.

M. Anouilh has divided his plays into two groups which form a convenient basis for the listing of his works. One group, entitled Pièces Noires and Nouvelles Pièces Noires, illustrates the author's individualism and his complete denial of hope for the individual--a nihilistic conception of life. The other group, Pièces Roses, indicates that possibly the individual can adjust himself to society and find hope in the happiness for which he is striving. The non-classified works also conform to the above-mentioned plan.

A complete list of the author's published works and dates of writing includes: Le Bal des voleurs (1932),

¹ Jean Anouilh. Letter to the author.

Le Rendez-vous de Senlis (1937), Léocadia (1939),
L'Hermine (1931), La Sauvage (1934), Le Voyageur sans
bagage (1936), Eurydice (1941), Jézabel (1932), Antigone
(1943), Roméo et Jeannette (1945) and Médée (1946). Y
avait un prisonnier (Published in 1935), Humulus le Muet
(Published in 1945) and two unpublished works, Mandarine
(Presented in 1933) and L'Invitation au Château (Presented
in 1948) complete the list of his works.

CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHY: Pièces Noires

In a world of depressions, strife and betrayal Jean Anouilh, like many other young Frenchmen of his generation, has searched for the answer to an age old question, the justification of man's existence. Like many another man of his time he has failed to find an answer to the problem which he has posed. Only in his latest work does one find, and even here one cannot be sure, a return to the solution summarized by Voltaire's *Candide* when he said, "...il faut cultiver notre jardin". Anouilh's seeming agreement takes place when Jason says, "...je referai demain avec patience mon pauvre échafaudage d'homme sous l'oeil indifférent des dieux".¹ This statement is heightened by Jason's later declaration that

"Il faut vivre maintenant, assurer l'ordre, donner des lois à Corinth et rebâtir sans illusions un monde à notre mesure pour y attendre de mourir".²

The fact that this statement is taken from *Médée*, which is included in the Nouvelles Pièces Noires, inclines one to believe that the author had no faith in such a

¹ Jean Anouilh, "Médée," Nouvelles Pièces Noires, p. 402.

² Anouilh, loc. cit.

solution to the problems that he poses. Possibly he meant that death is the answer, as it is in the other plays in his group "noires". His "Pièces Roses" offer a solution in the form of illusions as a means of forgetfulness or, in one, the acceptance of reality.

In the Pièces Noires one finds a reiteration of the doctrine of individualism. Along with this creed one finds the theory that man is a product of his environment and cannot rise above it. To this has been added the idea that man is also a product of that which is thought about him, whether true or false, and his actions conform to the situations created by these thoughts.

In these plays one finds that the individual refuses to accept the pattern which has been cut out for him and tries to fit his life to a better mold, one in which conformation to a preconceived pattern is not a part. The individual does not try to reform society but merely to create within that society an escape from the past and to find within it the truth by which he can live. All of the efforts fail because of the past from which one cannot escape and because of the fact that one cannot forget the past even if one can hide from it. No matter how pure the individual is he still retains an obligation to his past, however dark.

An examination of the plays reveals that L'Hermine,

La Sauvage, Roméo et Jeannette, Eurvdice and Jézabel form a group in which the escape or denial of the past is caused by love, or in which love is the means of escape offered. It must be noted, however, that the author treats love not as an individual matter but as a social phenomenon in which love portrays the character's inability to adjust himself to his society. There are other contributing factors which are better treated by an analysis of the plays.

The leading character of L'Hermine, Frantz, is highly reminiscent of Stendhal's Julien Sorel in Le Rouge et le noir. Both are extremely individualistic and are determined to be victorious in their designs regardless of the cost. Both are at odds with the society in which they live and both want to be successful. The difference in their attitudes toward love highlights the philosophy of Anouilh. Julien Sorel regards love as a means of arriving, whereas Frantz regards love as the end in itself. Another basic difference lies in the fact that Julien tries to impose himself upon the society in which he lives, whereas Frantz accepts passively his social situation and tries to find escape by putting all his faith in love. Both reach the same end. Another interesting aspect is the importance that both attach to money, a subject that Anouilh stresses in many of his plays.

Frantz, twenty-five and in love with a girl named Monime, is on the verge of failing in a business venture that he has undertaken in order to gain enough money to elope with her. The importance of the money is not derived from its intrinsic value but rather from the fact that Frantz does not want Monime, the niece of a wealthy duchess, to be driven to expedencies for lack of money. He feels that their love is too precious to be compromised in a world of reality. The refusal of the duchess to consider the possibility of Frantz as a suitor for Monime's hand increases the need for business success.

Frantz tries to borrow the money necessary for the success of his business from a wealthy American named Bentz. Bentz refuses to lend him the money because he knows that the business will fail anyhow. His wife, however, offers to give him the money provided he will show an interest in her. He refuses to abase his love.

Unable to obtain money Frantz is driven to an expedient that he detests, taking Monime for a mistress. He had long rejected this possibility because he had feared that they would be forced to compromise with the world in which they lived by lying about everything that they did and that Monime would become hardened. The thing that he had feared comes to pass and Frantz, unwilling to let it continue, conceives the idea of

killing the duchess in order to obtain the all-important money.

The village half-wit confesses to the crime under police questioning and Frantz believes that he has succeeded, when the thing in which he had placed his faith, the love of Monime, is taken from him. Monime, believing that he had killed the aunt only for the money she would inherit, informs Frantz that she will marry him but that it will be a marriage in name only. She promises not to reveal his secret. Frantz, his faith taken from him, confesses to the police. Too late Monime realizes that his love was sincere. Thus society conquers because of the lack of faith in love on the part of Monime.

The problem of escape is much better presented and treated in La Sauvage than in L'Hermine. A definite past is created in the personages of Thérèse's family. M. Tarde, the father, is the leader of an orchestra that plays in a cheap cafe. His wife has been, because of the father's cowardice, the mistress of the piano player, Gosta, for the past thirteen years. Gosta, tired of the mother, wants Thérèse as his mistress. The mother approves the project because she wishes to keep Gosta, and the father approves because he is a milksop.

Thérèse, still a simple, honest person despite her environment, is offered a chance to escape that environment by marrying Florent, a famous pianist of

good family and with a past completely different from hers. The parents see in Florent's proposal a chance to turn an honest dollar. They suggest to Thérèse that she accept jewelry from Florent, as well as other presents, and to see that he buys the presents at a jeweler with whom they have an arrangement for a dividend. Thérèse refuses all such offers but is unhappily aware that Florent's money is a hindrance to her happiness. Florent, aware of the fact that his money is an inconvenience to her, shows his scorn of money by throwing some on the floor. Thérèse, trained to know the value of money, picks it up, although it shames her. Finally deciding that her love will be forced to conform to what her parents expect of her she decides to abandon her parents and her past.

Florent unwittingly tries to make Thérèse conform to his past by having her live in his house and associate with the objects that represent it, such as books, family portraits, etc. He in no way relives any part of her past. This situation creates an antagonism from which Thérèse tries to find relief by lowering Florent in her eyes with such measures as parading naked in front of the portraits of the family, throwing books on the floor and by inviting her father to come and live with them. Tarde gets drunk, borrows clothing and money which he does not return and creates various

types of scenes. The only result is that Florent forgives Thérèse without really understanding the reasons for her actions. Finally Thérèse decides to leave Florent. Before she does so however she has Jeannette, the second violinist in her father's orchestra, tell Florent that she, Thérèse, had been Gosta's mistress and that at the age of fourteen she had had a lover by whom she had had a child. After this revelation Thérèse tells Florent that she hates the books that he reads so avidly and that she hates his respectable ancestors. She is the only unsmiling, dirty, shameful person in the house. Tears come to Florent's eyes as he realizes that he is going to lose her. Thérèse mistakes the tears for tears of understanding and decides to stay. Her decision is soon changed when she realizes that with him she must accept his family. She leaves.

One of the basic weaknesses of the two plays so far treated is that in each of them a factor other than love is involved. In L'Hermine the secondary question of money obscures the final conclusion. In La Sauvage, as well as in Roméo et Jeannette and Jézabel, both similar to La Sauvage in the conclusion reached, the main issue is obscured by the difference in the environment of the main personnages. Anouilh has clarified his attitude toward love in Eurydice by ignor-

ing the question of money and by giving to Eurydice and Orphée a similar environment.

Orphée is the son of a wandering street musician and Eurydice the daughter of an actress in a road troupe. They meet in a railway station while waiting for a train and fall instantly in love. Repulsed by the mundaneness of their parents' existence and by the manner in which they search the vulgar pleasures of life Orphée and Eurydice decide to leave their parents and find within their love the faith they need. Before leaving they have a mutual exchange of confidences relating to their pasts in order that they may, in the future, have nothing to hide that might compromise the truth.

Eurydice relates that she has had two affairs, both with men that she did not love. One took her by force and she gave herself to the other because she felt sorry for him. Still not too sure of their love however she fails to confess everything.

The next day while discussing all the nice and all the not-so-nice people whom they had met the day before, Orphée tells Eurydice that everybody whom they had met would always be a part of their past, the bad along with the good. That, he explains, is why the self-revelation of the preceding day had been so important. During the conversation he also reveals that she talks

in her sleep. Eurydice becomes troubled because she now realizes that her secrets will not be as easy to explain as they would have been the day before.

Upon the receipt of a letter from a lover that she had not mentioned to Orphée, Eurydice decides that she cannot escape the past that she had not revealed. Rather than tell the truth to him she leaves with the excuse that she is going to the store. Orphée starts after her but is detained by the arrival of a man whom they had met the preceding day at the railway station, M. Henri (Death).

Dulac, the impresario of the troupe and the author of the letter, arrives looking for Eurydice. He reveals to Orphée that he has been her lover and that she is far from being an angel. Orphée cannot believe that. Dulac then tells him of the letter which instructed her to meet him at the station. They are preparing to leave when a police wagon arrives with the body of Eurydice, who has been killed in an accident on a road that did not lead to the station.

M. Henri promises Orphée that he will return Eurydice from the dead on the condition that he not look at her face until dawn. (The symbolism is evidently that by looking at her face he rejects life as it is in his search for the absolute.) Eurydice continues falsifying her relationship with Dulac, and Orphée,

wishing to see the truth, looks into her face. She then admits everything to him and at dawn she is forced to leave.

M. Henri tells Orphée that even had she told the truth their relationship would eventually have changed. The only way that an unchanging love can be secured is through death. Rather than continue in a world of compromise and deceit Orphée decides to join Eurydice in death, the only solution offered by Anouilh to those who search for an absolute value.

The futility of the search for another solution is offered in Le Voyageur sans bagage. The traveler, Gaston, is a victim of amnesia, the result of his war service. As a person with a past he exists only in the minds of others. In identifying himself with a past created for him by others he will have to accept it completely with its obligations and opinions, even though as an individual he has a clear conscience.

The search for Gaston's relatives has continued for a period of eighteen years when he is introduced to the Renaud family, one of the five possibilities. The Renauds relate the past history of their son, Jacques. They recall the birds that he killed as a child, the dog whose foot he had crushed with a stone and a friend whom he had crippled in a dispute over a maid.

Gaston learns, with growing horror, that Jacques had seduced his brother's wife while the brother was at the front. Valentine, the wife, tells him that she had married the brother, George, in order to be near him and that she had become his mistress as soon as the wedding trip was over. She asks him to allow her to become his mistress again. Gaston responds that if he were Jacques, and he doesn't think that he is, he could not consider being her lover. Valentine says that she can prove his identity by means of a little scar just below his left shoulder blade. After she leaves, he confirms the existence of the scar by looking in a mirror.

Unable to stand the thought of such a vile past Gaston decides to deny that he is Jacques. When he tells Valentine that there is no scar on his shoulder she knows that he is telling a falsehood and berates him, mentioning that he should not be so proud, as she has had other lovers since their affair. She then warns him that if he tries to leave, she will tell the others about the scar, which she had put there in a jealous rage.

As Gaston stands, undecided about what course to pursue, a small boy comes into the room. The young boy is the remaining survivor of one of the families that believe that Gaston is a relative. The young boy

thinks that he is Gaston's uncle. The child's lawyer, aware that if the nephew is not found, the greater part of the heritage will pass from his young client, agrees with Gaston that the lost nephew whom he is searching has a scar on the shoulder. They present their proof to the interested families and Gaston leaves with his uncle.

Gaston's escape emphasizes the futility of trying to find a release because it is a solution for Gaston only. In Y avait un prisonnier Anouilh has treated the same problem in a slightly different version, the essential difference being that the man is a released prisoner, and not a victim of amnesia, who discovers what he would have been like had he been a free man. In Antigone the position of Anouilh, in regard to the individual's search for an absolute value, is made even clearer by the abolition of a past and by making the struggle one between the individual, represented by Antigone, and society, represented by Créon, who also symbolizes the compromise with events.

In treating Antigone the question of its historical importance in the eyes of the French during the occupation is not of too much importance when its relation to the other works of Anouilh as an integrated whole is considered. From this point of view the importance lies not in the fact that Créon represents

the German attitude and Antigone the French, but rather in the fact that Antigone represents the individual searching for a life without compromises and Créon represents society, willing to compromise and settle for what it can gain from life in a material sense. It is interesting to note that many American critics found Créon the victor in relationship to the reasonableness of his arguments and that they found Antigone's arguments weak. They could not understand how the French could find Antigone the victor.

"Granted that he (Créon) is cruel and ruthless, every word he speaks sounds reasonable...the ancient, egoistic and unreasonable Creon might better have suited Anouilh's purpose to portray the instigators of the German occupation..."³

(Note: Créon seems to the author to portray Pétain's rather than the German attitude.) "Antigone makes no answer to his (Créon's) argument worthy of any proponent of democracy."⁴ (Note: Antigone did not sacrifice self for democracy but for truth.)

Antigone disobeys an edict of Créon forbidding the burial of Polynice, the traitorous son of Oedipe. Her other brother, Etéocle, has been given an honorable

³ Rosamund E. Deutsch, "Anouilh's Antigone," Classical Journal, (October, 1946), 14.

⁴ John Gassner, "The Theatre Arts," Forum, Vol. 105 (April, 1946), 751.

burial. Caught covering the body, she is taken by the guards to Créon, the king. Créon tries to dissuade her by recounting his reasons for issuing the edict. He tells her that the burial ceremony is a pantomime performed by the priests. She agrees but persists in her obstinacy. He then informs her that both brothers were traitors and one had been given an honorable burial only because the people thought he was loyal. The other brother, regarded as a traitor, had been left to rot in order to impress the people with the justice meted out by him. He then reveals that the bodies were so badly mangled that they couldn't be identified. He had therefore ordered the least badly mangled body buried in an honorable manner, even though he did not know which body it was. Antigone finally accedes to his demands but immediately changes her mind when the king explains to her that one must live realistically, and that she is too young to know that one must compromise facts in order to find happiness. Antigone knows that she does not want to lie, smile false smiles, or sell herself in order to live, so she decides to die rather than accept his idea of happiness.

With the conclusion of the Pièces Noires, already discussed, Anouilh's concern with the hopelessness of life seems to have reached its conclusion. His latest work, Médée, although grouped with the Nouvelles Pièces

Noires seems to illustrate the idea that a passive acceptance of the hopelessness of life is not sufficient, that one must strive to better the world in which one lives. (Il faut vivre...et rebâtir sans illusions un monde à notre mesure pour y attendre de mourir).⁵

The same idea is repeated in Jason's statement

"J'ai pitié de toi, Médée, qui ne connais que toi, qui ne peux donner que pour prendre, j'ai pitié de toi attachée pour toujours à toi-même, entourée d'un monde vu par toi".⁶

This statement also seems to be a progression by Anouilh toward the belief that the individual must find a means of living in society, and not of dying because of it.

The plot of Médée is quite simple. It is the story of Jason's refusal to continue his life with Médée. He prefers a life of forgetfulness and peace with Créon's daughter, Créuse. Médée sends her children, bearing poisoned presents, to the wedding and the king and his daughter die after touching them. Médée then kills her children and herself. Jason returns to the city after trying vainly to stop her. As the play closes the nurse and a guard sit talking about the things in life which give pleasure: a good harvest, a beautiful

⁵ Anouilh, loc. cit.

⁶ Ibid., p. 387.

day, a tranquil moment, and conversation with friends.

CHAPTER III

PHILOSOPHY: Pièces Roses

A trilogy of plays compose the work entitled Pièces Roses. Of varying shades of pink they range from the completely ephemeral Le Bal des voleurs, conducted in an atmosphere of a make-believe world, through the mist of reality presented in Léocadia to the richer overtones of reality presented in Le Rendez-vous de Senlis.

Le Bal des voleurs offers a solution in the creation of illusions by which we can forget reality. The play itself is so constructed that one never forgets that the author is playing with the characters. Witness the remark of Lady Hurf:

"On n'apprend pas à croire. Elle est finie, notre belle aventure. Nous nous retrouvons tout 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 jouaient leur jeunesse, ce qui réussit toujours. Ils ne sont même pas aperçus de la comédie!"¹

The author has evidently tried to remove the plot from all reality and to make of the illusions a musical poetic work on a plane that has nothing to do with life.

¹ Jean Anouilh, "Le Bal des voleurs," Pièces Roses, p. 84.

The action takes place in a small resort town. Three thieves, who seem taken from an high-school operetta, pick each other's pockets, failing to penetrate the disguises that their cohorts have affected and otherwise fail ludicrously in all their attempts to "faire fortune". Witnessing the costly string of pearls worn by Lady Hurf they decide to disguise themselves as Spanish nobles in an effort to "lift" the pearls. Lady Hurf, bored to tears, gladly accepts their masquerade and acts as though she knows them. Hector, one of the two young thieves, pretends to be enamored of Éva, whom he had met and pleased in one of his disguises. Gustave, the other young thief, is honestly involved with Juliette, the second of Lady Hurf's nieces. The Dupont-Duforts, dowery hunters, and Lord Edgard, uncle of Éva and Juliette, complete the cast.

Lord Edgard, firmly convinced that something is amiss, sends for a Scotland Yard agent and in the interim searches for the death announcement of the noble whom Peterbono, the oldest thief, is pretending to be. Upon finding it he is overcome with emotion and faints. Juliette, hopelessly in love with Gustave, steals the announcement. Regaining consciousness Lord Edgard tries to convince Lady Hurf, who is already cognisant of the facts in the case, that the nobles are thieves. She refuses to listen.

That evening a dress ball is held and the entire group is to go to the ball disguised as thieves. Gustave remains behind in order to rob the house because he wants to leave before he becomes more involved with Juliette. Juliette, having read the death announcement, is sure that she knows why Gustave is avoiding her, and, suspecting that something will happen, remains behind also. She accosts Gustave while he is sacking the house. He gags and ties her, but fearful that the ropes might do her harm he releases her. She soon convinces him that he should allow her to leave with him. After choosing the more valuable objects in the house they leave.

The rest of the group, returning from the ball, do not notice the theft until the Dupont-Duforts, without the permission of Lady Hurf, have called the police. Lady Hurf protests their actions and when the police arrive she allows them to arrest the Dupont-Duforts, whom they have mistaken for the thieves because of their gaudy costumes. She then orders the true thieves to leave, as the fun is over.

Gustave, ashamed of having taken Juliette with him, returns her to the house after she falls asleep. They are seen by Lady Hurf and Lord Edgard. Juliette awakens and protests her love for him. Lady Hurf refuses to allow her niece to marry a thief but does allow her to

marry Gustave when Lord Edgard, overcome by the sight of young love, recognizes him as a son stolen while still a baby.

Léocadia, also a fantasy, seems better related to the Pièces Noires for in it there is a definite pattern of a past interfering with the present and not, as in Le Bal des voleurs, a denouement in which the past has only a brief entrance.

Albert, the prince Troubiscoï, obsessed for three years by the memory of a singer whom he had known for three days before her accidental death by strangling-- in tightening her own scarf--, has had constructed at the park of his aunt's chateau and at her instigation, all the places that he had visited during the three days that he had known Léocadia.

While in a hatmaker's shop the duchess, Albert's aunt, notices the resemblance of Amanda, who works there, to Léocadia. She has her sent to the chateau in an effort to make the prince accept her as a living reality in place of the dead memory.

The prince discovers the ruse and permits it for three days because Amanda's voice reminds him of that of Léocadia. During the three days Amanda tries to act just like Léocadia but she is unable to overcome some of her own idiosyncracies. When they go to the night club where Léocadia had champagne, Amanda requests water

and anisette because she is thirsty. This upsets the routine but they allow her to have it. Other incidents like this take place and gradually the prince, although still unaware of it, starts to accept life as it is and not as he wants it. Amanda discovers that Léocadia had never told the prince that she loved him. In order that the prince might better imagine that she had, Amanda repeats "je vous aime" to the prince. This angers the prince and they have an argument. Amanda leaves the night club and falls asleep on the lawn.

The next morning she is awakened by the duchess who is hunting in the woods. The duchess advises Amanda to see the prince during the morning, as the day (Reality) is her element and night, the element of Léocadia. Amanda takes her advice and awakens the prince, who had spent the night in the cabaret. The prince and Amanda breakfast in the spot where Léocadia had lemonade. They sit at a different table. Gradually she breaks the patterns that bind the prince and he falls in love with her. He is no longer the "petit poisson qui veut remonter le courant contre tous les autres, contre toute la force de la rivière".²

² Jean Anouilh, "Léocadia," Pièces Roses, p. 275.

Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, unlike the other two pieces, takes place in an atmosphere similar to that which is found in the Pièces Noires. The result however is that of a pièce rose. Gignoux thinks that the outcome of this play is not one in which Anouilh believes.

"Je ne peux pas m'empêcher de noter que Georges, en suivant son ami, abandonne sa famille et Robert, qu'il les condamne à une vie misérable, qu'il fait en somme ce que Thérèse Tarde refusait de faire: il se sauve tout seul. Et je me dis alors que, s'il est vraiment un personnage d'Anouilh, son passe, un jour ou l'autre, se réveillera, le plaçant devant une exigence de fidélité dont Isabelle, partenaire trop inconsistante, ne saura pas l'affranchir."³

With this position agreement is difficult, since Anouilh seemingly has not yet formulated a definite philosophy but rather seems to be searching for one; hence the two groups of plays. In this play one statement stands out as a rejection of all his philosophy in the Pièces Noires. It appears in a conversation between Georges and Barbara.

"Ceux qui quittent une maîtresse lui promettent leur amitié pour adoucir un peu leur départ. Je ne te promets même pas mon amitié..Je te promets ma haine. Mon dégoût, Barbara."⁴

This is an utter rejection of the past, and the ignoble life that he has lead and is also a rejection of his

³ Hubert Gignoux, Jean Anouilh, p. 136.

⁴ Jean Anouilh, Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, Act IV, Scene I.

associates in that past. It is not a search for forgetfulness nor for an absolute but merely a belief that one must advance. Since Anouilh must be judged from his plays it seems dangerous to presume too much.

Georges, in love with a young girl whom he met at the Louvre, has created for her an imaginary world peopled by his parents and his best friends, as they would have been had he been able to choose them. He has promised Isabelle to introduce her to these people and in order to do so he has to rent a house and hire actors to play the roles that he has created because his parents and friends have nothing in common with those he has created. One thing that he has neglected to tell her is the fact that he is married to a rich girl who supports him. He stays with her only because of his parents and friends. He rents a house, hires the actors, has a dinner prepared and is awaiting Isabelle's arrival when a phone call is received and he has to leave. The actors reveal themselves to Isabelle while he is gone.

Georges's family, anxious to retain their easy life as the in-laws of a rich daughter, is in the midst of an imbroglio with his wife, who threatens to divorce him. Barbara, his mistress, who is the wife of his best friend, Robert, tells the family that she

has followed Georges and knows where he may be. They go to the house that he has rented. Robert enters and is recognized by Isabelle as the friend of whom Georges had so often spoken. She explains the situation to him. He sneers at the whole thing as his only interest is the living that he can make by closing his eyes to the fact that his wife is Georges's mistress and by pretending to be his best friend.

Georges returns from his wife's house where he has knocked her down after she had shot him. The wife believes that Georges would have killed her had he not been in love with her and is more enamored than ever. Isabelle, after having met the family and the best friend, finds good reason for his actions and leaves with him. Thus Georges rejects an ugly existence and tries to find within his vision of life as it should be the happiness that he wants.

The solutions of either the Pièces Roses or the Pièces Noires are unimportant, since, as suggested in Médée, Anouilh's ideas are in a state of flux. The importance of his works lies in the fact that they represent a state of mind prevalent in the world today, a confused search for the truth.

CHAPTER IV

CHARACTERS

The characters presented in these plays are as barren of credibility as the grave-yard scene in Wilder's Our Town. The fact that the audience must clothe them is perhaps the only thing that makes them seem real. All the characters are on the marge of society, caricatures of human beings. Perhaps for the stage this is a good technique, but does Anouilh better illustrate his problems by so doing? The bold, crude outline of a personage makes him more unforgettable; it helps accentuate the emotions that the author is trying to arouse, but in choosing the extreme elements of society to illustrate his points he has highlighted the problem, but has he highlighted the true beings? With what equipment for the search of truth has he endowed his characters? All of them bring to it a knowledge of the past as well as a faith in the hopelessness of the future, a negative faith. With this as their guiding light they find what they expect to find; is this as bad as the faith of Jason, who expects to find something good in the future? Is he less true than the other bewildered characters who people the plays?

Or are the characters like an inspector of sewage disposal units who, in speaking of one town says, "Fine town! Beautiful disposal system." and in speaking of another says, "Terrible town, poor disposal system." Perhaps he should have peopled his plays with the average person, the ninety-nine that fail in an undertaking but who contribute to the success of the hundreth, question that is practically without solution. Let us simply say that the author has forcefully called our attention to problems to which death is not a solution. The only one that death can solve is the age old problem about death. His characters are chosen to illustrate the questions that have been posed but consideration of them as human beings had little, if any, part in the construction of the plays.

CHAPTER V

SOURCES

A consideration of the general sources of these works tends to show that M. Anouilh has chosen his topics for the value they offer in the exposition of his philosophy. The changes that have been made, and often they are striking changes, are made for the same reason. Of particular interest is his treatment of the classical personages, better known than the relatively contemporary sources such as Giraudoux's Siegfried, and others of less certain influence.

Among the classic themes that are treated one finds them freely changed to suit Anouilh's purposes. In the ancient tragedy the important feature was the fact that events were already decided and that the characters merely fulfilled the roles assigned to them. There was no question of faith--the fates were decided. In the present plays this is just the contrary. The characters are in search of a truth that will aid them in deciding their own fates. Likewise noteworthy in this respect is the reversal of personality on the part of the modern characters. In Antigone Créon is now the reasoner and Antigone the person whose arguments are weak. In Médée Jason is no longer the sinner but the one

sinned against. In Eurydice Orphée is no longer the one whose love conquers all but is the one whose love is altered by circumstances. These then are the most noteworthy changes.

In the well-known dramatic literature used as sources the main outline of the plots have been followed. An exception is Roméo et Jeannette in which the title is indicative that it does not follow too closely Shakespeare's work. Perhaps the statement of Gabriel Marcel explains the distinction:

"Jean Anouilh, with whose Antigone the New York public is acquainted, has had a play at the Atelier entitled Roméo et Jeannette which follows the exact pattern of all his previous work in the theatre. Why this strange title? Because, although Frédéric, the hero, a simple provincial boy destined to be notary in a Breton town, has all the romanticism of his Shakespearean predecessor, there is not the slightest resemblance between his beloved and Juliet."¹

There are other similarities in the two plays. In both there is the family antagonism. In Romeo and Juliet it is based on an old family feud whereas in Anouilh's play it is based on the social differences of the two families and their mental outlook toward life. At the beginning of each play the heroes are in love with a different woman, and in both cases they are

¹ Gabriel Marcel, "In Love With Death," Theatre Arts, 29 (May, 1947), 44.

relatives. Both heroes fall immediately and hopelessly in love. Each set of lovers tries to escape in order to keep their love and in the end commit suicide. Up to this point they are quite similar in plot but a synopsis of the modern drama shows many differences.

Frédéric, engaged to Julia, goes with his mother to visit Julia's parents. Upon arrival they find that each member of the family, unwilling to do the work necessary for a nice reception, has left the work of cleaning the house, buying food, etc. up to the other members of the family. That evening while Julia and Frédéric's mother clean the dishes and the kitchen Jeannette and Frédéric sit in the dark and talk.

A telegram for Jeannette arrives and she tears it up without opening it. She explains to Frédéric that it is from her lover begging her not to quit him. She further explains that she is suddenly ashamed of all her past affairs because she had not known that she would some day meet a man whom she really loved. Each, sure of the other's love, talks freely about what they should do. They decide to leave but first tell Julia, who defends herself by revealing all the nasty secrets of Jeannette's past. Jeannette had been ashamed of her actions but Julia's efforts to blacken her relieve her conscience.

Taking shelter from the rain as they trudge toward

the station Frédéric and Jeannette enter a shed in the woods. There Jeannette decides to beautify herself for Frédéric's sake. She puts on a white wedding gown bought for her by Azarias, her former lover. Feeling guilty she lies to Frédéric and tells him that she had bought the gown with money that she had earned. Aware that he knows that she is lying she then tells him that she had stolen and sold her father's silver in order to get the money to buy it. Lucien, her brother, enters with a veil that had been given to him by Azarias, who is standing outside the shed in the rain. It is the rest of the wedding dress. As Lucien explains about women's lies the postman arrives telling them that Julia has taken poison. Lucien leaves taking Frédéric with him. Jeannette, losing faith in her ability to be the kind of wife that Frédéric needs, asks Azarias to come into the shed.

Jeannette marries Azarias and taunts Frédéric by arranging the festivities so that they can be heard from his dwelling. Upon Julia's recovery Frédéric, his mother and Julia prepare to return home. As they are preparing to leave, Jeannette comes to see Frédéric and to explain to him why she had left him. She explains that she doubted her ability always to tell the truth and live a good decent life like his. She asks him to commit suicide with her. He refuses.

As the family crosses the beach on the road home they see Jeannette in the bay. Frédéric runs to join her and he and Jeannette stand as the sea covers them.

An interesting thought is that Jeannette, Gabriel Marcel to the contrary, had a love as deep and honest as that of Julia, despite the fact that she came from a much lower social level. In each case the thing that they mistrusted was the past.

Médée follows much more closely the ancient plot. Jason, in the version by Eurypides, is a wife deserter, whereas in the modern version he is fleeing from a woman who tries to lead him into a life of crime. As sketched by Eurypides he is a man willing to abandon life and family for personal gain while using the excuse that in marrying Créuse he is providing for the future of his children. The fact that he is willing to desert his children if Médée continues her antagonism disproves this. Créuse likewise is not a sympathetic character in the older piece. She is willing to accept the children because they are bearing presents and not because of any love for them. Médée, on the other hand, is sympathetic until the end of the play. Her murder of Créon and Créuse seems not unreasonable for a woman scorned. It is only with the death of her children that she loses support. In the modern counterpart almost all this is reversed but the essence is retained. Jason is

not a deserter but a man trying to escape a vicious woman. Créuse wants the children as does Jason. Médée is willing to sacrifice anything that crosses her. The essential difference in the two plays however is the fact that the Greek divine law is removed as the force motivating the actions of the characters as is the high moral purpose which forms the crux of the conflict. Replacing it is the struggle motivated by the opposition of selfish individualism to a social conscience, represented by Jason.

In the Antigone of Anouilh the opposition is one of materialism contrasted with a spiritual search for the truth. Créon, representing materialism, is a reasonable man who tries to influence Antigone, whereas his counterpart condemns her almost at once. However the Créon of Sophocles does not condemn her to death but rather to be walled up, leaving her fate to the gods. By this action he hopes to wash his hands of the whole thing, a direct contrast to the king presented here who assumes responsibility for his actions. At the conclusion of Sophocles's play, after the oracle's warning, he tries to repent his actions and buries Polynices and attempts to save Antigone. Too late he finds her dead along with his son and wife. Seeing everything fail he realizes that he is condemned by fate and leaves the stage a broken man. The modern Créon

accepts the deaths philosophically and leaves, secure in the knowledge that he has done what he thought best and certain of the necessity for his actions.

The myth of Eurydice, not as fully exploited as the other plays of classical title, is better treated in relation to the myth. In it one again observes the change of personality mentioned before. Orphée is now a lover who doubts and looks back because of his doubts. The ancient Orphée looked back because of the fact that his love was too strong. Other changes include the modernization of the myth. In the modern play Eurydice is killed in a wreck and not bitten by a serpent, Hades is transformed into a railway station and most of the characters are now human beings. No longer can the Erinyes remind the dead of their crimes and faults; there is only oblivion.

The only modern work of unquestionable influence is the Siegfried of Giraudoux. "Mais il (Anouilh) laissait entendre...qu'il avait eu sa véritable révélation devant le Siegfried of Giraudoux."² Siegfried is the story of a man suffering from amnesia who finds that previous to the war he had been a Frenchman. As he is a famous German statesman the importance of his past is obvious.

² Paul Arnold, "Jean Anouilh ou le Sauvage," Théâtre, Vol. III, p. 152.

The essential difference between this play and Anouilh's Le Voyageur sans bagage is the fact that in Siegfried there is an acceptance of an illustrious past and a correlation of it with the present. Except for the use of a man with amnesia, whose past is in conflict with the present, as the main character, Anouilh's play is completely different from that of Giraudoux.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

An appraisal of the work of Jean Anouilh reveals that the author is a creator of vivid drama and of forceful characterization. It also reveals a weakness common to many works of a creative type in which a system is offered; the system and the plot, although not incompatible, tend to detract from the work. This is mainly true in relation to the author's total work. In it one finds that the attempt to outline more clearly the philosophy offered results in a certain repetition of ideas. Although the plays individually are worthy, the continual reiteration types the author, just as Maeterlinck for example is typed. However, if M. Anouilh's statement that his life is resumed in his works is true, one may presume that with Médée the author has begun a new approach to his drama. Already an outstanding dramatist of his generation he can lose nothing by the change, if one is taking place.

Perhaps the most valid criticism of the works which he has completed to date is contained in the following:

"Elle est le cri sincère et vain d'intellectuels incapables de se résoudre à comprendre qu'assez longtemps la pensée a contemplé le monde et qu'il

est temps pour elle de le transformer. Malgré des mérites esthétiques qu'il serait dérisoire de nier, l'oeuvre d'Anouilh débouche sur une solitude inhumaine".¹

¹ Gilbert Mury, "Pièces roses et pièces noires," France d'abord, (January 2, 1946), 9.

STRATHMORE PARCHMENT

100% RAG U.S.A.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Primary Sources)

- Anouilh, Jean. Nouvelles Pièces Noires. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1946.
- Anouilh, Jean. Pièces Noires. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1945.
- Anouilh, Jean. Pièces Roses. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1942.
- Anouilh, Jean. "Y avait un prisonnier." La petite illustration, 724 (May 18, 1935), 100-135.
- Anouilh, Jean. "Humulus le Muet." Jeux dramatiques pour la jeunesse. Edited by Bordas. Paris: 1945.
- Eurypides. Medea. Notes by Gilbert Murray. New York: Oxford University Press, 1912.
- Giraudoux, Jean. Siegfried. Paris: Bernard Grosset, 1928.
- Shakespeare, William. Romeo and Juliet. Edited by W. A. Neilson. Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1906.
- Sophocles. Antigone. Introduction by Edward Brooks. Philadelphia: McKay Publishing Company, 1897.

(Secondary Sources)

- Bauer, Gerard. "Le Théâtre." Les Annales politiques et littéraires, 98 (May 15, 1932), 439.
- Beauplan, Robert de. "Y avait un prisonnier." La petite illustration, 724 (May 18, 1935), 100-135.
- Beauplan, Robert de. "Les Théâtres." L'illustration, 199 (January 22, 1938), 94.
- Beauplan, Robert de. "Les Théâtres." L'illustration, 207 (December 14, 1940), 401.
- Bellessort, André. "La Semaine Dramatique." Journal des Débats, 39 (May 6, 1932), 723-725.

- Berry, Edmund G. "Antigone and the French Resistance." The Classical Journal, 42 (October, 1946), 17-18.
- Blanchart, Paul. "Jean Anouilh ou le Sauvage." Théâtre, Vol. III, Paris: Editions du Pavoie, 1946. pp. 151-199.
- Bonnes, Jean-Paul. "L'Antigone de Jean Anouilh." La Revue Nouvelle, (June 19, 1946).
- Brasillach, Robert. "Jean Anouilh ou le mythe du Baptême." Les Quatres Jedis. Paris: Editions Balzac, 1944.
- Chastaing, Maxime. "Jean Anouilh ou le théâtre de la pureté." Jeux et Poesie. Lyon: Les Editions de l'Abeille, 1945 (3e serie).
- Colette, Mme. "Y avait un prisonnier." La Jumelle Noire, Vol. II. Paris: Editions Ferenczi, 1938. pp. 219-225.
- Colette, Mme. "Le Voyageur sans bagage." La Jumelle Noire, Vol. IV. Paris: Editions Ferenczi, 1938. pp. 121-125.
- Coquet, James de. "Le Théâtre." Les Annales Politiques et Litteraires, 105 (April 10, 1935), 350-356.
- Croix-Laval, A. de la. "Le mystère de Jean Anouilh." Etudes. (December, 1945).
- Deutsch, Rosamund E. "Anouilh's Antigone." Classical Journal, (October, 1946), 14-17.
- Franck, André. "Le Théâtre d'aujourd'hui: Jean Anouilh." Les Nouvelles Litteraires, (January 10, 1940).
- Gaillard, Pol. "Pièces Noires." La Pensée, I (nouvelle serie, octobre-novembre-decembre 1944).
- Gaillard, Robert. "Réflexions sur l'Antigone de Jean Anouilh." Cassandra, (May 21, 1944).
- Gassner, John. "The Theatre Arts." Forum, 105 (April, 1946), 751.
- Gignoux, Hubert. Jean Anouilh. Paris: Editions du Temps Present, 1946.
- Huisman, Georges. "Sur l'oeuvre de Jean Anouilh." La France au Combat, (September 20, 1945).
- Lièvre, P. "Théâtre." Mercure de France, 242 (February 15, 1933), 148-150.

- Linforth, Ivan M. The Arts of Orpheus. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941.
- Marcel, Gabriel. "In Love With Death." Theatre Arts, 29 (May, 1947), 44-45.
- Mury, Gilbert. "Pièces roses et pièces noires." France d'abord, (January 2, 1946), 9.
- Phelan, Kappo. "Antigone." The Commonweal, 43 (March 8, 1946), 525-526.
- Pillement, Georges. "Notice sur Jean Anouilh." Anthologie du Théâtre contemporain. pp. 424-428.
- Quéant, Olivier. "Le oui et le non." Images de France, (April, 1944).
- Rageot, Gaston. "Du Neuf, Du Vieux et Du Vieux Neuf." Revue Politique et Littéraire, 76 (February, 1938), 73-74.
- Rageot, Gaston. "Un Nouvel Auteur Dramatique." Revue Politique et Littéraire, 70 (May 21, 1932), 315-317.
- Verrier, Charles Le. "Mandarine." Eur Nouv, 16 (January 28, 1933), 88-89.

STRATHMORE PARCHMENT

100% RAG U.S.A.

Typist:

Mrs. Jim R. Terry