

PIRANDELLO'S INFLUENCE ON

JEAN ANOUILH

PIRANDELLO'S INFLUENCE ON JEAN ANOUILH  
AS SEEN IN THE PIECES GRINGANTES AND ANOUILH'S LATER PLAYS

by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The purpose of this paper will be to examine the influence of Luigi Pirandello's works on the theatre of Jean Anouilh. In our presentation of Pirandello's concepts and techniques, examples will be chosen only from those plays that have been staged in Paris, as these would be most likely to have had an influence on the French dramatist. In Jean Anouilh's case, by far the greatest emphasis will be placed on the Pièces grinçantes and on his later plays that, because of their particular vision of life, could be considered as an imaginary Nouvelles pièces grinçantes. In this last group we list La Grotte, Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté, Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron, and Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père ce héros.

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Io non posso ritrar di tutti a pieno,  
però che si mi caccia il lungo tema,  
che molte volte al fatto il dir vien meno.

Inferno IV, 145-147.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I      -    AN OUTLINE OF PIRANDELLO'S <u>DEBUTS</u> IN FRANCE	8
Notes to Chapter I	19
CHAPTER II     -    AN OUTLINE OF PIRANDELLO'S DRAMATIC THEMES AND TECHNIQUE	22
Notes to Chapter II	40
CHAPTER III    -    ANOUILH'S USAGE OF PIRANDELLIAN THEMES	44
Notes to Chapter III	68
CHAPTER IV     -    ANOUILH'S USAGE OF PIRANDELLIAN TECHNIQUES	70
Notes to Chapter IV	88
CONCLUSION	91
APPENDIX I     -    CHRONOLOGY OF PIRANDELLO'S PLAYS IN FRANCE	95
APPENDIX II    -    CHRONOLOGY OF ANOUILH'S PLAYS	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY	104

## INTRODUCTION

Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936), winner of the Nobel Prize for literature (1934), is considered along with Ibsen, Strindberg and Shaw to be "among the creators of contemporary theatre".<sup>1</sup> Einstein's contributions to science and Freud's to psychology are reflected by Pirandello in the theatre,<sup>2</sup> for the Italian dramatist assimilated the concepts on relativity and the probings of human personality, which were both at the forefront of thought at the turn of the century, and presented them in a visual manner on the stage. With the further assistance of philosophers such as the German Schopenhauer and the French Bergson, he developed a vision du monde, a philosophy in the loosest sense of the word, which was based on the relativity of all things, the unfathomable multiplicity of personality, and a mute scepticism that had an intimate relationship to an overall sentiment of pessimism.<sup>3</sup>

In the years following the First World War, Pirandello's plays began to attract an enormous amount of attention, both at home and abroad. In France the word pirandellisme was coined to denote what at the time seemed to be Pirandello's philosophy. As the years passed, in spite of the vicissitudes due to changing attitudes, Pirandello still remained a force within the theatre, attracting admiration, criticism and, most important, the attention of new generations of dramatists. It is in these new writers that the

true impact of his literary corpus is to be detected, for here his ideas and techniques are kept alive, expanded and developed. From the existentialist dramas of Sartre or Camus, even to the Theatre of the Absurd of Beckett, Ionesco and Salacrou, the influences of Pirandello are detectable.<sup>4</sup> In France, the author who most readily reveals his debts to Pirandello is, without any doubt, Jean Anouilh. The ideas and the techniques of Luigi Pirandello seem to have had their greatest impact on the theatre of this versatile, retiring dramatist.

Anouilh's formative years coincide with the inter-war period that saw the meteoric rise to fame of Luigi Pirandello. In the early 1920's, in fact, Anouilh was very much involved in the dramatic circles of the French capital; as Louis Jouvet's secretary and through the director's own affiliation with the Cartel des Quatre, Anouilh had direct contact with events on the Parisian stage. For this reason, Pirandello's impact on the theatre of the times touched the young French dramatist in a very personal and powerful manner, leaving an impression that was never to be forgotten. Many years later, speaking of the theatrical importance of En attendant Godot, Anouilh compares it to that of Pirandello's Six personnages en quête d'auteur, which he sees as the turning point of modern drama.<sup>5</sup> He even goes as far as to say that he experienced only two shocks in the theatre; the first when Pirandello in Six

personnages en quête d'auteur broke with the tradition of storytelling, the second when Beckett in En attendant Godot broke with the idea of theatre as entertainment for man.

6

Aside from influence incurred from such a direct confrontation with the original event, there is an indirect impact to be detected through the association of Anouilh with directors that had personally been involved with Pirandello's Parisian presentations. Dullin and Pitoëff were the first to produce Pirandello's plays in France; as members of the Cartel des Quatre, to which Juvet belonged, they had contacts with Anouilh. Didier recognises the importance of these two metteurs en scène in giving to Anouilh the special feeling for the theatre and for its writers that only a truly artistic director can convey:

"Charles Dullin et Georges Pitoëff, qui l'accueillirent en leurs théâtres, eurent, eux aussi, une grande influence sur Jean Anouilh. En lui donnant asile aux Arts, aux Mathurins et à l'Atelier, ils le faisaient entrer dans la galerie des auteurs qu'ils aimaient servir, par l'apport de leur mise en scène, parce qu'ils représentaient pour eux la forme la plus accomplie du théâtre."<sup>7</sup>

As a result of direct and indirect influences, Pirandello left his imprint on Jean Anouilh. Innumerable critics and scholars have mentioned this fact; only a small number of them however has presented it in a careful, detailed examination. Among the first we note Alba-Maria della Fazio who wrote her Ph. D. dissertation on the subject "Luigi Pirandello and Jean Anouilh" (1954), and later submitted an article which was an updated résumé of her previous work ("Pirandello and his French Echo, Anouilh", Modern Drama, VI

(1963-1964), 346-367). Thomas Bishop, in his book Pirandello and the French Theater (New York: New York University Press, 1960), devotes several pages to a study of the Italian dramatist's influences on Jean Anouilh (pp.108-119). In his article "Pirandello et la dramaturgie française contemporaine", (Atti del congresso internazionale degli studi pirandelliani, Firenze: le Monnier, 1967, pp.51-73), Bernard Dort also mentions Anouilh, but the brevity of the entire article, which forecloses a proper consideration of the subject, in turn does very little justice to Anouilh.

It seems that a detailed study of Pirandellian influences present in Jean Anouilh has not been carried out since della Fazio's dissertation twenty years ago. This is indeed a sad state of affairs which ought to be remedied, especially in view of the numerous plays that Anouilh has written since that date, and in view of Fletcher's classification of Anouilh's post-1960 writings as his <sup>8</sup> Pirandellian period. For this reason this thesis will attempt to examine Pirandello's influences on Jean Anouilh with particular emphasis on the Pièces grinçantes and on the later plays which could be seen as an imaginary Nouvelles pièces grinçantes. Among these we list the following for their particular vision of a world where illusion and reality meet in a jarring clash: La Grotte, Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté, Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron, Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père ce héros.

Clearly, an exhaustive study of even this small number of



plays would require a much lengthier and more repetitive examination than it is possible for us to undertake in this thesis. Discarding the exhaustive study, we have chosen to select those examples which appear to us to be the most rewarding for a comparative examination of the two writers whilst at the same time offering a clear demonstration, by way of their recurrence, of the debt that Anouilh's works owe to the Italian dramatist, both in the ideas that they contain and the techniques on which their dramatic effectiveness relies.

With this in mind, the thesis has been divided into four chapters: the first deals with Pirandello's débuts in France, in translations and articles at first, and in theatrical presentations later. The impact of Dullin and Pitoëff will be of particular interest, along with the vicissitudes of Pirandello in the popular press. It is these three, in fact, that would have been of particular interest to Anouilh himself, the first two as constructive assistance in the writing of plays, the third as a factual understanding of the fickle reality of dramatic criticism. The second chapter will present the main concepts of Pirandello's thought and technique as they are reflected in the plays that were performed in France. The third chapter will turn to Anouilh's plays and examine those thematic concepts which would appear to be related to Pirandello's thought as outlined in the previous chapter. The reflection in Anouilh of Pirandello's technique will be studied in the fourth chapter. Two appendices are included to provide the reader with

up-to-date lists of the first performances in Paris of Pirandello's and Anouilh's plays. It is hoped that this documentation will prove both useful and informative to the reader.

### Notes for the Introduction

<sup>1</sup>Martin Esslin, Reflections. Essays on Modern Theatre (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1971), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 47, and Lander MacClintock, The Age of Pirandello (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1951), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>see Gilbert Bosetti, Pirandello (Paris: Bordas, 1971), pp. 186-214.

<sup>4</sup>see Bernard Dort, "Pirandello et la dramaturgie française contemporaine", Atti del congresso internazionale degli studi pirandelliani (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1967), pp. 52-72.

<sup>5</sup>Jean Anouilh, "Du chapitre des chaises" in Pol Vandromme Jean Anouilh. Un auteur et ses personnages (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1965), p. 232.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph Barry, "A Walk and a Talk with Jean Anouilh", New York Times (Sept. 13, 1964), Section 2, pp. 1,5.

<sup>7</sup>Jean Didier, Jean Anouilh (Liège: Editions de la sixaine, 1946), pp. 45-46.

<sup>8</sup>John Fletcher ed., Forces in Modern French Drama (New York: Fredrick Ungar, 1972), p. 105.

# I

## AN OUTLINE OF PIRANDELLO'S DEBUTS IN FRANCE

Pirandello, who in Italy had established quite a solid reputation, was, by the early twenties, still relatively unknown in France. "Des comptes rendus élogieux à son endroit", which he had received as early as 1904 in two articles, one by F. Gaeta on Bianche e Nere (La Critique internationale, May 1904) and the other by M. Muret on Il fu Mattia Pascal (La Renaissance latine, December 15, 1904), had failed to raise<sup>1</sup> much interest. His novel Il fu Mattia Pascal, translated in 1909 by Eugène Bigot (Paris: Calmann-Lévy), had not had a noticeable impact. In December of the same year, Benjamin Crémieux wrote his first article on Pirandello, exposing the Sicilian's theories on l'umorismo. From that year to 1922 Crémieux translated and published approximately<sup>2</sup> fifteen of Pirandello's short stories. Antoine claims to have spoken<sup>3</sup> of him in 1921, but apparently that too went unnoticed. It was Benjamin Crémieux's article on Pirandello's theatre (Revue de France, August 15, 1922) which first induced, in France, a more careful examination of Pirandello's writings. Still, while Pirandello's plays were being acclaimed in Italy, England, Germany and the United States,

"seule la France restait à l'écart, indifférente, ou, plus exactement, dans l'ignorance complète de ce phénomène théâtral. Les rares articles consacrés au Sicilien n'avaient intéressé que des cénacles littéraires".<sup>4</sup>

The full attention of the French public and literary world was finally focused upon Pirandello by the first performances in Paris of his

theatrical works. The impact of his plays was such that, to this day, the French consider him a dramatist and tend to overlook his extensive output of short stories, his seven novels, his essays and his poetry. The plays, although they compose only one third of Pirandello's writings (Mondadori collects them in two of the six volumes that hold Pirandello's works) are by far the most important aspect of his creative output. Jean-Michel Gardair states:

"Certes il y a tout lieu de penser que le 'vrai' Pirandello --fût-il multiple--est celui du théâtre." <sup>5</sup>

The emphasis on the theatre is related to the influence of the first producers of Pirandello's plays; Charles Dullin and Georges Pitoëff. These two metteurs en scène play a very important role in establishing Pirandello's reputation in France during the inter-war period. They approached and presented the Sicilian's plays in two completely diverse, if not opposing fashions.

As a result of an automobile accident which indisposed Ludmilla Pitoëff for several months, and thus delayed the première of Six Personnages en quête d'auteur, Dullin was the first to stage a Pirandello play in Paris. He had recently opened the Théâtre de L'Atelier and was therefore looking for a bright play which, coupled with Cocteau's Antigone, would help establish his theatre. After a series of Spanish plays he felt that an Italian one, by Giovanni Verga perhaps, would be suitable and turned to Mme Camille Mallarmé for a suggestion; she proposed Pirandello's La Volupté de l'honneur and Dullin, who knew nothing of the Sicilian writer, soon agreed wholeheartedly. Dullin recalls:

"Je savais peu de chose sur ce Pirandello [. . .] je me mis à construire un certain Pirandello, un Pirandello qui répondait à la fascination qu'avait exercée sur toute ma jeunesse l'Italie, et tout ce qui venait de l'Italie, et l'Italie, mon Italie, mon Italie à moi, je me l'étais construite d'après les charbonniers qui travaillaient dans la montagne." <sup>6</sup>

In a somewhat simplistic view of things, he seized only the comical, lighter aspects of the play and thus presented a rather superficial, one-sided interpretation.

"Pour [Dullin] cette pièce latine lui paraît bouffonne et devoir [sic] être jouée dans le mouvement de la commedia dell'arte. Il néglige ou minimise la résonance morale ou la portée philosophique de la pièce."

Fifteen years after this first performance, in spite of the philosophical and moral overtones seen and presented by other producers, Dullin still considered Pirandello as a writer of genial comedies very much akin to the commedia dell'arte:

"Ce qui est nouveau chez Pirandello, c'est la faculté d'incarner de subtiles spéculations de l'esprit dans des personnages de la lignée de Truffaldin. Tout ce théâtre n'est qu'une satire de la petite bourgeoisie de l'époque. La vie est celle de la commedia dell'arte." <sup>8</sup>

The critics' reaction to the first performance were varied, <sup>9</sup> though generally somewhat cool. François Mauriac, though seeing Pirandello as a weak dramatist, calls him an "esprit délié, insinuant, dangereux". Antoine seizes the importance of Pirandello's special brand of humour and seeks to define it. G. de Pawlowsky is the first of the critics to perceive a dual nature in Pirandello's plays, which he sees as "comédies à deux étages superposés, l'un pour l'élite, l'autre <sup>10</sup> pour le vulgaire". Dullin had obviously seen only one of these étages. His interpretation, based on the comical aspects of the play, its Sicilian flavour and commedia dell'arte elements (all undeniably present

in Pirandello's work) led to his treating it as théâtre d'action.<sup>11</sup>

It is not at all surprising that Dullin should interpret Pirandello in such a vein; he knew little or nothing of contemporary Italian theatre,<sup>12</sup> he was, as has been mentioned, looking for a bright play and lastly he was at this time very much interested in the commedia dell'arte.<sup>13</sup> Dullin, in his daily encounters with the Russian dramatist and theorist Nicolaj Evreinov, must have discussed at length the latter's concepts on improvisation (which were very much indebted to the commedia dell'arte), as well as the representations given in pre-revolutionary Russia by the Italian troupes still active there. This seems pertinent, as Mme Lelièvre indicates, to the similarities<sup>14</sup> between Dullin's théâtre-jeu and Evreinov's theories.

Dullin, faced with a play by an unknown Italian author where there are undeniable commedia dell'arte overtones, must have rejoiced at the possibility of putting into practice the ideas he had discussed with Evreinov. Dullin's seeking to make Pirandello accessible to a broad section of the public and his desire to experiment with new ideas should not be considered the only reasons for the one-sided interpretation. The nature of the play itself and the circumstances of its presentation are also significant:

" [Mme Mallarmé] avait choisi cette comédie de caractères comme plus accessible à tous, et plus proche de nos habitudes dramatiques tout en étant très caractéristique de Pirandello. Peut-être aussi le fait que la place accordée à la théorie est moindre dans cette pièce que dans beaucoup d'autres l'y avait-il incitée. Bref, plutôt que de choisir une oeuvre qui fût scandale, elle avait préféré une oeuvre originale et accessible."<sup>15</sup>

Only four months after Dullin's first staging of La Volupté de l'honneur, Georges Pitoëff presented the Parisian public with a Pirandello play which certainly did have the tendency to scandal which Mme Mallarmé had taken pains to avoid. Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore had acquired such a reputation when in Rome

"La prima rappresentazione di questa 'commedia da fare' suscitò contrasti nel pubblico, che si sentì beffato. Il contenuto scandaloso e immorale, diede buona esca ai paladini della morale, ed ai critici." <sup>16</sup>

In France, this play did not seem to have auspicious beginnings; rejected at first by Jacques Copeau and Jules Romains, readers for the Vieux Colombier, it was then enthusiastically accepted by Georges Pitoëff who, however, had to overcome his own actors' lack of interest for it. His conviction gaining strength because of the opposition of others, Pitoëff created a mise en scène which was, to say the least, electrifying: lights, machinery, tone, atmosphere and interpretation, all combined to produce a great impact. Mme Lelièvre points out that Pirandello's success owed something to this careful staging:

"Quant à la pièce qui imposera Pirandello en France, tout autant qu'à sa valeur dramatique, elle devra une partie de son succès à l'étrangeté de la mise en scène imaginée par Pitoëff." <sup>17</sup>

Years after this production of Six personnages en quête d'auteur, many will recall it vividly; speaking of the six characters' appearance on stage, Lenormand recalls:

"La mise en scène en est apparemment inexistante, puisque le drame se déroule sur le plateau d'un théâtre. Mais les éclairages, les groupements, les entrées et les sorties des acteurs, agencés par Pitoëff avec un raffinement extrême, donnait à chaque acte une atmosphère différente. L'apparition



des personnages irréels était devenue, avec lui, un moment d'une étrangeté solennelle. [. . .] Livides sous la lumière verte, le père, la mère, et leurs quatre enfants surgissaient lentement des profondeurs de l'Erêbe théâtral et s'avançaient vers les vivants stupéfaits. L'impression égalait en force et en épouvante certains moments de la tragédie grecque." <sup>18</sup>

Brisson, just as many years after the production, recalls the event in terms similar to Lenormand's. <sup>19</sup>

Apart from using the technical resources of the theatre to his best advantage, Pitoëff had accentuated the tragic and philosophical aspects of Pirandello's work. Del Litto, making a contrast with Dullin's interpretation, calls this a théâtre d'idées. The critics of the time would certainly have agreed; although they each saw the play as representative of a different idea, they conformed in their perception that there was philosophical depth present. <sup>20</sup> The ambivalence first detected by G. de Pawlowsky now seemed to be even more complex, which is more reflective of Pirandello's thoughts. Crémieux envisioned further possible interpretations: <sup>21</sup>

"Encore M. Pitoëff a-t-il répandu parmi la pièce une atmosphère ibsenienne, si l'on peut dire, qui n'est peut-être pas dans l'originale. J'imagine que l'on pourrait jouer le Père, qui non content de vivre le drame pour sa part est encore obligé d'en faire le commentaire général dans un mouvement plus rapide et moins uniformément douloureux." <sup>22</sup>

Such diversity will be stressed two years later, in July 1925, when Pirandello will bring his own troupe to Paris and present yet another possible version of his plays. <sup>23</sup>

In France, Pitoëff soon became the director par excellence of Pirandello's plays; his approach to them was one of the major forces which structured le pirandellisme. Lenormand reports: "Pirandello

m'a dit un jour -- Pitoëff a appris aux comédiens de mon pays à jouer  
 24  
 mes pièces". The intuitive understanding which seemed to exist between  
 the Italian dramatist and the Russian director is seen by Lenormand  
 in the following terms:

"Le Sicilien réaliste est aussi un visionnaire que hantent les  
 vieux rêves nordiques, les questions sans réponses autour  
 desquelles gravite la dramaturgie ibsenienne. L'homme  
 psychologique est, à chaque instant, transcendé par l'angoisse  
 métaphysique. Et ce pathétique de la destinée, cette interrogation  
 constante des forces qui dominent la marionnette humaine et la  
 conduisent, devenaient perceptibles avec Pitoëff. Il était  
 naturel que Pirandello fût heureux de se sentir compris dans le  
 secret de ses intentions les moins explicites." 25

Because of this the names of Pitoëff and Pirandello have become, in the  
 French theatre, so linked together that as late as 1967 del Litto finds  
 it necessary to say:

"Certes il n'est pas question de contester l'enrichissement  
 qui a pu venir à Pirandello des Pitoëff, mais il est certainement  
 question de contester cette mainmise, cette espèce d'appropriation  
 de Pirandello par les Pitoëff, et par leur courte époque.  
 Pourquoi, au nom de quoi, veut-on que les Pitoëff soient  
 Pirandello et que Pirandello n'existe pas en dehors des Pitoëff?" 26

The immediate success which Pirandello enjoyed thanks to the Pitoëffs  
 was soon to backfire. The growing number of productions of his plays  
 only accentuated the feeling of satiety which enveloped the critics and  
 the public. This was perhaps a natural, general reaction to the  
 meteoric appearance of a new dramatist; from one extreme, the pendulum  
 was now swinging to the other. Other factors, however, were also  
 active in this reversal of fortunes. Because of a rather superficial  
 appreciation of Pirandello's thought, the public noticed only those  
 conventional aspects which had been labelled pirandellisme. Every new  
 play could be seen as a re-application of these same techniques and

concepts, clichés leading to a uniformity which bordered on the tedious:

"le reproche le plus fréquent est celui de monotonie. Monotonie dans les effets, à l'intérieur de la pièce (et le jeu de Pitoëff le souligne), monotonie d'une pièce à l'autre, à la fois dans le sujet et la construction." 27

This was aggravated by the confusion in approaches; Dullin's lighter style was the opposite of Pitoëff's tragi-philosophical manner, which, in turn, was not at all similar to Pirandello's own productions during the 1925 tour. Having learnt little from Chacun sa vérité, the Parisian critics still sought to establish which interpretation was the "correct" one and, in their inability to reach a definite conclusion,<sup>28</sup> became irritated with the author.

Furthermore the political situation of the times was unfavourable; the rise of fascism created a tense, suspicious atmosphere in which Italian productions soon became inevitably immersed. In Italy, Matteotti had been assassinated, the regime was securing its hold on the nation,<sup>29</sup> Pirandello had openly declared his support of Mussolini. In France the dramatic critics divided along political lines; Lucien Dubech, writing in the pro-fascist publication L'Action Française completely reversed his stand from the time of his first devastating review of La Volupté de l'honneur and became one of Pirandello's unquestioning admirers. At the première of Chacun sa vérité, the political factors were as evident as daylight:

"Pour la première de Chacun sa vérité, le grand public comme les snobs envahissent l'Atelier. Mais ici un nouvel élément apparaît qui sera une nouvelle source de polémiques; tout le Paris officiel est là: Edouard Herriot, président du conseil, Camille Chautemps, l'Ambassade de l'Italie au grand complet.

Pirandello aussi est présent. C'est la conjoncture politique qui exerce son influence sur un terrain qui aurait dû rester neutre." 30

The presence of the president necessitated the cancellation of the sketch L'Imbécile that was to open the programme; it was feared that the blatant allusions might spark disturbances in the house.

Pirandello's fortunes in France began to collapse at an alarming rate. Madame Simone's second-rate and hasty production of Vêtir ceux qui sont nus (Feb. 19, 1925) had unfortunately enough detrimental repercussions on Pitoëff's production, only five days later, of Henri IV. Satiety, political considerations and a mediocre performance had by now induced the critics to consider Pirandello as passé. The following seasons Pitoëff continued to present the Sicilian's plays although, as Lenormand indicates, they could not be guaranteed a favourable reception:

"Ce soir on improvise ne valait pas les Six personnages et le temps n'était plus où le nom de Pirandello suffisait à faire accourir la foule. C'est une préférence d'artiste et non un calcul de directeur qui incita Georges à monter tant de pièces de lui." 31

What are generally recognized as Pirandello's best plays had by now been presented. The new plays, which did not compare with the earlier productions, accelerated the

"mouvement de lassitude et de désaffection [qui] s'était dessiné en France à l'égard de Pirandello. On ne voulait plus voir en lui qu'un rusé prestidigitateur, un amuseur supérieur qui aurait pipé ses dés." 32

Critics, however, cannot always dictate reaction, and Pirandello continued to enjoy strong support among the spectators who still came to see his plays. In a letter to Silvio D'Amico (dated in 1927),

Pirandello writes:

"Mon succès et mon renom mondial n'ont nullement commencé le jour où la critique dramatique découvre, ou croit découvrir, mon idéologie, mais le jour où le 'Stage Society' de Londres et le 'Pemberton' de New York, sans rien savoir de mon idéologie, représentent Six personnages en quête d'auteur et qu'à New York le spectacle tient l'affiche onze mois de suite; le jour où à Paris on donne les Six personnages pendant une année entière à la 'Comédie des Champs-Élysées'." 33

World-wide recognition kept growing. In 1934 Pirandello received the Nobel Prize for literature. In France he was officially recognized as a great dramatist when, in January 1935, the title of Officer of the Legion of Honour was conferred upon him. The critics who had at first praised him and then attacked him, now changed their views again and examined his work in a more benign mood. During a soirée de gala in honour of Pirandello, the Pitoëff company gave a performance of Ce soir on improvise that the dramatic press reviewed quite favourably. In March 1937, one year after Pirandello's death, Chacun sa vérité was entered in the repertory of the Comédie Française, thereby placing him officially among the great dramatists of past times.

Since then, Pirandello has remained a popular dramatist on the French stage. His plays are being staged by avant-garde and traditionalist companies alike, writers freely admit being influenced by him, and scholars show a renewed interest that now encompasses a fuller and deeper understanding of his works. Along these lines del Litto suggests:

"C'est maintenant peut-être que le vrai Pirandello est en train de se révéler et de délivrer son vrai message: celui sur qui est fondé pour une grande partie le théâtre contemporain." 38

This resurgence in fortunes must have a familiar ring to Jean Anouilh who, to this day, recalls Pirandello's first meteoric rise to fame. At that time, Anouilh was closely associated with the Parisian dramatic circles. He was Juvet's secretary and as such must have had close ties with the other members of the Cartel des Quatres (i.e. Pitoëff, Dullin and Baty). In such a closely-knit group, which included both producers of Pirandello's plays, Pirandellian themes and techniques would have received far greater appreciation than was granted to them by the newspaper critics. The vicissitudes of Pirandello in the popular press would also have had repercussions on Anouilh and the Cartel (which, it must be kept in mind, was formed to off-set the possible negative influences of unfavourable critics). In this group, therefore, Pirandello would have remained an active force, directly moulding the future dramatists, actors and producers that trace their lineage to this era. Anouilh is undeniably one of them.

## Notes to Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>Renée Lefièvre, Le Théâtre dramatique italien en France 1855-1940 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1959), p. 407.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 408.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 409.

<sup>4</sup>Camille Mallarmé, "Comment Luigi Pirandello fut révélé au public parisien le 20 décembre 1922", Revue de l'histoire du théâtre, I (1955), 9.

<sup>5</sup>Jean-Michel Gardair, Pirandello, fantasmes et logic du double (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1972), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Dullin, Ce sont les dieux qui nous faut (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), pp. 269-270.

<sup>7</sup>Vittorio del Litto, "Les débuts de Pirandello en France. L'interprétation des Pitoëff", Atti del congresso internazionale degli studi pirandelliani (Firenze: le Monnier, 1967), p. 179.

<sup>8</sup>Charles Dullin, "L'apport de Pirandello au théâtre", Le Journal (March 15, 1937)

<sup>9</sup>J. N. Alley, "French periodical criticism of Pirandello's plays", Italica, XXV, No. 2 (June 1, 1948), 138.

<sup>10</sup>Vittorio del Litto, op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>12</sup>Renée Lelièvre, op. cit., pp. 410-411.

<sup>13</sup>Dullin's interest in the commedia dell'arte dates from ca. 1915, with the Jacques Copeau-Gordon Craig meeting at the Arena Goldoni in Florence. This interest, however was very much encouraged by the Russian émigré artists, especially Evreinov. The Russians' importance in accelerating research in the commedia dell'arte is discussed by Mme Lelièvre in her book Le Théâtre dramatique italien en France 1855-1940, pp. 347-350.

<sup>14</sup>Renée Lelièvre, op. cit., p. 349.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 411.

<sup>16</sup>Giuseppe Ganci Battaglia, Luigi Pirandello (Palermo: Organizzazione Editoriale, 1967), p. 145.

"The first representation of this 'play in the making' aroused strife

amongst those in the public who felt themselves to have been ridiculed. The scandalous and immoral content proved to be good bait for the champions of morality and for the critics." My translation.

<sup>17</sup>Renée Lelièvre, op. cit., p. 347.

<sup>18</sup>H.-R. Lenormand, Les Pitoëff. Souvenirs (Paris: Odette Lieutier, 1943), p. 94.

<sup>19</sup>cf. Pierre Brisson, Le Théâtre des années folles (Genève: Editions du milieu du monde, 1943), p. 35.

<sup>20</sup>Vittorio del Litto, op. cit., p. 181.

<sup>21</sup>cf. Renée Lelièvre, op. cit., pp. 418-419.

<sup>22</sup>Benjamin Crémieux, "Le théâtre: Six personnages en quête d'auteur", Nouvelle Revue Française, XX (June 1, 1923), pp.960-966.

<sup>23</sup>Even in Germany the interpretation of Pirandello's plays gave rise to contrasts. Apparently Reinhardt had presented Sei personaggi in a vein similar to Pitoëff's. Oscar Büdel, in his book Pirandello, (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1966) points out that "a comparison between Reinhardt's and Pirandello's staging of Sei personaggi in Berlin is very revealing. Whereas Reinhardt stages the piece in a rather heavy setting, laden with symbolism that was meant to underline the tragic dilemma between reality and illusion, Pirandello's mise en scène was light, and in its rapid pace underlined above all the play-character of the piece." (p. 26).

<sup>24</sup>H.-R. Lenormand, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>26</sup>Vittorio del Litto, op. cit., p. 190.

<sup>27</sup>Renée Lelièvre, op. cit., p. 437.

<sup>28</sup>Vittorio del Litto, op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>29</sup>for further reading and study on the political climate of the time as it affected Pirandello's fortunes in France, see Renée Lelièvre, op. cit., pp. 361-370.

<sup>30</sup>Vittorio del Litto, op. cit., p. 184.

<sup>31</sup>H.-R. Lenormand, op. cit., p. 169.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 120-121.

<sup>33</sup>translation into French as quoted in Jean-Michel Gardair, op. cit., pp.14-15.

<sup>34</sup>J. N. Alley, op. cit., pp. 142-143.



<sup>35</sup>cf. Bernard Dort, "Pirandello et la dramaturgie française contemporaine", Atti del congresso internazionale degli studi pirandelliani (Firenze: le Monnier, 1967), pp. 51-73.

<sup>36</sup>cf. the inquiry "Pirandello, vous a-t-il influencé?", Arts (Jan. 16, 1957).

<sup>37</sup>Bernard Dort, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>38</sup>Vittorio del Litto, op. cit., p. 179.

## II

### AN OUTLINE OF PIRANDELLO'S DRAMATIC THEMES AND TECHNIQUE

Del Litto's "vrai Pirandello" is a phenomenon which might prove very difficult to isolate. The author of Chacun sa vérité is so grounded in relativism that an attempt to see an all-pervading reality or a "vrai message" in his works would be contradictory to Pirandello's philosophy. There are, however, certain aspects of his thought that, readily recognisable as leitmotifs in all his writings, could be considered as a particular "philosophy". It is these aspects which enable critics to acquire an understanding of the influence which Pirandello came to exert on European drama of this century.

At the basis of Pirandello's thought is the concept that all things are relative; there is no absolute "Truth" which allows man to discern between right or wrong, but rather there are a number of personal truths, each one valid on its own. In his years as a student in Bonn, Pirandello came to be influenced by the ideas of Schopenhauer:

"Le fameux relativisme pirandellien [...] a son fondement psychologique dans le subjectivisme radical du philosophe allemand. [...] Pour Schopenhauer, chacun a du monde sa propre représentation et cette vision subjective et par conséquent arbitraire n'est qu'une illusion, une fiction. Tout le théâtre de Pirandello est bâti sur ces données concrétisées par des situations dramatiques." <sup>1</sup>

In Chacun sa vérité [Così è (se vi pare)] Laudisi points out and derides the fallacy of attempting to establish even the basically factual nature of Mr. Ponza's relationship to Mrs. Frola.

The earthquake which destroyed their town and all their legal documents has forced them to reconstruct, in their own minds, the nature of the relationship which binds them together. However, Mr. Ponza and Mrs. Frola behave in such a manner and uphold such diverse opinions on the basis of their relationship, that the town gossips claim one of the two must be a lunatic. Laudisi, the raisonneur of the play and Pirandello's porte-parole answers:

"Et lequel? Vous ne pouvez pas le dire, personne ne peut le dire! Et ce n'est pas parce que ces preuves que vous recherchez n'existent pas, ont été perdues ou détruites, par un accident quelconque: un incendie, un tremblement de terre. Non, mais c'est parce que ces preuves, ils les ont détruites eux-mêmes, en eux, dans leur âme. Comprenez-vous enfin? Ils ont imaginé, lui pour elle, elle pour lui, une fiction qui a la consistance même de la réalité, et ils vivent désormais en parfait accord, réconciliés dans cette idée... Cette réalité-là aucun document ne pourra la détruire: ils la respirent, ils la voient, ils la sentent, ils la touchent!"<sup>2</sup>

Faced with a difficult situation, Mr. and Mrs. Ponza and Mrs. Frola have created a reality of their own which helps to alleviate the difficulties of their existence. Whether this reality is the "Truth" or a figment of their imagination is irrelevant; the necessity of its creation is the important factor which should dictate its acceptance. Reality, embodied in Mrs. Ponza, becomes multi-faceted and must be respected as such in order to attain a modus vivendi. The attempt of the other characters to seek out a "Truth", demonstrates the destructive nature of such an activity; to satisfy their own petty curiosities, they risk destroying that element in the Ponza-Frola family which protects it from further painful confrontations with life.

"The essential wisdom needed -- and Laudisi possesses it-- is the tolerance that admits the impossibility of seeing

all aspects of a given subject. Having accepted the diversity of truths, Laudisi takes the logical final step: not only does he recognise the possibility of a multiple reality, but he is also resolved to respect whatever truth people want to assume for themselves." <sup>3</sup>

To search for an absolute truth in a given situation remains inconclusive. Mrs. Ponza reveals that she is both Mrs. Frola's daughter and Mr. Ponza's second wife, while for herself she is no-one. "Pour <sup>4</sup> moi, je suis celle que l'on me croit!"

In Comme ci ou comme ça (Ciascuno a suo modo), the truth is again uncertain. The motivation behind Delia Morello's behaviour is the subject under discussion by two friends, Doro Palegari and Francesco Savio; during the course of the play they both drastically change their point of view on the matter, each becoming the intransigent defender of what he initially denied. To complicate matters, Delia Morello reveals that she herself is uncertain about the basic motivation in her behaviour, since she gives credence first to one postulation and then to the opposite one. Truth becomes even more uncertain due to the interruptions caused by the characters in the choral interludes. Little, if anything, can be established as being the correct motivation; truth becomes, in this manner, a very personal concept.

With truth as the product of various conceptions, it is often advisable, or even necessary, to attempt to mould reality into a fictitious form. This is the case with Henri IV (Enrico IV) who, having regained his lucidity after twelve years of amnesia, continues to inhabit the dream-world which had been purposely created to support

his illusions. Reawakened to a world in which he is now an outsider, Henri IV adopts his insanity as a refuge, thereby affirming his need for what now has become essentially a lie. Pirandello's relativism does not condemn the eight years Henri IV lives in the knowledge of his fiction, for the lie has become, through the strength of his will reality.

"The historically accurate surroundings in which he is placed are illusion, because they are contrived. And yet for Enrico they are the only reality for twelve years of delusions -- so real in fact that, when he regained his senses, the illusion became reality and reality mere illusion."<sup>5</sup>

The relativity of truth has led directly into a confusion between reality and illusion.

In La Volupté de l'honneur (Il piacere dell'onestà), a necessary illusion becomes so powerful as to supplant the reality which had created it. Illusion becomes reality when Baldovino assumes the role of an honest husband with such integrity and strength of will that his wife actually falls in love with him and discontinues her affair with the Marquis Fabio. The pro forma arrangement has become a deeply felt emotion which surpasses the superficial dictates of appearances.

The opposite holds true in La Vie que je t'ai donnée (La Vita che ti diedi); here a fiction is unable to force reality and Donna Anna must cease imagining that her son is still alive. To continue fabricating such an illusion would be, in this case, an inhuman torture on Lucia Maubel, the son's mistress, and therefore Donna Anna submits herself to reality. Unlike La Volupté de l'honneur, the conflict of reality versus illusion terminates in this play with the former's

victory, thus illustrating Pirandello's concept that all situations vary one from the other to such an extent that a solution must be envisioned only from the framework of that particular situation.

The confusion between reality and illusion remains unresolved in Six personnages en quête d'auteur (Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore); the little boy's death is declared:

"Quelques Acteurs.--Mais oui, réellement! Il est mort ... Il est mort! ...  
D'Autres Acteurs.--Mais non, c'est du chiqué! N'en croyez rien!  
C'est une fiction! Il a fait semblant!  
Le fils, criant très fort.-- Une fiction!!! La réalité, monsieur!"<sup>6</sup>

Similarly the very presence on stage of characters from the imagination of an author creates an atmosphere where reality and illusion intermingle freely. The re-enactment of the story is sufficient to cause another apparition, that of Madama Pace, who is created not from an author's imagination, but from the mere necessity of her presence on stage.<sup>7</sup> The six characters, themselves illusion, give birth to a seventh one, thereby enlarging the spheres of reality active in the play.

The relativity of truth and the simultaneous existence of several realities (or illusions) has shattering effects on the traditional concept of personality. Pirandello follows Bergson's views in seeing that the sum total of previous experiences, of stimuli which are often very much opposed, causes a person to possess traits which render his personality multiple and at times even contradictory.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of the great number and varied nature of influences which one undergoes throughout one's life, it is impossible to shed some in favour of others. The past, in other words, is irreversible

and must be accepted as such in its totality. The creation of an illusion in the present, although it cannot "correct" the past, is perhaps the only manner in which the pains of existence can be somewhat alleviated. However, even in such a case, acceptance of the past is an inevitable corollary and therefore "antagonisms constantly arise between memories of past formations and present conditions".<sup>9</sup> In Pirandello's dramatic world, the numerous characters that create and live in an illusion, first accept the reality of their past. Ersilia Drei, in whom the desire to recreate herself is most persistent realises that she cannot shed her past and therefore chooses to die "naked" (as she is), not with an "abitino" (as she would like to appear). Baldovino accepts to play the part of an honest husband because he realises that his life has reached a very low point and can rise only through the assumption of a formally correct role. Similarly Henri IV gains strength in his masquerade from the realisation that he will never recapture the lost years.

Living in a constant state of flux, man is everchanging and therefore exists in a myriad of different spheres: as he sees himself, as others see him, as he acts in one occasion or another. Because of this, his personality is also changing relative to the situation and hence true self-knowledge is impossible. Vitelangelo Moscarda, the main character of Un, personne et cent mille (Uno, nessuno e cento mila), suddenly becomes aware of the question of appearances; looking at himself in the mirror he concludes:

- "1. que je n'étais pas pour les autres ce que jusqu'ici j'avais cru être pour moi;
2. que je ne pouvais pas me regarder vivre;
3. que, ne pouvant pas me regarder vivre, je demeurais étranger à moi-même, c'est-à-dire quelqu'un que les autres pouvaient voir et connaître chacun à sa façon mais moi non;
4. qu'il était impossible de mettre devant moi cet étranger pour le voir et le connaître; je pouvais certes me voir, mais non le voir;
5. que mon corps, si je le considérais de l'extérieur, était pour moi comme une apparition de rêve; une chose qu'ignorait qu'elle vivait et qui restait plantée là, dans l'attente que quelqu'un la prenne;
6. que, de même que je prenais ce corps qui est le mien pour être de temps à autre tel que je me voulais et me sentais, de la même manière n'importe qui pouvait le prendre pour lui donner une réalité à sa façon;
7. qu'enfin ce corps en lui-même n'était rien ni personne, qu'un courant d'air pouvait le faire éternuer aujourd'hui et demain l'emporter;" 10

The image of the mirror is a very common device in Pirandello's plays to indicate and to render physically visible to an audience the concept that the personality is composed of images, of reflections which, on an individual basis, have very little consistency. Laudisi, speaking to his image in the mirror, says:

" [ . . . ] en tête à tête, nous savons parfaitement tous les deux qui nous sommes ... Ah! si nous étions seuls au monde, il n'y aurait aucune difficulté ... Mais il y a les autres, voilà le malheur. Ils ne te voient pas, comprends-tu, de la même façon que moi ... Et sais-tu ce que tu deviens pour les autres? Un fantôme, mon cher, un simple fantôme. Et pourtant, vois comme ces gens sont stupides. Les voilà, dévorés de curiosité, qui galopent après les autres pour les saisir. Comme si on pouvait saisir des fantômes". 11

To impose a label, a certain characteristic on a man, is to deprive him of the fluidity which is his basic attribute and also to deny him any chance for future changes. In Six personnages en quête d'auteur, the daughter's attempt to "fix" her father into a mould by



virtue of a single act, draws a forceful reaction from him:

"Le drame, selon moi, est tout entier là-dedans, monsieur, dans la conscience que j'ai, qu'a chacun de nous d'être 'un', alors qu'il est 'cent'. qu'il est 'mille', qu'il est 'autant de fois un' qu'il y a de possibilités en lui ... [ . . . ] Nous nous en apercevions bien quand, par malheur, un accrochage se produit au milieu de nos actes; nous nous apercevons que nous n'étions pas tout entiers dans cette défaillance et que ce serait une atroce injustice si l'on nous jugeait uniquement sur ce seul acte et si l'on nous clouait au pilori pour toute la vie, comme si toute notre vie se résumait dans ce seul acte! Comprenez-vous à présent la perfidie de cette fille? Elle m'a surpris dans un endroit, dans une attitude où elle n'aurait pas dû me voir, elle m'a vu tel que je n'aurais jamais dû apparaître à ses yeux; et elle veut m'attribuer cette personnalité que je ne pouvais pas m'attendre à revêtir pour elle, cette personnalité qui a été la mienne dans une minute fugace, honteuse de mon existence!"<sup>12</sup>

The essence of a person, therefore, lies in the totality of his acts, not in one, or even in a select number of representative ones.

Henri IV is undefinable as a single character for he exists as a sane person, as an amnesiac who believes himself to be the Teutonic king and, after his awakening, as an unstable fusion of these two aspects.

"The two personalities are now intertwined and overlapping; and, accordingly, life becomes more and more unattractive, until, having reached the limits of agony, Enrico commits an act that represents the perfect fusion of his double personality -- he kills as Enrico IV for reasons which concern his other life."<sup>13</sup>

What Henri IV did, was to consciously adopt the mask which he had unconsciously donned in his amnesia. To Pirandello, this is an aspect of costruirsi, the concept by which a person fabricates for himself a personality which would make life more tolerable. Ersilia Drei, in Vêtir ceux qui sont nus (Vestire gli ignudi), purposely

attempts to cover up her sordid past with a new personality; the symbol of the new dress which she wishes to don reflects her desire to conceal her background under a cloak which would allow her to retain some self-respect.

"C'est que tout le monde, tout le monde veut paraître beau ... Plus nous sommes, plus nous sommes (Elle veut dire 'laid' [. . .]) et plus nous voulons nous embellir. [. . .] Mon Dieu oui, nous vêtir d'un habit un peu décent, voilà ... Moi, je n'en avais pas pour paraître devant toi, [. . .] Et alors ... alors j'ai voulu me faire, pour ma mort tout au moins, un vêtement un peu joli."<sup>14</sup>

In direct contrast to the fluidity of life is the rigidity of art. By the imposition of a form, a work of art remains immutable and everlasting, therefore acquiring a reality which is more real than life itself. Instead of having form, it now is form and ceases to be threatened by extinction through mutation. In his preface to Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, Pirandello cites the example of Francesca; in the Divine Comedy, Dante has given her an unchanging reality which in the continual flux of life she never could have possessed.

However, the imposition of form, by virtue of its rigidity, inevitably denies life, which is movement and flux. Though a work of art may be more real than life, it is not alive. From this paradox rises the Pirandellian conflict of life and form (Tilgher's 'vita e forma'), of being and appearing.

In Six personnages en quête d'auteur, the professional actors are totally incapable of conveying the powerful drama of the six characters. Their attempts are dismal failures since they act, since they seek to appear to be something. However, when the scene is

re-enacted by the six characters who are and actually live their plight, it begins to pulsate with vitality. Actors, forced to rely on a script, a director, and an author, cannot create life, they can only attempt to suggest an appearance of life.

The question of being and appearing is intimately related to Pirandello's basic concept of relativity, and hence it is to be found closely linked to other aspects of his thought. The duality of Henri IV's personality can be seen in terms of the life/form dichotomy: reawakened to a world in flux where the continual changes have left him on the by-way, Henri IV prefers to live in an illusion where the rigidity of form grants him the stability he so much needs. It is a mask which fixes the changeable nature of things and permits to present a front either to others or to oneself. This is a form of escape to which, in one way or another, most people succumb.

"Nul mensonge pourtant, nulle fiction de notre part. Nous sommes de bonne foi, immobilisés dans une noble idée de nous mêmes. [...] Il n'en est pas moins vrai que nous nous obstinons tous dans l' idée que nous nous faisons de nous-mêmes, tout comme, en vieillissant, nous teignons nos cheveux. Peu importe que la teinture de mes cheveux ne puisse pas être pour vous une réalité, si du moins pour moi, elle est un tout petit réelle. -- Vous, madame, vous ne teignez certainement vos cheveux pour tromper les autres, ni vous-même, mais simplement pour tromper un peu, un tout petit peu, votre image au miroir. Moi, je me tiens pour rire. Vous, vous vous teignez pour de bon, mais vous avez beau le faire sérieusement, vous n'en êtes pas moins masquée, vous aussi madame."<sup>15</sup>

The mask is also the make-up necessary in order to properly act an assumed role. Henri IV's mask is insanity, Ersilia Drei's is a fiancée's dress. The use of an actual, physical mask is suggested by Pirandello in the stage directions of Six personnages en quête d'auteur,

in order to interpret in this manner the profound meaning of the play. The six characters must not appear as phantasms, but as concrete realities which, in contrast to the changeable nature of the actors, are each one fixed and immutable in the personal, fundamental sentiment which is his own. Hence the father's mask should express remorse, the daughter's revenge, the son's disdain, the mother's suffering. <sup>16</sup> Henri IV also wears a physical mask by virtue of his costume, his facial make-up, and his tinted hair (which, incidentally, is only at the front of the head, thus suggesting more clearly the concept of a mask that covers the face but not the back of the head). His ability to sustain the masquerade forces his visitors, who should appear "sane" in society's eyes, to don costumes and enter into an "insane" reality. This tour de force orchestrated by Henri IV gives him the upper hand in the situation and demonstrates his natural superiority to those who cannot help but submit themselves to his machinations.

The world itself becomes a stage on which life is but a series of different scenes. Evreinov's ideas surface again:

"Un accostamento ideologico con Nicolaj Evreinov, drammaturgo e teorico del teatro russo, a nostro avviso vi è indubbiamente in Pirandello drammaturgo.

Ne Il Teatro e la vita libro non di tecnica scenica ma di psicologia, Nicolaj Evreinov interpreta tutta la vita come 'teatrocrazia' essendo l'esistenza dell'uomo (e perfino delle bestie e delle piante) fondata sullo istinto della teatralità, ossia sul continuo sforzo di 'diventare un'altro', di comporsi 'una maschera e un carattere, di recitare una parte'".<sup>17</sup>

Oscar Bùdel continues:

"For [ Evreinov ], theatre originated from the basic human instinct for transformation and metamorphosis, out of some

sort of protean yearning. He saw the world as permeated by pantheatricalism, and the artist's duty for him consisted in an active theatricalisation of life. Pirandello's ideas go in the same direction, and his theoretical thinking as well is influenced by this concept." 18

The theatricality of life, the conflict between life and art, is transposed by Pirandello into the striking and at times complex technique of the theatre-within-the-theatre. By virtue of this device, he himself grouped together three plays as a trilogy: Six personnages en quête d'auteur, Comme ci (ou comme ça), and Ce soir on improvise (Questa sera si recita a soggetto). These plays depict action in the theatre through the actual medium of the theatre, as well as all the possible conflicts which may rise from the interaction of author, director, actors and audience.

"tutti e tre uniti, quantunque divertissimi, formano come una trilogia del teatro nel teatro, non solo perchè hanno espressamente azione sul palcoscenico e nella sala, in un palco o nei corridoj o nel ridotto d'un teatro, ma anche perchè di tutto il complesso degli elementi d'un teatro, personaggi e attori, autore e direttore-capocomico o regista, critici drammatici e spettatori alieni o interessati, rappresentano ogni possibile conflitto." 19

As the trilogy progresses, the "fourth stage-wall" convention is gradually undermined and the audience becomes engulfed by the performance. Moestrup notes that in 1925, quite probably as a result of Pitoëff's Parisian production, Pirandello changed the stage directions for the entrance of the six characters; he now introduced the entrance via the rear of the auditorium and this innovation proved to be so effective that it became an integral part of the play. In Comme ci (ou comme ça), the convention is broken by the simultaneous

existence of a play per se and an audience which reacts to it. This audience, however, is still composed of actors who are distinct from the actual public. The final step is taken in Ce soir on improvise, where actors who are to represent stock characters of the theatre-going public are intermingled with the real audience and are inseparable from it. Furthermore, Pirandello's stage directions seem to be written expressively for the audience when, at the dimming of the lights, he indicates their reaction to the fact that the curtain does not rise, or when, throughout the play, members of the audience are given lines to speak. The complete fusion inherently intended in such techniques occurred in Berlin, where the audience picked up the gauntlet:

"At the Berlin performance in the Lessing Theater (May 31, 1930), the audience indeed intended to be part of the game and to perform as well, which caused the only really improvised scene: the appearance on the stage of the real director Hans Hartung who shouted insults at the real audience."<sup>21</sup>

In all three plays there are three basic levels of existence. In Six personnages en quête d'auteur they are the audience, the actors and the characters. The audience, apart from the disturbing surprise of the empty stage, the six characters' unexpected arrival and the original situation depicted, remains generally stable. The actors, however, undergo transformations; they exist as individuals, as actors and as audience. As individuals they are rather shallow and stereotyped, as actors they are naïve and superficial, as audience they are capable of being deeply moved. The characters also exist on different spheres; as characters they are warm and full of passion, as actors they actually live their part and as audience they are sensitive critics of the

performance. The father and the daughter are the most carefully developed roles in the play; the others are either stereotypes (the actors ), archetypes (the mother, who is "una natura fissata in una figura di madre"<sup>22</sup> ) or mere "presenze" (the little boy and girl). In their attempts to present the story, or certain parts of it, in a manner based on their own subjective views, the father, above all, and the daughter to a lesser extent, assume the further roles of author and director. The daughter, who feels that the father's outline for the proposed play does not take into consideration her own side of the story, reacts very strongly:

"Je ne joue pas, je ne joue pas. Ce qu'on peut porter à la scène, vous l'avez combiné tous les deux ensemble, merci bien ... Oh! Je comprends, allez ... Il veut en venir tout de suite à son drame 'cérébral' compliqué, à la représentation de ses remords et de ses tourments, mais moi, je veux aussi représenter mon drame, mon drame!"<sup>23</sup>

The commedia da fare allows Pirandello to present and discuss the different variables involved in the process of artistic creation. Various persons, author, director, actors, audience, all interact to form the ultimate result which illustrates the inconsistency of art with respect to its real-life original. At the end of Six personnages en quête d'auteur it becomes clear that it would be impossible to reproduce faithfully through the medium of art all the aspects of the six characters' story. As the stage curtain is about to fall for the last time, confusion reigns supreme, the remaining four characters disappear and the director complains at having lost a whole day's work. The play in the making has resulted in a total failure.

Returning again to the conflict of life and art, it is evident that the passionate existence of the six characters cannot be enclosed in the mould of form. Vittorini, associating this play with Ce soir on improvise and Diane et Tuda says:

"Here art is looked upon as an inadequate means of expression which dwarfs life and robs it of its fire and glow. This longing for the pulsating throb of life originates in the thirst and hunger for life that nature has infused in every creature, animate and inanimate. Through this longing Pirandello reveals the torment of the artist as he is confronted by problems of dramatic technique. He rebels against the fact that there is a vast difference between actors and characters: actors as they are engaged by a stage director; characters as they have been created by the playwright. He also resents dramatic art's being laden down with conventional tricks of all kinds -- division into acts, light effects, make-up -- all elements that life in its actuality does not need in order to be dramatic."<sup>24</sup>

The second play in the trilogy, Comme ci (ou comme ça), consists of two plays each dealing with similar subject matter (the Moreno-Nuti affair) and each taking place on closely related sets (the stage and the lobby of the same theatre). There are two distinct groups of persons, the "actors" and the "audience" (the real public would be the third level of existence); their interaction provides the unifying link between the two plays. It is a link, however, which forces the interruption of the play-within-the-play and brings about the end of the entire performance. The two plots are kept distinct one from the other by means of slightly different sets, and by the "actors" return to their "own selves" during the choral interludes. The similarities due to the fact that the drama is à clef, that is based on a "real life" event which is known by the audience, and due to the eventual reflection in the lobby of what has occurred on stage, do



not create that confusion between reality and illusion which was integral to Six personnages en quête d'auteur. As a whole Comme ci (ou comme ça) is of inferior quality to the other plays in the trilogy.

"The play has certain good points and a number of serious defects, the most serious of which is probably the unrelatedness of setting and content. The main theme of the two acts is quite clear, and it has been shown above that the conclusion they lead up to is that instinct is the only truth. [. . .] The setting, especially the two intermezzi, is amusing and untraditional, and the dialogue is varied and humorous. Its major weakness is that it has no real meaning. As opposed to Six Characters, in which the content, the rigidly fixed interrelationship between the characters, is organically connected with the setting, that is their attempt at having their story staged (their tragedy versus the attempt at escaping from it), there is no connection whatsoever between the two levels in Each in his own way."<sup>25</sup>

Moestrup continues with the suggestion that Pirandello, far too conscious of Tilgher's views on Six personnages en quête d'auteur, over-reacted and responded with a purely technical piece of work, void of depth, symbolism and innate power, all of which are present  
26  
in the previous "theatre" play.

In Ce soir on improvise, however, pure theatricality becomes the unquestioned content of the play and the plot of the play-within-the-play, which is totally unrelated to the main plot, fades into the background.

"The play is pure theatrical experiment, and what concerns the author is the framework, not the content, which is only of interest in so far as it makes the experiment possible. To put it paradoxically, the framework is the real content, and this is not necessarily a weakness."<sup>27</sup>

The illusion of the inner play is constantly breached either by Hinkfuss or by the actors. The former interrupts to introduce or explain the action and the technique; he becomes obsessed by the

desire to impose his will on the course of events. The actors disrupt the illusion of the secondary plot by stepping out of character and quarreling with Hinkfuss and among themselves. Their objections to being forced to improvise and their open discussion of technique (an entire scene is redone in order to bring out its dramatic quality) accentuate the purely theatrical aspect of the performance.

The "fourth stage-wall" convention is totally abandoned in what becomes a dialogue between director and audience on the play, the theatre and Pirandello himself. Actors interspersed among the audience react in different ways and answer Hinkfuss' comments to the public. The total involvement of the audience with the action on stage seems to be indicated. However, as the play progresses, the actors on stage find it gradually more difficult to remain true to both the theatrical elements imposed by Hinkfuss and the inherent life of the La Croce family. In a final outburst as actors they eject Hinkfuss and then return to the performance as characters living their part. The "fourth stage-wall" illusion is re-instated and the inner play continues with few interruptions until the end.

As in Six personnages en quête d'auteur, the fact that characters are alive on stage induces a confusion between the different spheres of reality thus permitting Mrs. Ignazia and her daughters to speak directly to Mommina even though they are in the near-by town and she is shut in her house. Again the action on stage becomes pulsating with life and passion as the characters, not the actors, gain the upper hand. Bishop notes:

"The story of the La Croce family becomes alive only after Hinkfuss is cast aside and the actors are completely dominated by their roles and play -- or, rather, live -- according to their own impulsion. In other words, the play comes alive when all the theatrical elements are discarded: the author, the director, and the actors. The premise of the triumph of a play's situation over the theatre itself is an impossible one. It cannot be; and, once again, the playwright is blocked in his attempt to reconcile art and life."<sup>28</sup>

It is not the traditional Pirandellian theme of form versus life, as Bishop seems to indicate, that is paramount in this play. It is rather the technical aspect of dramatic art per se which, in the trilogy of the theatre-within-the-theatre, finds here its concluding point.

"The disintegration of the classical illusion, the expansion of the traditional stage, the disappearance of established form and the new entity which emerges as the product of these new means are an expression of the necessity of a new, integral realism, a statement that the art of the twentieth century can no longer accept the limits that were formerly respected. For the stage to be usable, conventional barriers must be broken down; only when this has happened can it again be used as the starting-point of a fiction which can, but does not have to, go beyond the classical restrictions because their conventional character has been established.

In Pirandello's work the romantic revolution and the negation of the three unities is completed. For this reason Tonight we improvise occupies a special place in his dramatic work, and there is particular appositeness in calling it 'theatre-within-the-theatre'."<sup>29</sup>

## Notes to Chapter II

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Bossetti, Pirandello (Paris: Bordas, 1971), pp. 197-198.

<sup>2</sup> Luigi Pirandello, Théâtre, trans. Benjamin Crémieux (34th ed.; Paris, Gallimard, 1950), I, 106.

"E chi dei due? Non potete dirlo voi, come non può dirlo nessuno. E non già perché codesti dati di fatto, che andate cercando, siano stati annullati -- dispersi o distrutti -- da un accidente qualsiasi -- un incendio, un terremoto -- no; ma perché li hanno annullati essi in sé, nell'animo loro, volete capirlo? creando lei a lui, o lui a lei, un fantasma che ha la stessa consistenza della realtà, dove essi vivono ormai in perfetto accordo, pacificati. E non potrà essere distrutta, questa loro realtà, da nessun documento, poiché essi ci respirano dentro, la vedono, la sentono, la toccano!"

Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude (2nd ed.; Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1958), I, 1062-1063.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Bishop, Pirandello and the French Theater (New York: New York University Press, 1960), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Luigi Pirandello, Théâtre, op. cit., I, 141.

"Per me, io sono colei che mi si crede." Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 1099.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Bishop, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Luigi Pirandello, Théâtre, op. cit., I, 74.

"Il primo attore (rientrando da sinistra, ridendo). [. . .] Finzione! finzione! non ci creda!

Altri attori da destra. Finzione? Realtà! realtà! E' morto!

Altri attori da sinistra. No! Finzione! Finzione!

Il padre (levandosi e gridando tra loro). Ma che finzione! Realtà, realtà, signori! realtà!"

Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 137.

<sup>7</sup> Antonio Janner, Luigi Pirandello (3rd ed.; Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1948), p. 311.

<sup>8</sup> Gilbert Bossetti, op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>9</sup> Alba della Fazia, "Pirandello and his French echo, Anouilh", Modern Drama, VI (Feb. 1964), 352.

<sup>10</sup>as quoted in Gilbert Bossetti, op. cit., p. 93. The translation is by G. Bossetti. Since this passage summarises concisely and explicitly the disturbing nature of a Pirandellian self-realization, we have chosen the example exceptionally not from one of the plays that were performed in France, but from the novel Uno, nessuno e cento mila, which was translated as Un, personne et cent mille by Louise Servicen (Paris: Gallimard, 1930).

"1a--che io non ero per gli altri quel che finora avevo creduto d'essere per me;

2a--che non potevo vedermi vivere;

3a--che non potendo vedermi vivere, restavo estraneo a me stesso, cioè uno che gli altri potevano vedere e conoscere; ciascuno a suo modo; e io no;

4a--che era impossibile pormi davanti questo estraneo per vederlo e conoscerlo; io potevo vedermi, non già vederlo;

5a--che il mio corpo, se lo consideravo da fuori, era per me come un'apparizione di sogno; una cosa che non sapeva di vivere e che restava lì, in attesa che qualcuno se la prendesse;

6a--che, come me lo prendevo io, questo mio corpo, per essere a volta a volta quale mi volevo e mi sentivo, così se lo poteva prendere qualunque altro per dargli una realtà a modo suo;

7a--che infine quel corpo per se stesso era tanto niente e tanto nessuno, che un filo d'aria poteva farlo starnutire, oggi e domani portarselo via."

Luigi Pirandello, Tutti i romanzi (3rd ed; Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1957), pp. 1300-1301.

<sup>11</sup>Luigi Pirandello, Théâtre, op. cit., I, 109.

"così a tu per tu, ci conosciamo bene noi due! -- Il guaio è che, come ti vedo io, non ti vedono gli altri! E allora, caro mio, che diventi tu? Dico per me che, qua di fronte a te, mi vedo e mi tocco --tu,-- per come ti vedono gli altri -- che diventi? -- Un fantasma, caro, un fantasma! -- Eppure, vedi questi pazzi? Senza badare al fantasma che portano con sé, in se stessi, vanno correndo, pieni di curiosità dietro il fantasma altrui! E credono che sia una cosa diversa."

Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 1065-1066.

<sup>12</sup>Luigi Pirandello, Théâtre, op. cit., I, 30-31.

"Il dramma per me è tutto qui, signore: nella coscienza che ho, che ciascuno di noi --veda-- si crede 'uno' ma non è vero: è 'tanti', signore, 'tanti', secondo tutte le possibilità d'essere che sono in noi [. . .] Ce n'accorgiamo bene, quando in qualcuno dei nostri atti, per un caso sciaguratissimo, restiamo all'improvviso come agganciati e sospesi: ci accorgiamo, voglio dire, di non essere tutti in quell'atto, e che dunque una atroce ingiustizia sarebbe giudicarci da quello solo, tenerci agganciati e sospesi, all'gogna, per una intera esistenza, come se questa fosse assommata tutta in quell'atto! Ora lei intende

la perfidia di questa ragazza? M'ha sorpreso in un luogo, in un atto dove e come non doveva conoscermi, come io non potevo essere per lei; e mi vuol dare una realtà quale io non potevo mai aspettarmi che dovessi assumere per lei, in un momento fugace, vergognoso della mia vita."

Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 94-95.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Bishop, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Luigi Pirandello, Théâtre, trans. Benjamin Crémieux and M.-A. Comnène (15th ed.; Paris: Gallimard, 1951), III, 81.

"E' che ciascuno, ciascuno vuol fare una bella figura. -- Più si è ... più si è ... (vuol dire 'laidi' [ . . . ] -- e più ci vogliamo far belli, ecco. [ . . . ] Dio mio sì, coprirci con un abito decente, ecco. -- Io non ne avevo più nessuno per ricomparirti davanti. [ . . . ] E allora ... e allora volli farmela per la morte, almeno, una vestitina decente.--"

Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 936-937.

<sup>15</sup> Luigi Pirandello, Théâtre, op. cit., I, 176-177.

"Nessuno di noi mente o finge! -- C'è poco da dire: ci siamo fissati tutti in buona fede in un bel concetto di noi stessi. [ . . . ] Ma tutti, pur non di meno, seguitiamo a tenerci stretti al nostro concetto, così come chi invecchia si ritinge i capelli. Che importa che questa mia tintura non possa essere, per voi, il color vero dei miei capelli? -- Voi, Madonna, certo non ve li tingete per ingannare gli altri, né voi; ma solo un poco -- poco poco -- la vostra immagine davanti allo specchio. Io lo faccio per ridere. Voi lo fate sul serio. Ma vi assicuro che per quanto sul serio, siete mascherata anche voi, Madonna;"

Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 347-348.

<sup>16</sup> cf. Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 76.  
The use of masks, Moestrup indicates (p. 343), remains a suggestion and is seldom followed in practice. Benjamin Crémieux, in fact, does not include Pirandello's suggestion and subsequent comments in his translation of the play.

<sup>17</sup> Giuseppe Ganci Battaglia, Luigi Pirandello (Palermo: Organizzazione Editoriale di M.A. David Malato, 1967), p. 156.  
"In our opinion, there is an undeniable ideological rapprochement between Pirandello the dramatist and Nicolaj Evreinov, dramatist and theorist of the Russian theatre.

In The Theatre and Life, a book not of theatrical technique but of psychology, Nicolaj Evreinov interprets all of life as a 'theatrocracy', since the existence of man (and even that of animals and plants) is rooted in the instinct of theatricality, that is on the continual attempt to 'become another', of composing for oneself 'a mask and a character, of playing a part'." (My translation)

<sup>18</sup>Oscar B del, Pirandello (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1966), pp. 96-97.

<sup>19</sup>Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 51.  
 "all three plays united, even though extremely amusing, comprise a sort of trilogy of the theatre-within-the-theatre, not only because they take place specifically on the stage and in the house, in a stage-box or in the corridors or in the lounge of a theatre but also because they represent every possible conflict inherent in the elements of the theatre: characters and actors, author and director or producer, dramatic critics and interested or disinterested spectators." My translation.

<sup>20</sup>J rn Moestrup, The Structural Patterns of Pirandello's Work (Odense: Odense University Press, 1972), p. 185.

<sup>21</sup>Oscar B del, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>22</sup>Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 21.  
 "a nature fixed in a figure of Mother". My translation.

<sup>23</sup>Luigi Pirandello, Th  tre, op. cit., I, 56.  
 "Non ci sto! Quello che   possibile sulla scena ve lo siete combinato insieme tutti e due, di l , grazie! Lo capisco bene! Egli vuol subito arrivare alla rappresentazione [caricando] dei suoi travagli spirituali; ma io voglio rappresentare il mio dramma! il mio!"  
 Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 119.

<sup>24</sup>Domenico Vittorini, The Drama of Luigi Pirandello (New York: Russell & Russell, 1935), p. 288.

<sup>25</sup>J rn Moestrup, op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 210-213.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>28</sup>Thomas Bishop, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

<sup>29</sup>J rn Moestrup, op. cit., p. 236.

### III

#### ANOUILH'S USAGE OF PIRANDELLIAN THEMES

As far as his themes and dramatic techniques are concerned, Pirandello finds in Jean Anouilh his most faithful disciple. Alba-Maria della Fazia goes as far as to place the title "Pirandello and his French Echo: Anouilh" on her article on the two dramatists.<sup>1</sup> Paul Werri states that never had a young French dramatist so well entered Pirandello's skin and, for Werri, Anouilh writes "du Pirandello".<sup>2</sup> Although the idea has often been advanced that Anouilh merely frenchifies Pirandello,<sup>3</sup> some critics and scholars treat Anouilh with greater respect. Thomas Bishop notes:

"Above all stands out his own creative genius. Anouilh is no imitator. His theatre is original, but, of course, no playwright writes in a vacuum. [...] Anouilh's great debt to Pirandello resides in the themes that he has adapted and in the Pirandellian flavour of much of his dialogue and atmosphere. His is 'a sort of Pirandellian drama of a single character in search of himself and it reiterates the familiar theme of escape from the ugliness of life'."<sup>4</sup>

The Pirandellian obsession with the relativity of truth seems, ironically enough, to be pertinent to a consideration of the criticisms of Anouilh's work. The numerous critics and scholars who have examined his theatre seem incapable of reaching an agreement on the Pirandello-Anouilh line of development. Anouilh would not be at all surprised to see such a stalemate develop from the question of truth. He himself dealt in his plays with the inconclusive nature of facts in particular and truth in general. In the early nineteen-forties



the heroine Antigone, faced by Créon with a pragmatic concept of existence which totally destroyed her defence of Polynice, decided to discard the factual aspects of the confrontation and chose to die. She clung to her vision in spite of the situation and showed by this the inconclusive nature of facts, just as Mrs. Ponza's ambiguous nature shattered the preconceived notions of the townspeople.

When he undertook the composition of the Pièces grinçantes, Anouilh returned to the question of the impossibility of defining truth. In his play La Grotte, the Author and the Inspector both seek to resolve the murder of the cook Marie-Jeanne, but each differs drastically from the other, be it in aims or in method. The Author is interested in the events leading to the murder and the interrelationship of the different characters, complete with nuances in voice, feeling and behaviour. Truth, to be conclusive, must take all these into account. The basic reason for the Author's inability to write the play is that he cannot be certain of all the nuances. The Inspector, on the other hand, has a much more pragmatic, and therefore simpler, outlook:

"La police se contente des apparences. La vérité: c'est un dossier qui se tient. Le mien doit se tenir, Monsieur le Comte. C'est tout ce que je demande."<sup>5</sup>

His will be a much easier quest, and it will lead to the more immediate solution. At the end of La Grotte a culprit is found and the question seems resolved. However, two shadows immediately fall upon this "truth". First, the circumstances of the culprit's "confession" seem somewhat forced, calculated more to produce results than

to arrive at a just and exact appraisal of the nature of events.

"Le Commissaire: Le cocher. Trente-cinq minutes d'interrogatoire avec deux autres collègues, méthode américaine, la lampe dans le nez et il avouait. Il a déjà été embarqué au Dépôt. L'affaire est dans le sac."<sup>6</sup>

The validity of a confession extracted in such a manner could be easily questioned and demonstrates how truth can be given different faces according to the method employed in arriving at the results.

The second shadow, however, seems more important. Throughout the play, the Inspector's obsession with "un dossier qui se tient" has led to a subtle form of humour against him by way of ridicule. This has had detrimental effects on his credibility and has induced the audience to participate more fully in the Author's own problems with the play. As the last curtain falls, the spectators are more conscious of the human element expressed in the Author's emotions and actions with respect to Marie-Jeanne's death, than in the factual aspect seen in the Inspector's exuberance at having solved the case. Even if truth were to be equated with the discovery and apprehension of the murderer, the burnt-out feeling that dominates the last scenes suggests that, on the human level, such findings seem to miss the point. A clear-cut, unequivocal truth, as the Inspector seems to espouse, denies humanity one of its most valuable attributes: compassion. It is the townspeople's lack of compassion towards the newcomers that gives Chacun sa vérité ominous black overtones of organised malice. These overtones are again felt in Pauvre Bitos ou le Dîner des têtes, although both sides now seem to be at fault. Maxime's masquerade

could be seen as a vicious attack on Bitos, but the latter's intransigence and extreme Jacobean tendencies seem to warrant such reactions against him. Bitos has taken the word of the law (seen here as the Truth) and the spirit of the post-war épuration as his unbending rule. In this context he has become a latter-day Draco, dispensing justice so firmly as to become harsh and cruel.

"La Justice immanente est en marche et c'est lui. La rigueur et la vertu du peuple sont dans nos murs. Notre petite ville pourrie n'a qu'à bien se tenir. Il se promène avec son fer rouge, dans la serviette façon veau qui ne le quitte jamais; il nous marquera tous."<sup>7</sup>

Bitos goes as far as to execute an ex-friend and schoolmate of his who had for many years remained in his cell, condemned to death and forgotten by the executioners.

The destructive nature of complete adhesion to the law (Truth), had been touched upon by Anouilh in his earlier plays. Antigone demonstrated the inhuman nature of such a disposition; Créon, although willing to save Antigone, found that his hands were tied by the laws of the land and by Antigone's refusal to forego her own vision. In Le Voyageur sans bagages, Gaston rejected the truth offered him by his would-be-relatives, finding it far too repulsive to his present state.

As Pirandello had pointed out in Comme ci (ou comme ça), truth is inconclusive primarily because each person has his own personal conception of it. That is the main barrier between Créon and Antigone. In L'Alouette, truth becomes a principal theme when, during the re-enactment of the climatic scenes in Jeanne's life, it

becomes evident that personal interpretations play a major role.

Even when dealing with a subject which presents itself simultaneously to several persons, the individual views of it differ drastically. In Ardèle ou la Marguerite, the different characters' opinions on love and on Ardèle's affair vary so much one from the other as to become the principal question, the focal point of dramatic interest. Since there are no important events on stage, except for the abrupt double suicide which brings the play to an immediate end, the dialectical nature of the proceedings allows for the elaborate discussion of love. General Saint-Pé claims: "Il y a l'amour bien sûr. Et puis il y a la vie, son ennemie." According to him the two do not match. For this reason he feels no qualms when deciding that Ardèle's love affair must be terminated; society (life as it is) would have no consideration for the love of two hunchbacks, and the Saint-Pé family would then suffer in stature because of the derision such a match would attract. His lack of qualms is helpful to him when indulging in illicit love affairs of his own. His relationship with the maid does not seem to contain the potential social holocaust that he and his sister the Countess envision in Ardèle's relationship with her hunchback tutor.

The Countess' views on love are also contradictory. On the one hand she overlooks her own affair with Villardieu, and the strange menage à trois which it has created, yet on the other hand she condemns her older sister's more conventional form of love. Although usually a liberal in amorous matters, she is now blinded by

some sort of unexplained double standard:

"Le Comte, doucement: [. . .] Nous sommes convenus depuis longtemps, ma chère, que l'amour avait tous les droits. La Comtesse, se lève indignée: Mais Gaston, vous êtes donc complètement amoral? Entre ces deux êtres difformes, il ne peut être question d'amour!"<sup>9</sup>

While being similar to the General and the Countess with respect to extra-marital relationships, the Count seems to possess that breadth of mind which is wanting in them. Although he tries to convince Ardèle to take into consideration her family's sentiments, he realises that her position is both authentic and worthy of respect. He clearly indicates that it is love, in its simplest form, that is under attack:

"Nous faisons le procès de l'amour. Tante Ardèle a l'amour caché dans sa bosse comme un diable, l'amour tout nu et éclatant dans son corps difforme, sous sa vieille peau. Et nous qui trichons tous avec l'amour depuis je ne sais combien de temps, nous voilà nez à nez avec lui maintenant. Quelle rencontre!"<sup>10</sup>

The Count retains his sense of proportion and comes close to being the raisonneur of the play.

The progression of opinions on love is carried on by Nathalie and Nicolas, who present a point of view antithetical to that of the General and the Countess. In a passionate outburst of defiance against the family's will, Nicolas screams out to Ardèle:

"Tenez bon. Moquez-vous d'eux. Moquez-vous de ce qu'ils appellent le scandale. Aimez, tante Ardèle, aimez qui vous voulez. Ne les écoutez pas. S'ils ne vous disaient pas que vous êtes trop vieille et bossue, ils vous diraient que vous êtes trop jeune. Mais de toute façon, ils essaieraient de vous empêcher d'être heureuse et d'aimer."<sup>11</sup>

A fourth, completely different attitude is put forward by

Amélie, the General's neurotic wife. She sees love as a repulsive emotion epitomised in the act of copulation, which, to her, appears both grotesque and animal. Even when closed in her room, she is obsessed by the reproductive processes of nature:

"Le paon appelle lui aussi. Et les belettes et les blaireaux et les fouines et les renards dans la clairière et les insectes, les millions d'insectes, en silence, partout. Tout jouit et s'accouple et me tue. Je sais quand les fleurs même se détendent soudain et s'entrouvent, obscènes, au petit matin. Tous ignoble, vous êtes tous ignobles avec votre amour. Le monde est ignoble et il n'en finit plus."<sup>12</sup>

Last in the play, but not least in importance, is the children's concept of love. Toto and Marie-Christine are two precocious ten-year-olds who have formulated a concept of love based on their observation of adult behaviour. The final curtain falls while the two children, dressed in their parent's clothing, come to a physical confrontation, each intermingling vows of love with rather strong insults.

Given a situation which appears in a consistent fashion to a group of people, Anouilh has illustrated how at least five different attitudes, each believing in its own correctness, can grow from it and prosper. Personal truths, as Pirandello had suggested, are inevitable in a world where each individual carries his own baggage of preconceived notions.

Such personal truths are often at the basis of a character's quest for escape, since he can build upon them an imaginary world where life becomes easier to understand. Henri IV had been the epitome of this escape in the plays of Pirandello. Anouilh's play Léocadia is strongly reminiscent of it; from the amnesiac nobleman, to the physical

reconstruction of the surroundings in order to please his fancy, everything seems to infer a generous amount of borrowing. In his later plays however, Anouilh is more subtle in expressing his debt to Pirandello. The creation of an illusion acquires a validity independent of its possible origins.

General Saint-Pé reappears in La Valse des toréadors. Several years seem to have passed, but he still retains his neurotic wife and his unquenchable thirst for extra-marital sustenance. Throughout his difficulties with his wife, and in spite of his numerous escapades, the General has found comfort in a platonic love affair with Ghislaine de Sainte-Euverte. For seventeen years the two should-be lovers have recreated and lived the innocent atmosphere of their youthful first encounter, deriving from it strength in face of the adversities of life.

Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron again deals with attempts to escape life's sordid nature by seeking refuge in a world of dreams. Throughout the play, Adolphe, Elodie, and their son Toto, all indulge freely in flights of fancy where their harsh realities are replaced by dreams of power, beauty and harmony. Adolphe, a meek subordinate, uncertain of his state and stature, envisions himself as a powerful industrialist reversing the tables on his real-life, overpowering superior, M. Fessard-Labonze. Elodie, growing old and unattractive, surrounds herself with imaginary titled lovers, while maids intent on her toilette praise her beauty and charm. Toto's dreams are somewhat more altruistic and considerate; he wishes for a return to domestic harmony. Influenced by his history lesson, Toto

casts his parents in the roles of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette who, while imprisoned at the Temple, developed that tender and peaceful love for each other that had never existed in the brilliant days of Versailles.

When the past is deliberately distorted or concealed, retreat into the lie seems to be indicated as a refuge. In La Vie que je t'ai donnée, Donna Anna, because she was unwilling to admit her son's death, perpetrated the potentially harmful lie that he was still alive. In Anouilh's theatre, refuge in a lie does not seem to be as harmful as in some of Pirandello's plays; the Pièces noires are too involved with idealism to admit such an unacceptable form of escape, while the Pièces roses and Pièces brillantes are far too lighthearted to seriously accept an evil, destructive nature. The lie is more evident in the Pièces grinçantes, for in these plays he is only concerned with the un-heroic characters, the ordinary human beings who, given to compromise, 13 make up one of his two major groups.

"Anouilh has shifted his attention from the 'heroic race' to the 'mediocre race' and its compromise with life. The effect of these plays is 'jarring' because two irreconcilables-- comedy and tragedy-- clash on a battlefield strewn with the cast-off armour of humanity's defense mechanisms."<sup>14</sup>

The compromise involves covering up the past to permit an acceptance of the present. There is no conception of the future, as there had been in the case of Le Voyageur sans bagages, for refuge in a lie is a defensive tactic, it does not look forward to an offensive advance.

Perhaps the clearest example of this attitude is found in General Saint-Pé. The old soldier, seeing the world about him slowly



moving away from him, seeks to reassert himself through the memory of past glories. In La Valse des toréadors, the memoirs of his African exploits are nothing else but the bombastic ravings of an old soldier who refuses to fade away. He is not creating an illusion from which a better future may rise, but rather he is covering up the past with an attractive cloak. As della Fazia has indicated, the effect is jarring (grinçant) because the comedy of his behaviour accentuates the tragedy of his life. The lie the General seeks to perpetrate is a form of protection but the tactic is obvious to all; its efficiency is thus destroyed and the two dramatic extremes, comedy and tragedy, are at liberty to vie for control.

The creation of an imaginary world can sometimes lead to a case where illusion supplants reality. This is evident in La Volupté de l'honneur, where Baldovino's pro forma marriage eventually leads to a true and honest relationship. Anouilh takes up this concept in Le Voyageur sans bagages, where Gaston's new life is based on the illusion that the English boy is his sole relative, and in Léocadia, where Amanda, after impersonating the Prince's beloved, actually becomes his fiancée.

Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté recalls Comme ci(ou comme ça). In the latter, the events of the inner play induce the performers of the outer play to act out what had been staged before their eyes. In Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté, a similar situation is depicted. In a cottage high in the German Alps, Antoine's friends gather for the reading of his will. Snowed in by an avalanche, they spend a few days waiting for rescuers and reminiscing about their lost friend.

It is learned that Antoine, a dramatist, had three years previously, written and privately staged a play in which he envisioned his friends' behaviour at the reading of his will. The third act is mainly a flashback in which the spectators are led back to that private performance and become aware that it is an exact copy of what had actually occurred in the first act. The friends had unconsciously realised the illusion fabricated by Antoine.

In Pauvre Bitos ou le Dîner des têtes the illusion of the dîner des têtes gives way to the reality of a humiliation of Bitos. The delicate dividing line is breached and the attacks supposedly aimed at Robespierre by his fellow revolutionaries become accusations made at Bitos himself by the other guests. Deschamps, who nurtures some resentment against Bitos, admits:

"Je ne vois pas ce qui pourrait me gêner, monsieur. Au contraire, je suis ravi de l'occasion que vous me donnez de redire à André Bitos sous la masque de Camille ce que je pense de lui."<sup>15</sup>

Bitos senses this undercurrent; he immediately stops the action to voice his disapproval and threatens to leave. The game, however, is continued and in the double language used Bitos remains the butt of the criticism.

As Pirandello had illustrated in La Vie que je t'ai donnée, illusion does not always carry the day. Anouilh follows the Italian dramatist's belief that every particular situation must be judged independently and can thus be given its own solution, different from all the others. Relativity is again the guiding rule, rendering Anouilh's theatrical situations as varied and versatile as Pirandello's

had been. For this reason, one finds that there are several instances in which Anouilh's characters must face reality and forego their illusions. Thérèse, in La Sauvage, realises that she could never shed her past and become Florent's wife. Like Ersilia Drei in Vêtir ceux qui sont nus, she cannot don a new dress to appear socially acceptable. The concept of a gown as a way of symbolically covering up reality is expressed in La Sauvage by Thérèse's elaborate wedding dress, and is reminiscent of the white gown which Jeannette wears for Roméo (Roméo et Jeannette) and Eurydice's dress as she walks to her death (Eurydice).

In the Pièces grinçantes reality is inescapable; illusions must eventually succumb and collapse. Such an outcome is inevitable, given della Fazia's previously quoted description of these plays. In La Valse des toréadors, the General finds that his seventeen-year-long idyll must bow to Ghislaine's and Gaston's coup de foudre. Reality has finally caught up with the old soldier; his dreams with Ghislaine were nothing else but a form of escape from his neurotic wife, his lecherous tendencies and his approaching old age. As the play draws to a close, all three of these realities are accepted -- immediately after his wife's insistent cries of "Léon", he takes the new maid by the hand and leads her off saying:

"Je suis un vieux petit garçon sans grandes exigences ... Vous ne connaissez pas mes roses? Venez, je vais vous faire faire un tour de jardin et si vous êtes sage, je vous en donnerai une ..."<sup>16</sup>

General Saint-Pé must again face the realities, this time political, social and personal, in L'Hurluberlu ou le Réactionnaire amoureux. As the play opens, the General, married to a woman many years younger than himself, indulges in a number of illusions. The two principal ones involve a desperate attempt to keep his young wife entertained and an absurd plan to save France from corruption and decadence. His daughter, prone to numerous love affairs, is a third front on which the General must battle to impose his vision. His reactionary, uncompromising attitudes eventually yield before the facts of his personal life and the old General realises that sooner or later his wife will be unfaithful to him. Furthermore, he is forced to acknowledge that his daughter has been seduced by a young man who, reflecting the new generation's social mores, incomprehensible to the General, will have none of his old concepts of honour and duty. Lastly, the political plans for a renewal of France's moral patrimony fall by the wayside as each of the General's fellow conspirators submits to

17

l'esprit du siècle.

In the later plays, reality and illusion freely intermingle, leading to a confusion of time and space. The Pirandellian precursors are undoubtedly Six personnages en quête d'auteur, where imagined characters have the consistency of real actors, and Henri IV, where two different levels of existence lead into two time sections seven hundred years apart. In his earlier plays, Anouilh had indicated an interest in this area (witness the flashback techniques in Colombe and the stress on role-playing in Antigone), but he had never developed

it further.

With Pauvre Bitos ou le Dîner des têtes, Anouilh began an active study of the simultaneous existence of reality and illusion. The dividing line between Bitos and Robespierre is quite often unrecognisable; Bitos has assumed the role so well that Maxime says:  
 18  
 "Il se croit Robespierre." Later on, when Bitos faints from fright, Anouilh presents on stage the dream sequence in which Bitos relives Robespierre's last days of liberty. This is doubly significant in that it shows the extent to which Bitos has assumed the character of Robespierre and is a technical image, visible on stage, of Bitos' own dislocation of time and space.

In Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron, dream sequences are constantly shown on stage. Reality and illusion are no longer kept somewhat separate by means of scenes, but are delicately fused, as characters from the imagination of either father, mother or child move and speak on stage unseen and unheard by the others. In this manner a visual dramatic image is presented depicting the consistency which these visions possess for their creators.

In Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père ce héros, a series of different scenes presents portions of time and space taken at random; they are suspended intervals, each viable on its own and each needing no outside point of reference. For this reason there is no possibility of an identification of a "now" or a "then" until the entire play is over and is examined in retrospect. At this time one can suppose that the very last scene depicts the present and takes place "en Bretagne,

au bord de la mer, le 14 juillet 1960", while all the previous ones  
 19  
 can be placed "dans la tête de l'auteur". Throughout the play the  
 spectator is kept in a state of fascinating uncertainty, with respect  
 to the question of time, that blurs the lines separating reality and  
 illusion.

This kind of atmosphere is conducive, as it had been in Six  
personnages en quête d'auteur, to the creation on stage of a character  
 who is deemed to be indispensable. In the Italian play, artistic  
 necessity had given birth to Madame Pace; in Anouilh's La Grotte,  
 the Author finds that he must resuscitate Marie-Jeanne in order to  
 present certain important elements of the story.

"La Marie-Jeanne ... C'est pour essayer de la faire revivre,  
 pour la sortir du monde vague des idées possibles et lui  
 donner, avec mon faible pouvoir, deux sous de réalité, que  
 j'avais voulu écrire cette pièce ... Il ne pouvait donc pas  
 être question de la tuer avant le lever du rideau ... "20

Unlike the imagined characters that populate the stage of Le Boulanger,  
la boulangère et le petit mitron, Marie-Jeanne has a physical consistency  
 and a role in the play that render her completely credible as a  
 dramatic character per se. There is absolutely no question of her  
 being "less real" than the maids, the butler, the Inspector or even  
 the Author.

In Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père ce héros, the confusion  
 between reality and illusion allows the author to accentuate Antoine's  
 obsession with his past. By reliving previous experiences, Antoine  
 feels again the impact that they had on him, thus reaffirming their  
 value with respect to the present. The past is irreversible; it will

continue to exist in its original form throughout the character's life, influencing it and directing it along a certain path. It is this realization that convinces Thérèse to forego her marriage with Florent, or gives Eurydice the strength to leave Orphée. Similarly Antoine will constantly be hounded by his grandmother's reprimand: "Et les poissons rouges? Qui a pissé dans les poissons rouges?"<sup>21</sup>

Speaking of the encounters between the General and his wife in La Valse des toréadors, della Fazio states:

"Their scenes are especially depressing and tragic for we know that no matter how deep the offenses are, the couple is inseparable. Amélie and the General will never shed each other, just as their pasts will never be shed."<sup>22</sup>

The hardships inherent in the continual presence of the past are paralleled to the love-hate relationship that dominates this aging couple.

In Ornifle ou le Courant d'air, the past is personified in the figure of Fabrice, who confronts his father with a list of the latter's ex-mistresses. Ornifle, who had been skirting his obligations in his light-hearted cavalcade from romance to romance, must now face his past; he accepts the adult offspring who confronts him, and decides to give him paternal assistance.

Ornifle is a personage quite accustomed to character changes; even his poetical work shows two completely different approaches and reflects his protean quality:

"De cette ignoble période grecque, par une étrange contradiction, vous avez pourtant rapporté un recueil de poèmes; les plus purs,

les plus déchirants qui aient été écrits depuis Apollinaire. Tout Paris se plut à saluer en vous l'espoir de la jeune génération! ... Trois mois après la parution de votre livre -- à cause duquel deux jeunes filles s'étaient suicidées d'admiration en province -- vous acceptiez de faire les couplets de la nouvelle revue du Casino de Paris!"<sup>23</sup>

Ornifle's change gives his personality a multiplicity which does not permit definitive knowledge of his character. As Pirandello had shown by way of Vitelangelo Moscarda in Un, personne et cent mille, or through his numerous plays, a person's character is indefinable. Complete self-knowledge is an impossibility, since other persons' views are aspects of one's personality. This concept has been taken up by other modern writers, especially those with existentialist leanings; the Sartrean "regard d'autrui", as presented in Huis Clos, is reminiscent of the Father's dismay in Six personnages en quête d'auteur.

The concept of the multiplicity of human personality is found in a large number of Anouilh's plays. The dual reality of Gaston/Jacques in Le Voyageur sans bagages recalls Henri IV's dramatic personality split. Costume changes are visual reminders of the changing aspects of a man; in Le Bal des voleurs, Gustave spends most of his time desperately trying to remember which of his impersonations was the one with which Juliette had fallen in love. The thieves are successful thanks to their masquerade and the unfortunate DuPont-DuFords are arrested and charged with theft on account of their costumes. Della Fazio notes:

"All the characters in Le Bal des voleurs illustrate the theory exposed by Baldovino in La Volupté de l'honneur that we 'make ourselves over' in accordance with the particular



circumstances in which we find ourselves."

At times Anouilh seems very reluctant to accept the peaceful co-existence of several personalities within the same person. He places his characters in such a position that they are literally forced to choose one way or the other. Antigone loves both life and purity, but in her situation she must forego Hémon and consecrate herself on the altar of Justice. This compelling desire to make a choice seems to disappear in the Pièces grinçantes; compromise with life includes a de facto acceptance of persons as they are, not a desperate attempt to be true to what one should be.

In La Valse des toréadors the characters acquire a multiplicity which is illustrated in their own views of themselves, in the opinions of others and in the particular situation in which they find themselves. As the curtain rises, the neurotic ramblings of Amélie present a very biased portrait of the General. Although it might appear that he is working on his memoirs or writing a letter to M. Poincaré, the fact is immediately pointed out that what goes on in a person's mind is an aspect of his personality which is just as important and just as valid as what he does or as what others think of him. By this token the General's supposed erotic fantasies become a reality and he is immediately classified as a latter-day Casanova. In act four, which is a bitter confrontation between the General and his wife, Mme Saint-Pé continues to see her husband as a lascivious woman-chaser and attributes to him affairs or pseudo-affairs with Mme Tardieu, the house maids and

even the girls from the near-by school. There might be some truth in such an image of the General, for he does sometimes reveal himself as such to the audience (his sexual advances at Mme Dupont-Fredaine and at the maid, or his conversations with the doctor and with Gaston). However, Léon Saint-Pé the womanizer is contrasted with Léon Saint-Pé the devoted husband, for, in spite of his wife's naggings, he has remained with her all these years. Furthermore, one could assume from the conclusion of the play that he will always be with her. His occasional escapades and affairs seem to be something totally irrelevant to his attachment to her.

He is also devoted to Mlle de Sainte-Euverte. His love for her has induced him to respect her virginity and to keep alive for seventeen years not only their platonic relationship but the hope of a possible respectable union in marriage. He does not see her as a sexual object (as for example he sees the maids), but as a woman with whom he wishes to be involved properly and legally.

Aside from Amélie's View of the General, one must also consider Mlle de Sainte-Euverte's; one would say there were two different generals involved. Ghislaine's image of him is one of a dashing, gallant young man who is sacrificing his love for her for the sake of his legal and moral obligations to his wife. Léon is no Casanova, hopping from one affair to the next. Rather, he appears to be the exact opposite, constantly avoiding any possible compromising situation. It is against this prudishness that Ghislaine finally rebels when she falls in love with Gaston, for, with the latter, life and love are a series of passions

which must be instantly appeased.

To these portraits, one must add the General's own view of himself, since he is the only person with first-hand knowledge of the majority of his avatars. His bombastic vision of himself on his African campaigns should be taken into consideration, but could be dismissed as the rantings of a typical old soldier. This aspect, though it is obviously superficial and though others easily see through it, is considered by the General to be a true and very important part of himself; he really believes himself to be a great warrior.

Similarly he consistently recedes into his past, reliving the image of himself as the dashing lieutenant at the Saumur Ball. He becomes in this manner the young career soldier with plenty of ambition and assured fame. The numerous flashbacks, besides revealing the General's own idealisation of his youth, point out clearly that, when he is faced with the harshness of reality, the General needs to escape into a more secure and more rewarding world.

Aside from his wishes to be a great soldier and a dashing young man, the General realises full well that his well decorated exterior conceals an empty interior:

"Docteur, je vous ai dit ma vie en deux mots. La coquille est belle, on m'a peint dessus des feuilles de chêne et je ne sais combien de décorations; [. . .] je me tape la caisse comme un gorille et chacun dit: 'Voilà un homme!' Hé bien, la coquille est vide. Il n'y a rien dedans. Je suis tout seul et j'ai peur."<sup>25</sup>

The traditional concept of self-knowledge, looking deep into

oneself to find a supposed "true essence", raised such a feeling of Angst in the General that he immediately sought escape in appearances:

"Je sais ce que vous allez me dire. Il faut rentrer en soi-même. J'ai essayé cela aussi. Je suis rentré en moi-même plusieurs fois. Seulement, voilà, il n'y avait personne. Alors, au bout d'un moment, j'ai eu peur et je suis ressorti faire du bruit dehors pour me rassurer."<sup>26</sup>

From such a statement one can see how the General could be seen as un, personne et cent mille.

A similar detailed study of Amélie would reveal that she too appears as completely a different person according to the observer and the situation. Léon has labelled his wife as a frustrated actress who continues to act even when she is off-stage. An uneducated woman of dubious background, she should, according to the General, be thankful that he was gracious enough to marry her and elevate her to better stature. For the doctor, however, she is an attractive and charming woman who creates a stir in men's hearts. To Ghislaine she is an adulterous, domineering woman who is an obstacle to her own devotion for Léon. The Pirandellian echos are undeniable; even in such an apparently simple play as La Valse des toréadors, the personality of the main characters is so multiple and changing that a true self cannot be isolated.

Bitos, looking into himself, says: "Personne n'aura jamais <sup>27</sup> besoin de savoir qui j'étais. Je n'étais rien", thus echoing both Léon's anguished cry and Vitelangelo Moscarda's "ce corps en lui-même <sup>28</sup> n'était rien, ni personne." The characters of Anouilh's Pièces grincantes experience very deeply that sentiment of metaphysical

anguish that had been expressed in Pirandello's work. They realise that they are mere images, be it of their or someone else's imagination, of no greater consistency than an image in a mirror.

Pirandello's application of mirror imagery was obvious and to the point: Laudisi spoke to his reflection in a mirror, Henri IV talked of colouring one's hair only to deceive one's image in a looking-glass. Anouilh camouflages this leitmotif, but the awesome nature of reflections remains everpresent. The actress Carlotta, in Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté confesses:

"Il faut ignorer les miroirs. Ce sont des pièges à faibles. Moi je ne me regarde jamais que dans un de mes anciens portraits. J'en ai d'admirables par les plus grands peintres de notre temps. Cela me suffit."<sup>29</sup>

The image of identical twins, another form of reflection, had appeared in L'Invitation au château; in Ardèle ou la Marguérite it is given a curious twist in the figures of the Count and Villardieu.

"Rien ne doit permettre de distinguer le comte de Villardieu. Même moustaches, même col trop haut, même monocle, même cul de singe derrière la tête, même distinction et sans doute même club."<sup>30</sup>

The husband and lover become reflections one of the other in their appearance, behaviour and emotions. A certain amount of comical confusion arises from Villardieu's jealousy of his mistress' husband and from the Countess' attitude towards the Count. In the peculiar outlooks of the members of this menage à trois, personality and roles seem to be reflected through the prism of a distorted mirror, producing at times grotesque and absurd images. For this reason the

mirror's implied comment on personality hides a rather painful sting under the mantle of comedy.

Given the protean nature of personality, the feeling of nothingness which is to be experienced when looking into one's inner self, and the insubstantial nature of reflection, a character will seek to mould himself in a certain fashion so as to present at least a semblance of solidity. This is the Pirandellian costruirsi which had been epitomised in Ersilia Drei and had been reflected in most of the Italian dramatist's plays. Anouilh adopts it and illustrates it through characters such as Ornifle who, with the help of modern journalistic techniques, creates for himself the image of a poet. Bitos also builds himself; through stoicism and will-power he makes of himself a powerful, intransigent public prosecutor, whose devotion to duty diminishes the emotional hardships of responsibility. Julien notes:

"Et d'ailleurs, Bitos n'est pas un assassin, c'est un 31  
magistrat, il ne faisait, en principe, que son devoir."

By building for themselves a public front which is to their own liking, the characters attempt to surmount the hardships of existence.

From the foregoing detailed examination, one point seems to emerge; there is a thematic richness and diversity within Anouilh's work that enhances his merits as a dramatist. At times it might have appeared as though Anouilh merely imitated Pirandello or, in Werri's words, frenchified him, but this is hardly the case. The Pirandellian themes are indeed present, but they are subordinated to Anouilh's principal concerns, which always remain the true basis for his artistic merits. The conflict between the race of the pure and the race of

compromisers, Anouilh's political outlooks in plays such as Antigone, La Foire d'empoigne, Pauvre Bitos ou le Dîner des têtes, L'Alouette, his social commentary, and, in a lighter vein, his boulevard plays, all these aspects of his work establish him as an individualistic and versatile dramatist in his own right. Bishop's acknowledgement that no playwright writes in a vacuum is a point which ought to be kept in mind when dealing with Anouilh but which should not be allowed to detract from his proven worth.

## Notes to Chapter III

- <sup>1</sup>Alba-Maria della Fazio, "Pirandello and his French Echo: Anouilh", Modern Drama, VI (1963-1964), 346-367.
- <sup>2</sup>Paul Werri, Théâtre de la fuite (Brussels and Paris: Les Ecrits, 1943), p. 186.
- <sup>3</sup>Henri Clouard, Histoire de la littérature française, II (Paris: Albin Michel, 1949), p. 463.
- <sup>4</sup>Thomas Bishop, Pirandello and the French Theater (New York: New York University Press, 1960), p. 17.
- <sup>5</sup>Jean Anouilh, La Grotte (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1961), p. 20.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 176.
- <sup>7</sup>Jean Anouilh, Pièces grinçantes (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1957), pp. 377-378.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 14.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 37.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 56.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 61.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 79.
- <sup>13</sup>One of the major themes in Anouilh's work is the confrontation between the two races which he believes exist in this world. There is an heroic race, composed of pure people who are unbending in their vision (Antigone, Thérèse, Jeanne d'Arc, Becket), and a mediocre race composed of people who forego ideals and seek to reach compromises in order to lead a more peaceful existence (Créon, Florent, Cauchon, king Henri).
- <sup>14</sup>Alba della Fazio, Jean Anouilh (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1969), p. 86.
- <sup>15</sup>Jean Anouilh, Pièces grinçantes, op. cit., p. 389.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 210.



<sup>17</sup> Jean Anouilh, L'Hurluberlu ou le Réactionnaire amoureux (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1959), p. 181.

<sup>18</sup> Jean Anouilh, Pièces grinçantes, op. cit., p. 377.

<sup>19</sup> Jean Anouilh, Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père ce héros (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1970), p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Anouilh, La Grotte, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> Jean Anouilh, Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père ce héros, op. cit., pp. 10, 16. See also pp. 92 and 213.

<sup>22</sup> Alba della Fazia, Jean Anouilh, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> Jean Anouilh, Pièces grinçantes, op. cit., p. 323.

<sup>24</sup> Alba-Maria della Fazia, "Luigi Pirandello and Jean Anouilh" (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1954), p. 45.

<sup>25</sup> Jean Anouilh, Pièces grinçantes, op. cit., p. 134.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 466.

<sup>28</sup> As quoted in Gilbert Bossetti, Pirandello (Paris: Bordas, 1971), p. 93.

<sup>29</sup> Jean Anouilh, Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1969), pp. 28-29.

<sup>30</sup> Jean Anouilh, Pièces grinçantes, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 386.

#### IV

#### ANOUILH'S USAGE OF PIRANDELLIAN TECHNIQUES

It is a truism to say that Pirandello was a major force in the development of modern dramatic technique. Anouilh goes so far as to write derisively of those who cling to outworn dramatic formulas in the post-Pirandellian period:

"Je sais bien qu'une école d'auteurs, bien vue de ses maîtres, s'escrime encore à construire des pièces 'bien faites', à fignoler l'anecdote, croyant encore que le salut est là, après le coup de balai de Pirandello dans Six Personnages." <sup>1</sup>

It seems as though Six personnages en quête d'auteur is to be considered one of the turning points of French, if not international, theatre.

In the Italian play, theatrical technique far from being camouflaged, was brought into the open together with a discussion on the problems of artistic creation. The problems of the actor had fascinated men of the theatre as early as Diderot and as recently as Copeau and Stanislavsky. Pirandello, long before Artaud's essays were published, illustrated the discrepancies between characters and actors by presenting them both simultaneously on the same stage. Since actors cannot recreate life but can only suggest it, the illusion of the theatre remains nothing more than an illusion evident to all.

Pirandello seized on this and, to stress the point, used psychological and at other times even facial masks, as the old

commedia dell'arte had done. Actual physical masks were suggested for the characters of Six personnages en quête d'auteur, facial make-up was used in Henri IV and role-playing was evident in the majority of his plays.

Anouilh also relied heavily on the concept of the mask, expressing it sometimes directly and sometimes in an attenuated form, such as the obsession with dressing up, with donning a disguise, which is evident in several plays, among them Colombe, La Répétition ou l'Amour puni, and Le Rendez-vous de Senlis. In Becket ou l'Honneur de Dieu, for example, Becket assumes the role of king's counsellor or of archibishop according to the costume he wears, and then he seeks perfection on grounds of appearance, not of devotion.

In the one-act play Episode de la vie d'un auteur, Anouilh's stage directions explicitly call for the use of a physical mask which is to be a vivid contrast to the otherwise natural and realistic appearance of the characters:

"Tous les personnages de ce petit acte sont réalistes, les femmes sont charmantes mais --ce détail de mise en scène est indispensable -- tout le monde porte un faux nez."<sup>2</sup>

The facial mask is put to particularly effective use in Pauvre Bitos ou le Dîner des têtes; all the characters have disguised their heads to resemble given characters of the French Revolution. They have also had to do historical research on their own particular character so as to present an acceptable approximation of the original. Such premises are very reminiscent of the ground rules for the

carnival cavalcade in which Henri IV had participated.

Bitos is more susceptible than the other diners to fully assuming his role not only because of his personal identification with Robespierre, but also because of his costume. Not having been made aware that the event was a dîner des têtes, as opposed to a masquerade, Bitos has arrived in full costume, only to find himself differentiated from the other guests. This, Maxime notes, will render Bitos' impersonation of Robespierre all the more believable. However, it will also facilitate Bitos' character switch. In Henri IV, Henri's great interest in the preparation for the assumption of his role had been a similar catalyst.

The costume as an extension of the mask concept, is an important element in other plays; General Saint-Pé, when recounting his confrontation with the hunchback tutor (Ardèle ou la Marguerite), tells of how he donned his full dress uniform, complete with decorations, in order to impress and baffle his opponent. Fabrice, about to shoot Ornifle, literally begs his father to remove the Molièresque wig so as not to appear ridiculous in death. Speaking of Le Bal des voleurs, Fletcher recalls Evreinov's theories when he says:

"Throughout it, there runs the metaphor of life seen as the acting out of arbitrarily assigned roles, for which one must constantly dress up and assume disguises."<sup>3</sup>

Play-acting becomes an important aspect of the performance. Pirandello had stressed it in Six personnages en quête d'auteur, in Ce soir on improvise and in Henri IV. Anouilh incorporated it in the

behaviour of many of his characters. The General in La Valse des toréadors gives a witty and shrewd appraisal of his wife:

"Vous savez que ma femme était cantatrice. Elle beuglait la Walkyrie à l'Opéra. L'épousant je lui fis renoncer au théâtre, pour mon malheur. Elle devait continuer à jouer pour moi tout seul. Une représentation à son bénéfice qui dure depuis plus de vingt ans."<sup>4</sup>

For Ornifle ou le Courant d'air, John Harvey notes:

"play-acting is about all Fabrice can do: at present he is performing as the Avenger of Family Honor; in an earlier chapter we saw him as the Reproachful Lover; and soon he will be the Selfless Physician."<sup>5</sup>

The type of the great actress who acts even off-stage was first incarnated by Madame Alexandra in Colombe. In Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté, it is seen in Carlotta, the grande dame or monstre sacré of the stage. Anouilh's directions describe her as "enveloppée de voiles sombres et surmontée d'aigrettes comme une reine de Shakespeare".<sup>6</sup> Her off-stage actions are an extension of her roles: "Elle embrasse théâtralement Valérie. [. . .] Elle éclate de son rire célèbre et s'arrête soudain tragique".<sup>7</sup>

Such roles become so stylised that they seem to recall the commedia dell'arte. Pirandello had, in several plays, suggested the advantages of commedia dell'arte techniques<sup>8</sup> and Anouilh seems to have followed this suggestion. His use of masks and character types illustrates this point. In Anouilh's theatre, the miles gloriosus is seen in General Saint-Pé, while Pédelièvre, who is "très universitaire",<sup>9</sup> recalls the pedant; the fumbling doctors Subitès and Galopin, although they can be traced to Molière's doctors, owe

a great deal to the commedia's Dottor Balanzon; the ubiquitous couple of young lovers is reflected in Nicolas and Nathalie, Fabrice and Marguérite, the Séminariste and Ardèle.

Della Fazio attributes to Anouilh the creation of modern masks such as the rich old aunt (Mme Desmormorts, Lady Hurf), the mother who is more interested in her own career than in her children's upbringing (Mme Tarde, Madame Alexandra), or the third rate travelling<sup>10</sup> artist (the Tarde family, Orphée and his father). It is at this point that we find Anouilh reaching beyond the sphere of Pirandello, extending the traditional notion of mask into a strikingly modern<sup>11</sup> expression.

Improvisation, which Pirandello had called for, especially<sup>12</sup> in Ce soir on improvise and Comme ci (ou comme ça), seems to have interested Anouilh; in a brief footnote of La Répétition ou l'Amour puni the author suggests that actors and directors may modify or<sup>13</sup> omit passages at their discretion. In a number of other plays there are numerous short scenes intended to be completely improvised. In Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté the scene in which Estelle serves coffee to her guests is to be played spontaneously; in the stage directions Anouilh indicates a few typical responses, but otherwise leaves the actors free to create as they see fit. Della Fazio finds that in Anouilh's plays there is room enough for improvisation to<sup>14</sup> satisfy any particular troupe or audience.

From masks and improvisation to the concept of "playing" with the characters, the step is a short one. In one of his rare interviews,

Anouilh acknowledges the characters' own independent existence and the possibility on the part of the writer to play with them. This realization, he says, had been the turning point of his career as a dramatist:

"--Quel élément nouveau vint, en 1936, changer le visage de votre oeuvre? Avons-nous demandé à Jean Anouilh.

Anouilh le définit d'un mot: le Jeu. En 1936 il découvrit qu'un sujet ne se traitait point forcément dans sa rigueur naïve, dans sa simplicité ou sa rudesse naturelle, que l'auteur dramatique pouvait et devait jouer avec ses personnages, avec leurs passions, avec leurs intrigues."<sup>15</sup>

There is a game of pretending which can be detected in Anouilh's abundant use of costumes, roles and masks. There is also a game involving creator, interpreter and spectator which is more evident in the later plays, where Anouilh seizes on theatricality and expands on it, recalling very much Pirandello's trilogy of the theatre-within-the-theatre. Such a technique, which leads Fletcher to consider La Grotte (1960), Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron (1968), Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté (1969), and Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père ce héros (1970) as "a period [ . . . ] in which the paramount<sup>16</sup> influence is without a doubt that of Pirandello", does not however restrict itself to such a late period in Anouilh's production.

Theatricality is present in the majority of Anouilh's plays.

John Harvey points out a duality which would be useful to keep in mind: there is an aesthetic and a psychological theatricalism.

Aesthetic theatricalism is rooted on the following premise:

"any art is more effective and honest when its medium is exposed than when it is concealed. In theory this meant that a dramatist might intensify his hold on an audience by openly

17

exploiting a play's artificiality or staginess."

Anouilh does in fact take full advantage of the possibilities of this premise, delighting in showing his audience the artist at work.

The fourth stage-wall convention had been breached in Antigone, when the Chorus spoke directly to the audience in order to introduce the characters on stage, discuss tragedy and comment on the action. In L'Alouette the audience found itself implicated in the dramatic process when Beaudricourt arrives on stage from the back of the auditorium and Charles addresses himself directly to the spectators.

In La Grotte the audience is again involved in the action on stage. As the curtain rises, the Author steps forth and speaks to the audience. In a long monologue he admits that he has never been able to write this play, tells those spectators who might be unhappy that they may be reimbursed the price of their ticket, and then continues with considerations on plot, characters and artistic creation. This is very reminiscent of Pirandello's preface to Six personages en quête d'auteur. The Author does in fact admit the resemblances with Pirandello, but notes:

"D'abord vous vous apercevrez que ce n'est pas exactement la même chose et puis, ensuite, cela prouverait seulement qu'il a dû avoir des ennuis avec une pièce lui aussi, Pirandello ..."<sup>18</sup>

The Author's anticipation of criticism and his response to it do not deter critics such as Fletcher from capitalising on the parallels:



'La Grotte (1960) could be called Anouilh's own Six Characters; as in Pirandello's play, we see the author in the throes of composition, with the characters taking shape and, at the decisive moment, assuming an autonomous existence. The nominal 'plot' of the play is that of a detective-story -- but plot is of a minimal importance: what matters is the relationship between the dramatist and his characters, the various possible ways of presenting 'character' and 'action' in a play."<sup>19</sup>

In Pirandello's trilogy of the theatre-within-the-theatre, several levels of existence were detected. This is also the case with many of Anouilh's plays; he often includes other plays or play-acting in the main story-line, thus creating different levels. In Colombe he had incorporated the conclusion of an imaginary play, La Maréchale d'amour, into the beginning of the fourth act. The two levels, however, had remained completely separate. In La Répétition ou l'Amour puni, a Marivaux play, La Double inconstance, is this time so intermingled with the plot that it leads to a certain amount of confusion between the two levels. The Count's belief that the Marivaux play should rise slowly and inadvertently from amongst the banquet guests is at the basis of this mingling of art and life.

In La Grotte and in Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté, a secondary play is again included into the main plot. In the former, as Fletcher had noted, the detective-story is subordinate to the question of artistic creation. It does, however, allow a number of different levels to exist: the characters in the murder story would be in the first of a number of concentric rings; moving out, these same characters could be placed on the second circle, since they are asked to perform at given times and therefore they also exist as actors;

the Author and the Inspector would occupy the third ring since they are outside the main action, directing and commenting on it; the audience, which observes all the proceedings, would then be on the fourth and outermost circle.

All these levels of existence do not remain separate identities, but often overlap one with the other. The Inspector is in fact a member of the first three circles since he is a character involved in the murder-story, an actor waiting for his turn to perform, and a commentator of the presentation. In the second act, the Author, who had remained on the third circle, directing and discussing events, suddenly enters the first circle and becomes a part of Marie-Jeanne's death scene. The audience itself is not allowed to remain aloof; the Author's direct manner of address involves the public in active participation by way of critical analysis. The Author presents the following image to illustrate his sentiments on audiences:

"Le théâtre, c'est une partie où le public reçoit, une fois sur deux, le ballon sur la tête; si le ballon tombe dans un coin de la salle où il y a des maladroits qui ne savent pas le renvoyer la partie n'est pas bonne, voilà tout. Mais nous, nous nous sommes entraînés, six semaines, pas vous. J'ai toujours pensé, pour ma part, qu'il faudrait faire répéter aussi les spectateurs et les critiques. On aurait beaucoup moins de fous."<sup>20</sup>

Pirandello's idea of mingling rehearsed actors with his audience (Ce soir on improvise) certainly did anticipate the Author's views.

In Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté, the inner play again demonstrates Anouilh's technique of incorporating a play into another. This time the effect is much more powerful because, when the inner-play

comes to an end, the figure of Antoine is allowed to remain on stage, a phantasmal apparition observing the behaviour of his past friends.

Other works of Anouilh contain an unrehearsed inner play which is more akin to play-acting. In Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, the hired actors are to present a picture of the ideal parents, in Léocadia Amanda is to represent the dead Italian actress, in L'Invitation au château Isabella is to interpret the role of a glamorous heiress, each in an ad lib., improvised manner which is to be adapted to the demands of the particular moment.

Pauvre Bitos ou le Dîner des têtes is based on the intention of Maxime, spurred on by ulterior motives, to stage an improvised play dealing with the period of the Reign of Terror. As in La Répétition ou l'Amour puni, the inner play is to emerge naturally from around the banquet table. Again reality and illusion mingle to create such a confusion of levels of existence that Bitos inadvertently slips into a different time sphere and becomes another character.

The question of artistic creation, which had so intrigued Pirandello, had been discussed by him first in Six personnages en quête d'auteur and then in Ce soir on improvise. While Pirandello had called the former commedia da fare,<sup>21</sup> in La Grotte the Author<sup>22</sup> describes Anouilh's play as a pièce [. . .] à faire. Although the set for the French work is not the naked stage of the Italian one, Anouilh's indication that "rien n'a l'air vrai ni dans l'un ni dans l'autre décor",<sup>23</sup> forces the audience to be constantly aware of the

artificial aspects of the presentation. On what remains a stage in a theatre, both dramatists illustrate the inability of the creative process to give a truthful representation of real life through the medium of the theatre.

The Author's difficulties in La Grotte stem from the fact that all the nuances and aspects of the story cannot be reproduced. He seeks to assert some sort of control on the direction of the presentation but finds a number of obstacles: characters, such as the Séminariste, exist per se and cannot be altered; certain truths are unclear and have to be investigated; the characters feel restricted, if not repressed, by the Author's manipulation of the dénouement.

The actors of Ce soir on improvise revolted against Hinkfuss; the characters of La Grotte voice their problem to the Author and confront him with an ultimatum. The Séminariste, their spokesman, says:

"C'est une histoire atroce, Monsieur, inhumaine, mais maintenant qu'elle est à demi vraie, si nous ne devons pas la jouer honnêtement, mes camarades et moi, nous avons le sentiment qu'il vaut mieux que nous rentrions dans notre néant. [. . .] nous sommes là maintenant, Monsieur, nous avons commencé à la vivre et il faut considérer cela. [. . .] Alors maintenant, il faut nous laisser. Ne plus intervenir jusqu'à la fin. [. . .] Si vous êtes d'accord pour nous laisser faire, je vais monter là-haut et je vais prendre la scène des enfants et après, il faudra que tout se déroule dans l'ordre. Sinon, acceptez que nous disparaissions."<sup>24</sup>

The Author agrees to allow the characters freedom to control the action, but the turn which events take induces him to leave, thus reflecting, in a subdued manner, the eviction of Hinkfuss from the theatre. With the characters in command, as the actors were in Ce soir on improvise, the drama darkens consistently until its blacker

overtones begin to assert themselves. The Author soon feels compelled to reassert his authority and takes charge of the situation, but events have developed in such a manner that he is left nearly powerless.

Although the play ends with the discovery of the alleged murderer, the Author seems extremely disenchanted; the play did not evolve in the manner in which he would have wished. His last words indicate that the only constructive result is the termination of the play he was unable to write. The composition of a pièce à faire, proposed at the beginning, has had an unsatisfactory conclusion; this was the case with Pirandello's commedia da fare, which ended in utmost confusion.

In Ce soir on improvise, Pirandello had given the process of dramatic creation another chance to prove its worth, this time by stressing the improvisation techniques and the pure theatricality of the old commedia dell'arte. Anouilh has not yet presented a play where these two techniques are dominant aspects, but he has used them to a lesser extent in other works. Total improvisation has been mentioned with respect to La Répétition ou l'Amour puni. Improvisation within guidelines is abundant in plays with an "unwritten" inner plot (Pauvre Bitos ou le Dîner des têtes, La Grotte), or concerned with play-acting (Le Rendez-vous de Senlis, L'Invitation au château).

In Anouilh's work, settings are not meant to be conducive to maintaining the illusion of the theatre, but rather they stress the fact that one is viewing a spectacle on a stage. The author's

suggestion for the décor of La Grotte has already been mentioned. To  
 this one could add the directions for Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père  
ce héros ("Un décor vague, ou peut-être le plateau nu" ), the few  
 simple objects "disposés dans le vide noir" in Le Boulanger, la  
boulangère et le petit mitron . The stylised paper horses used  
 in the Anouilh-Piétri production of Becket ou l'Honneur de Dieu have  
 a similar effect.

A number of plays, however, do have complicated and elaborate  
 stage settings. These, della Fazio suggests, are used to accentuate  
 contrasts and emphasize the phantasy element:

"Both Pirandello and Anouilh, then, use the technique of  
 contrasts in their stage sets. Pirandello usually preferred  
 the simplest of sets so that only the psychological or  
 metaphysical problem could be seen by the spectator, while  
 Anouilh often describes specific objects in his settings to  
 accentuate the fantasy of his characters. But whether the  
 settings for Pirandello's or Anouilh's plays are realistic  
 and simple or vague and fantastic, they always serve, in  
 relation to the characters and plot, as dramatic contrasts  
 to enhance the particular reality or illusion portrayed."<sup>30</sup>

John Harvey, while speaking of Anouilh's theatricality,  
 includes the bright lighting, often achieved by means of footlights  
 rather than spotlights, for it recalls the happy, gay world of fin  
de siècle theatre. He continues by mentioning the "two dimensional,  
 unreal, pictorial, artificial" stage settings, the abundant use of the  
 typical theatrical prop (in Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté Carlotta sits  
 in "un beau fauteuil de théâtre", p. 22), and the constant obsession  
 with costumes and dressing up.

Language is also one of the major elements sustaining the atmosphere of theatricality. At times, a comment by one of the characters is sufficient to recall the artificiality of the presentation. Cravatar's exclamation that the avalanche is of bad theatrical taste is quickly refuted by Carlotta, who claims: "C'est admirable! C'est  
 32  
 du Sardou", thus making the audience aware that such a technique is merely a question of stylistic preference.

Throughout the plays, there are innumerable references to the world of the theatre. These are usually one-line comments, but they recur with such consistency that the illusion of the theatre remains evident. Words like Ornifle's "nous débiterons par la fin du  
 33  
 programme" or the Count's "Heureusement que nous sommes ridicules,  
 34  
 sans quoi cela serait vraiment trop triste, cette histoire", are aspects of the aesthetic theatricality of language, but they also possess elements of a deeper, more spiritual concept.

Speaking of theatricalism, John Harvey had seen, aside from the aesthetic one, a second premise:

"Theatricalism seemed to derive in the second place, from a universal, deeply rooted human tendency to pretend and to savour pretending in others. Sometimes referred to as histrionic sensibility, the trait suggests a human capacity to transform life into a continuous performance."<sup>35</sup>

Such a concept sends us back once more to Evreinov's theories and to Pirandello's ideas on the question of reality. Anouilh has assimilated them, for it is evident from his works that he envisions life itself on a theatrical basis. Guicharnaud states it unequivocally:

"Every one of Anouilh's plays, except for the very first, is dominated by a theatrical vision of life."<sup>36</sup>

Histrionic sensibility is capitalised upon by the Count (Tigre) and by Maxime; both men seek to give birth to a play, whether written or improvised, by allowing the guests at their dinner table to assume a given character and perform in a natural manner. The ensuing play is not an exterior event, but grows spontaneously from a theatrical spirit present within the group.

In Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté, the inner play again reflects psychological theatricality; Antoine, three years previously, had been able to imagine as a dramatist the behaviour of his friends at the reading of his will. This had been consistent with his vision of life, moulded as it was on artistic creation and on theatre. For Antoine, events sought to imitate art, and not vice versa, thus making of the artist a poet-prophet:

"Ce que les professeurs, qui savent tout, ne sauront jamais, Piedelièvre, malgré toutes leurs nuits blanches, ce sont les secrets de la création. Moi qui suis du même métier que Molière -- toutes proportions gardées -- je puis vous le dire: on écrit toujours ce qui va se passer et on le vit ensuite. C'est dans la joie fragile de sa lune de miel que Molière a vécu la première trahison d'Armande."<sup>37</sup>

The outcome of Comme ci (ou comme ça) had shown how life did indeed reflect or copy events on stage. Life, however, does not have the technical consistency, the form, which is central to the theatre, and for this reason it becomes more confused, more "unlivable":

"La vie est décidément irréaliste. 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."<sup>38</sup>

Antoine had therefore disassociated himself from life and sought refuge in his own theatrical world, where outside sentiments had to be translated into artistic language before they could be digested. For this reason Antoine hired the troupe of actors to impersonate his friends, and then unconsciously entered into the play himself through a dialogue with the jeune fille. With her assistance he caught a glimpse of the reasons and the emotions involved in his mistress' future departure, and thereby predicted the turn of real events through artistic creation.

Predicting, however, was not Antoine's only forte; he enjoyed being a director, controlling the dénouements as much as possible. He is the great puppeteer who cannot refrain from pulling the strings of his marionettes even after his death:

"Je vous ferai remarquer que nous jouons de plus en plus une pièce d'Antoine. Des gens venus de tous les azimuts sous un prétexte fortuit, qui n'ont aucune envie de se fréquenter et qui sont bloqués ensemble, par une causerie extérieure, quelque part. C'est un très vieux truc de théâtre qu'il adorait et dont il s'est beaucoup servi. [. . .] Hé bien, cette fois, ça y est, nous sommes coincés! Antoine l'aura réussi encore une fois sa fin d'acte! C'est l'avalanche! [. . .] C'est du mauvais goût! Ah, l'affreux théâtre!"<sup>40</sup>

In La Valse des toréadors, the General's belief that "il faut respecter les apparences"<sup>41</sup> illustrates his own psychological theatricality: no matter what one does, a front must be presented to

satisfy the dictates of society. In this manner, life becomes once more a play for the benefit of the performer:

"C'est un jeu qu'on a décidé de jouer parce qu'une longue expérience a appris à des tas de gens qui n'étaient plus bêtes que vous et moi, que c'était la seule façon de s'en tirer."<sup>42</sup>

Such an attitude gives rise to the question of the mask, already discussed with respect to aesthetic theatricalism, and invites an understanding of it which encompasses a psychological level as well. As Pirandello's Henri IV had so vividly shown, the mask can be and generally is a desperate attempt on the part of man to escape from anguish by playing a role. In this case it illustrates the inherent desire to "transform life into a continuous performance". When the final score is tallied, it is man the actor that wins the game.

The technical devices discussed in this chapter, masks, improvisation, play-acting and theatricality, illustrate Anouilh's previously mentioned delight in showing the artist at work. These devices, however, are not limited to the purely aesthetic or even functional aspects of the theatre; they reach into the complex psychological levels of Jean Anouilh and have indivisible links with the themes previously examined. Psychological theatricality is reflected in the confusion between reality and illusion, in the multiplicity of personality and in the concept of costruirsi. A reality created to attenuate the difficulties of existence is but an attempt to act one's part in a different play. The new

role thus assumed, results in the construction of yet another character, which in turn provides another facet to an already multiple personality. "All the world's a stage", Shakespeare had written. In Anouilh's work, the basis of this concept rests heavily on Pirandellian themes and technique.

## Notes to Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup>Jean Anouilh, "La Valse des toréadors? Que voilà une bonne pièce!", Le Figaro, No. 2293 (Jan. 23, 1952), 6.

<sup>2</sup>Jean Anouilh, Episode de la vie d'un auteur, Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud--Jean-Louis Barrault, Vol.26 (May, 1959), 61.

<sup>3</sup>John Fletcher, Forces in Modern French Drama (New York: Fredrick Ungar, 1972), p. 92.

<sup>4</sup>Jean Anouilh, Pièces grinçantes (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1957), p. 101.

<sup>5</sup>John Harvey, Jean Anouilh, a Study in Theatrics (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 169.

<sup>6</sup>Jean Anouilh, Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1969), p. 20.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 21-22

<sup>8</sup>see Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude (2nd ed.; Milano: Mondadori, 1958), I, 144 and 230-234.

<sup>9</sup>Jean Anouilh, Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>10</sup>Alba-Maria della Fazia, "Luigi Pirandello and Jean Anouilh" (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1954), p. 161 ff.

<sup>11</sup>The Vieux Colombier group, led by Jacques Copeau, had planned to create a series of modern masks in the early 1920's, but the project failed. Anouilh's efforts therefore stand as the earliest attempts at this form to be brought to fruition.

<sup>12</sup>Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 230-234, 143-144.

<sup>13</sup>Jean Anouilh, Pièces brillantes (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1951), p. 442.

<sup>14</sup>Alba della Fazia, Jean Anouilh (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc. 1969), p. 123.

<sup>15</sup>André Franck, "Le théâtre aujourd'hui: Jean Anouilh", Les Nouvelles Littéraires, No. 962 (Jan. 10, 1946), 2.

<sup>16</sup>John Fletcher, op. cit., p. 105.

- 17 John Harvey, op. cit., p. 3.
- 18 Jean Anouilh, La Grotte (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1961), p.11.
- 19 John Fletcher, op. cit., p. 105.
- 20 Jean Anouilh, La Grotte, op. cit., p. 11.
- 21 Luigi Pirandello, Maschere Nude, op. cit., I, 67.
- 22 Jean Anouilh, La Grotte, op. cit., p. 11.
- 23 Ibid., p. 9.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 134-135.
- 25 see above, p. 74.
- 26 see above, pp. 79-80.
- 27 Jean Anouilh, Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père ce héros (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1970), p. 9.
- 28 Jean Anouilh, Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1969), p. 9.
- 29 see the photograph opposite p. 97 in Paul Ginestier's book Jean Anouilh: textes de Anouilh, points de vue critique, témoignages, chronologie (Paris: Seghers, 1969).
- 30 Alba-Maria della Fazia, "Luigi Pirandello and Jean Anouilh", op. cit., p. 124.
- 31 John Harvey, op. cit., pp. 151-154.
- 32 Jean Anouilh, Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté, op. cit., p. 51.
- 33 Jean Anouilh, Pièces grinçantes, op. cit., p. 318.
- 34 Ibid., p. 65.
- 35 John Harvey, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
- 36 Jacques Guicharnaud, Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Genet (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 130.

<sup>37</sup>Jean Anouilh, Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 127-128.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 138-141.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 35, 51.

<sup>41</sup>Jean Anouilh, Pièces grinçantes, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 153-154.

## CONCLUSION

When, twenty years ago, della Fazio first studied in depth Pirandello's influence on Jean Anouilh, it became evident that, although Anouilh was a dramatist in his own right, he had been very much indebted to the Italian writer with respect to themes, technique and even situations. Since that time, Anouilh has been a prolific writer; from 1954 to the present day the number of original plays he has presented on the stage has exactly doubled. In our examination of some of these later plays, Pirandello's imprint has been found to be still present. In many instances in fact, the Pirandellian elements have been seized by Anouilh and expanded so as to become an important aspect of the play. La Grotte, like Six personnages en quête d'auteur and Ce soir on improvise, is concerned with the relationship between author, characters and plot. It is not, as we have seen, a copy of Pirandello, but a play in its own right, where the device of characters who refuse to conform to an imposed dramatic pattern is used as the focal point in an independent line of development.

Other plays as well gravitate around points which recall Pirandello. Bitos' personality switch is akin to Henri IV's, both men living consciously and unconsciously in alternating spheres of time. The question of personality as a multiplicity is an

accepted fact in plays such as La Valse des toréadors or Ornifle ou le Courant d'air. The irreversibility of the past continues to haunt the present in Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père ce héros. Bitos, Ornifle and many others admit to "making themselves up" in a manner reminiscent of the Pirandellian costruirsi. Truth is brought into question in Ardèle ou la Marguérite, and proves to be ambiguous in La Grotte. All these show that since della Fazio's study, Anouilh's fascination with Pirandellian problems and themes has grown stronger, surfacing periodically in some of his plays and moving downstage centre in the Pièces grinçantes, where the jarring vision of the world stems especially from the acute awareness of man's state in the universe.

Far from limiting Anouilh's pirandellisme to an interest in psychological problems on the nature of truth or identity, we find that there are a number of technical aspects which also evolve from Pirandello. The Italian dramatist had been aware of the possibilities offered by the theatre and had taken advantage of them in the presentation as well as in the content of his plays. In Anouilh it becomes a fundamental concept which surfaces periodically but is especially effective when, like Pirandello in his trilogy plays, he chooses the theatre as the background for his work. In La Grotte this device is obvious, since the action takes place in a theatre; in other plays it is insinuated by the presence of persons associated with the theatre or by the language employed



(Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté). An aesthetic distance is created that allows the spectator to follow the events depicted from a new perspective. In this manner the aspect of jeu present in dramatic creation is accentuated, giving rise to what could be seen as a game between creator, interpreter and audience.

From our examination of the similar themes and techniques, it is now possible to mention a further parallel, for the documentation provided in our chapters points, beyond doubt, to a resemblance in Pirandello's and Anouilh's attitudes to the world as reflected in the over-all mood of their writings. Whilst something of Anouilh's well-known pessimism can be said to be characteristic of serious twentieth-century writers, and almost commonplace, it does form yet another bond between him and Pirandello. There is a lucid understanding of man's predicament which permeates the works of both dramatists, going beyond the clever exploitation, for mere dramatic purposes, of problems of personality, of the notion of truth and so on. Although it is not our chief aim to pursue this parallel beyond this point, the link remains and should be noted.

However, when remaining within the spheres of themes and technique, it is clear that Anouilh's theatrical palette has indeed grown richer from the influence of Pirandello. Both della Fazio and Bishop draw striking parallels in details, themes and atmosphere between Anouilh's earlier plays and the works of Pirandello. We have seen that these parallels continue and are

developed in the later plays, at times being an important facet of the situation, at other times an accepted fact which needs no further elaboration. Among the latter, the thematic questions seem to be taken for granted and are relegated to a secondary level. The facets, however, which are being constantly expanded, especially in the last plays, are those dealing with technique and theatricality. What had been innovations in Antigone, L'Alouette and Becket ou l'Honneur de Dieu, become the starting points in La Grotte, Pauvre Bitos ou le Dîner des têtes and Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père ce héros. It is perhaps due to this concentration on technique that Fletcher groups the plays written after 1960 as, what he calls, Anouilh's Pirandellian period.

When using a term such as Fletcher's, or when studying the possible influences of an author upon another, one must be wary of unduly minimising the second author's own worth. In Anouilh's case this has unfortunately occurred. While some dismiss Anouilh with the claim that he merely Frenchifies Pirandello, others attack his philosophy suggesting that his techniques are standard ones or borrowed. Thomas Bishop perhaps comes closest to an acceptable evaluation when, admitting that no playwright writes in a vacuum, indicates that Anouilh's originality is proved by the fact that he was able to weld together such diverse influences as those from Pirandello and Musset.

Anouilh uses Pirandello in a way that Cocteau and Giraudoux

use Sophocles or Homer. In Pirandello, Anouilh finds his matter, his techniques, his own particular theatricality arising from an intricate blend of borrowed tools and original ideas. It would take another thesis to show the great divergence of these two writers, but one can rapidly point to the wide range of Anouilh, beyond the Pièces grinçantes, where poverty and riches, intransigence and compromise give rise to rich dramatic creations that seem to be all Anouilh's own. Similarly the mere variety of subject matter and of styles can be taken to attest to his profound understanding of the human experience and to his undeniable expertise in the modes of dramatic expression.

It is in the Pièces grinçantes, however, that Anouilh incorporates Pirandellian themes into a network of plays dealing, as Pirandello had dealt, with man's daily compromise with life. This thematic material is reinforced in the later plays by technical aspects which seem again to originate from the Italian dramatist. These influences are one of the pillars on which stands Anouilh's dramatic cosmos, but they should not be allowed to undermine Anouilh's own importance in the theatre of the twentieth century. Rather, they should be taken as an indication that Anouilh, in the versatility both of content and of sources for his dramas, has been in touch with the events and mood of his times. What Pirandello offered that Anouilh was able to grasp and mould to his needs was the possibility of contemplating the theatre's own problems and the theatre as an aspect of life itself.

## APPENDIX

### I

#### Chronology of Pirandello's Plays in France

(First performance in Paris)

<u>La Volupté de l'honneur</u> Théâtre de l'Atelier directed by Charles Dullin	Dec. 21, 1922
<u>Six personnages en quête d'auteur</u> Comédie des Champs-Élysées directed by Georges Pitoëff	Apr. 10, 1923
<u>Chacun sa vérité</u> Théâtre de l'Atelier directed by Charles Dullin	Oct. 23, 1924
<u>Un Imbécile</u> Théâtre de l'Atelier directed by Charles Dullin	Oct. 24, 1924
<u>La Jarre (Ballet)</u> Théâtre des Champs-Élysées Swedish Ballet Company	Nov. 19, 1924
<u>Vêtir ceux qui sont nus</u> Théâtre de la Renaissance directed by Henri Varna	Feb. 19, 1925
<u>Henri IV</u> Théâtre des Arts directed by Georges Pitoëff	Feb. 24, 1925

- Tout pour le mieux Apr. 12, 1926  
Théâtre de l'Atelier  
directed by Charles Dullin
- Comme ci (ou comme ça) May 3, 1926  
Théâtre des Arts  
directed by Georges Pitoëff
- Comme avant, mieux qu'avant Mar. 7, 1928  
Théâtre de Grenelle  
Comédiens de la Croix-Nivert
- La Vie que je t'ai donnée Mar. 13, 1930  
Salle d'Iéna  
Compagnie de la petite scène
- L'Homme, la bête et la vertu Nov. 19, 1931  
Théâtre Saint-Georges  
directed by Max Maurey
- Comme tu me veux Nov. 7, 1932  
Théâtre Montparnasse  
directed by Gaston Baty
- Agro di limone (in Italian) June 9, 1933  
La Potinière  
directed by Pretolini
- Ce Soir on improvise Jan. 17, 1935  
Théâtre des Mathurins  
directed by Georges Pitoëff
- Cécé June 22, 1950  
Théâtre des Noctambules  
directed by J. Mauclair

- Je rêvais (peut-être) June 22, 1950  
Théâtre des Noctambules  
directed by J. Mauclair
- La Fleur à la bouche Dec. 15, 1950  
Théâtre des Noctambules  
directed by J. Mauclair
- Méfie-toi, Giacomino June 28, 1952  
Théâtre de Babylone  
directed by Jean-Marie Serreau
- Bellavita Apr. 1, 1954  
Théâtre du Petit Marigny
- La Fable de l'enfant échangé Feb. 26, 1955  
Studio des Champs-Élysées  
Compagnie Bernard Jenny
- L'Étau Mar. 2, 1961  
Théâtre en Rond  
directed by Lucien Arnaud
- On ne sait comment Feb. 16, 1962  
Théâtre du Vieux Colombier  
directed by Jean Tasso
- Eve et Line Jan. 12, 1962  
Théâtre des Bouffes Parisiens  
directed by Fierre Franck  
"rapport musical" by Erik Satie
- Liola Feb. 27, 1965  
Théâtre du Vieux Colombier  
directed by Bernard Jenny

Se Trouver

Théâtre Antoine  
directed by Claude Régy

Nov. 17, 1967

I Giganti della montagna (in Italian)

Odéon-Théâtre de France  
directed by Giorgio Strehler

June 20, 1967

Le Jeu des rôles

Odéon-Théâtre de France  
directed by Giorgio De Lullo  
Compagnie du Piccolo Teatro di Milano

Nov. 10, 1967

## II

### Chronology of Anouilh's plays

When written (if known) in parentheses, and when first performed in Paris.

Humulus le muet (1929?) not performed

Mandarine (1929) Jan. 16, 1933  
Théâtre de l'Athénée  
directed by Gérard Bothedat

Attila le magnifique (1930) not performed

L'Hermine (1931) Apr. 26, 1932  
Théâtre de l'Oeuvre  
directed by Paulette Pax

Jézabel (1932) not performed

Le Bal des voleurs (1932) Sept. 17, 1938  
Théâtre des Arts  
directed by André Barsacq  
music by Darius Milhaud

La Sauvage (1934) Jan. 10, 1938  
Théâtre des Mathurins  
directed by Georges Pitoëff  
music by Darius Milhaud

Y'Avait un prisonnier (1934) Mar. 21, 1935  
Théâtre des Ambassadeurs  
directed by Marie Bell



<u>Le Petit bonheur</u> (1935)	not performed
<u>Le Voyageur sans bagages</u> (1936) Théâtre des Mathurins directed by Georges Pitoëff music by Darius Milhaud	Feb. 16, 1937
<u>Le Rendez-vous de Senlis</u> (1937) Théâtre de l'Atelier directed by André Barsacq music by Francis Poulenc	Jan. 30, 1941
<u>Léocadia</u> (1939) Théâtre de la Michodière directed by Pierre Fresnay music by Francis Poulenc	Nov. 3, 1940
<u>Eurydice</u> (1941) Théâtre de l'Atelier directed by André Barsacq	Dec. 18, 1942
<u>Oreste</u> (1942?) Fragment	not performed
<u>Antigone</u> (1942) Théâtre de l'Atelier directed by André Barsacq	Feb. 4, 1944
<u>Roméo et Jeannette</u> (1945) Théâtre de l'Atelier directed by André Barsacq	Dec. 1, 1946
<u>Médée</u> (1946) Théâtre de l'Atelier directed by André Barsacq	Mar. 25, 1953
<u>L'Invitation au château</u> (1946) Théâtre de l'Atelier directed by André Barsacq music by Francis Poulenc	Nov. 4, 1947

- Ardèle ou la Marguerite (1948) Nov. 3, 1948  
Comédie des Champs-Élysées  
directed by Claude Sainval
- Episode de la vie d'un auteur (1948) Nov. 3, 1948  
Comédie des Champs-Élysées  
directed by Claude Sainval
- La Répétition ou l'Amour puni (1950) Nov. 25, 1950  
Théâtre Marigny  
directed by Jean-Louis Barrault
- Colombe (1950) Feb. 10, 1951  
Théâtre de l'Atelier  
directed by André Barsacq
- Cécile ou l'Ecole des pères (1949) Oct. 19, 1954  
Comédie des Champs-Élysées  
directed by Jean-Denis Malclès
- La Valse des toréadors (1951) Jan. 9, 1952  
Comédie des Champs-Élysées  
directed by Jean-Denis Malclès
- L'Alouette (1952) Oct. 14, 1953  
Théâtre Montparnasse-Gaston Baty  
directed by Jean Anouilh and Roland Piétri
- Ornifle ou le Courant d'air (1955) Nov. 3, 1955  
Comédie des Champs-Élysées  
directed by Jean-Denis Malclès
- Pauvre Bitos ou le Dîner des têtes (1956) Oct. 22, 1956  
Théâtre Montparnasse-Gaston Baty  
directed by Jean-Denis Malclès

- L'Hurluberlu ou le Réactionnaire amoureux (1958?) Feb. 5, 1959  
Comédie des Champs-Élysées  
directed by Roland Piétri
- La Petite Molière Nov. 12, 1959  
Odéon-Théâtre de France  
directed by Jean-Louis Barrault  
(the first representation took place in  
Bordeaux, on June 1, 1959; J.-L. Barrault  
was the director)
- Becket ou l'Honneur de Dieu (1958) Oct. 1, 1959  
Théâtre Montparnasse-Gaston Baty  
directed by Jean Anouilh and Roland Piétri
- La Foire d'empoigne (1959) Jan. 11, 1962  
Comédie des Champs-Élysées  
directed by Jean Anouilh and Roland Piétri
- Le Songe du critique Nov. 5, 1960  
Comédie des Champs-Élysées  
directed by Jean Anouilh
- La Grotte (1960) Oct. 4, 1961  
Théâtre Montparnasse-Gaston Baty  
directed by Jean Anouilh and Roland Piétri
- L'Orchestre (1961) Jan. 11, 1962  
Comédie des Champs-Élysées  
directed by Jean Anouilh and Roland Piétri
- Le Boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron Nov. 13, 1968  
Comédie des Champs-Élysées  
directed by Jean Anouilh and Roland Piétri
- Cher Antoine ou l'Amour raté Oct. 1, 1969  
Comédie des Champs-Élysées  
directed by Jean Anouilh and Roland Piétri

Les Poissons rouges ou Mon père ce héros

Jan. 21, 1970

Théâtre de l'Oeuvre

directed by Roland Piétri

Ne Réveillez pas Madame

Oct. 21, 1970

Comédie des Champs Elysées

directed by Jean Anouilh and Roland Piétri

Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit

Jan. 17, 1972

Théâtre Antoine

directed by Jean Anouilh and Roland Piétri

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Contains: L'Alouette, Becket ou l'Honneur de Dieu, La Foire d'empoigne.

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