THE THEME OF PURITY IN CERTAIN

PLAYS BY JEAN ANGUIULH

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The problem dealt with in this discussion is the various aspects of the theme of purity in *Le Voyageur sans bagage*, *Antigone*, *L'Alouette* and *Becket ou l'Honneur de Dieu*, by the French playwright, Jean Anouilh. These particular works were chosen because the researcher has seen them performed on stage and finds them to be excellent examples of Anouilhan plays whose heroes are in search of purity. The purpose of this discussion is to clarify Anouilh's concept of the search for purity and to shed light upon the various interpretations of the theme of purity in these four plays.

The four plays are each assigned a chapter and are arranged chronologically. A somewhat informal explication *de texte* method is employed to study each play with particular emphasis on the theme of purity as it appears throughout the text. This method allows for a basically objective view of the work itself.

Each protagonist handles the search for purity in an individually interesting manner and interprets purity with slight variations on the basic Anouilhan concept of it. Gaston in *Le Voyageur sans bagage* sees his path to purity as an escape from his unpleasant past. Remaining pure is achieved
by living one's ideals and by being true to one's self. Gaston achieves this purity by denying his past and by striving to guide his life according to his ideals.

Antigone, in Anouilh's version of Antigone, also emphasizes being true to one's self in her search for purity by breaking a law which she feels is unjust. Saying "no" to this law and to the authority which created it, Antigone thus remains pure and, like Gaston, lives her own ideals.

In L'Alouette, Jeanne d'Arc strives to be faithful to herself through total dedication to God. During her trial she refuses to compromise as the English judges would like for her to do. The techniques of flashback and a play within the play furnish fascinating insights into the character of Anouilh's Jeanne.

Finally, Thomas Becket tries to defend God's honor and his own during his search for purity in Becket ou l'Honneur de Dieu. When he becomes Archbishop of Canterbury, Becket is faced with the conflict of wills--God's and the king's. In his attempt to remain true to God, or pure in the Anouilhan sense, Becket refuses the king's demands.

Each protagonist herein studied interprets purity in his own way. In general, purity represents that part of human nature which has not yet been tainted by such exterior elements as money and unjust authority. In each case, the Anouilhan protagonist holds tenaciously to his ideals in an attempt to retain his innocence.
This discussion concludes that Anouilh uses the theme of purity to attack such social ills as money, degeneration of the family, injustice, and hierocracy. Anouilh portrays the fight for purity as providing stimulation and varying degrees of satisfaction to his characters even though they do not attain perfection.
THE THEME OF PURITY IN CERTAIN
PLAYS BY JEAN ANOUILH

THESIS

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PREFACE

The Theme of Purity in Certain Plays by Jean Anouilh
is a study of the search for purity as seen in Le Voyageur
sans bagage, Antigone, L'Alouette, and Becket cu l'Honneur
de Dieu, where the leading characters reject such aspects
of the human condition as family life, religion and au-
thority in an attempt to remain pure. This rejection is
an important and interesting aspect of the contemporary
theater and warrants consideration and study by those in-
terested in the works of Anouilh. He has dealt with the
theme of purity in various ways and in divers plays. The
four plays studied herein have been seen in theater pres-
entations by the researcher and are good examples of
Anouilh's treatment of the theme. Other students of Anouilh
might find different plays to be the best representatives
of the theme of purity, but these four are the more illustra-
tive of this theme of the ten works that the researcher
has seen performed on stage.

The following chapters treat the four plays in chron-
ological order tracing the character development of each
protagonist and discussing those facts, persons and circum-
stances which affect his plight as they relate to the major
topic of this thesis. Only to strengthen, stress or clarify
a point will reference sometimes be made to other plays by Anouilh which are not included in this study. The arrangement of the discussions of these plays as they appeared helps to demonstrate the development of the theme of purity and Anouilh's interpretation of purity with respect to cultural and historical events.

The designations of Sources Frequently Consulted and Other Sources have been assigned to the bibliographical material used in this study. The Sources Frequently Consulted include those references used extensively throughout the thesis in footnotes and quotations, including the four plays themselves. The Other Sources listed in the bibliography have been consulted mainly for an overview or a general understanding of the Anouilhan theater. The articles by Jean Anouilh are to be considered informative bibliographical materials since they have provided a better understanding of Anouilh's theories and views of the theater during the first half of the twentieth century.

Several scholars have published extensive studies on the theater of Jean Anouilh, including Pol Vandromme, Philippe Jolivet, and Robert de Luppé. But perhaps the most well-organized and comprehensive are The World of Jean Anouilh, by Leonard Cabell Pronko and Jean Anouilh: Poet of Pierrot and Pantaloon, by Edward Owen Marsh. It is hoped that this thesis will provide some additional light to the subject of purity
and may be of value to those persons interested in the Anouilhan theater.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Few are the French theatergoers and readers today who do not enjoy the plays of Jean Anouilh and who do not esteem his dramatic art. This dramatist, whose far-ranging and divers subjects extend from the story of Joan of Arc in the play *L'Alouette* to the plight of a World War I amnesiac in *Le Voyageur sans bagage*, succeeds in interesting and exciting his spectators. He is likewise adept in taking historical subjects such as that of Thomas Becket in *Becket ou l'Honneur de Dieu* and modernizing them by way of language, tone and action so as to suit the mood and intellect of the twentieth-century theatergoer and reader.

Only since World War II has Anouilh become known in the United States. His first play successfully performed in the United States was not until the appearance of *Le Mal des voleurs* in 1954. However, his success here has not matched that which he has received in Europe. His first successful presentation in New York City was followed by triumphant performances of *L'Alouette* in 1955 and *Becket* in 1960. The latter was, in fact, such a success that, winning the Antoinette Perry Award, it was recognized as the best play of the 1960-61 season and was produced as a movie. In spite of such fame, other plays by Anouilh which have
been performed in New York, including the very popular
La Valse des toréadors, have failed to achieve the same
level of success.

This lack of success may be attributed to the play-
wright's purpose—to show man's predicament—and to his
typically French situations such as the ménage à trois and
the cuckold spouse. Most Broadway audiences simply do not
find man's plight sufficiently entertaining or stimulating
as one may see reflected in the majority of the productions
of our time. Likewise, in the United States the situations
of the cuckold and the ménage à trois do not have the benefit
of the centuries-old tradition which they enjoy in France.
According to Anouilh himself, they "remain an enigma to the
American audiences, and therefore cannot reach and touch
them." 1

The years the four plays dealt with herein appeared
were characterized by internal and external strife. In
1936, when Le Voyageur sans bagage appeared, the memory of
past war and the threat of future war weighed heavy on the
minds of the French. Surrounded by a world seemingly devoid
of reason, the French saw their predicament well-focused in
the Anouilhan theater, particularly with the production of
Antigone during the Nazi Occupation. More positive in out-
look, L'Alouette and Becket present French and British heroes

1 Quoted in Isolde Farrell, "Anouilh Returns," New York
personally victorious against a senseless conflict similar to situations well known to the contemporary French audiences. The American during the late thirties was not in the least concerned with war, especially since it did not directly touch him even in World War I. Nor were these stories of British and French national heroes of interest for the majority of the American audiences in an isolationist country as the United States was in the late thirties. The anticlerical sentiment expressed in Anouilh's drama is typically French and comparatively atypical in America.

One of the central themes of these four plays is purity; the preoccupation of each protagonist rests in the quest for it. Purity represents that part of human nature which has not yet been tainted by such exterior elements as money and unjust authority. In each case, the Anouilhan protagonist holds tenaciously to his ideals in an attempt to retain his childhood purity; since a child is not generally influenced by corrupt society, Anouilh and such philosophers as Jean-Jacques Rousseau see children as pure, or not yet fallen from purity. Anouilh allow some of his heroes to cling so stubbornly to their ideals that their ideals often become their only reality. Nevertheless, the Anouilhan protagonist is the master of his own choices. In order to attain and retain purity, he must be willing to say "no" even when the consequences may prove fatal. This freedom of spirit and
will is an essential and integral part of purity as expressed in the Anouilhan theater.

Exploring the theme of purity through French literature, one finds a definite preoccupation with the explication of man's search for his true self during the eighteenth century. It is not known whether Anouilh studied Rousseau or Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, but one may assume he had a general knowledge of these great littéraires. The "state of nature" described by Rousseau in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and successfully analyzed by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in *Paul et Virginie* is very similar to the purity for which these four Anouilhan protagonists are searching. Rousseau sees the state of nature as one in which man is primordially good and possesses inherent virtues which society can only temporarily corrupt. This eighteenth-century philosopher condemns society as a chthonic force and insists that man must estrange himself from that corruption in order to remain good or pure. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre also recognizes a moral beauty within every man who can follow the dictates of his heart, "être selon son coeur." The beauty and freedom in virgin nature as represented by the Ile de France are elements quite similar to Anouilhan purity as represented

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by the ideals of Gaston, Antigone, Jeanne d'Arc and Thomas Becket. Differently interpreted in each case, happiness, or "le bonheur," is the result of reaching the sought-after purity. In Rousseau's and in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's state of nature, happiness is an overt mental and physical bliss or joy. With Anouilh's heroes, happiness becomes less open and physical and more like an inner satisfaction for having done what the hero feels needs to be done. The reader views each protagonist in his own struggles during his search for purity.

Very little is known about the playwright's own life and struggles. One must assume that biographical material is not imperative to understand Anouilh's plays, as he states in a letter to Hubert Gignoux in 1945:

"Je n'ai pas de biographie, et j'en suis très content. Je suis né, le 23 juin 1910 à Bordeaux, je suis venu à Paris, j'ai été à l'école primaire supérieure Colbert, au collège Chaptal. Un an et demi à la Faculté de Droit de Paris, deux ans dans une maison de publicité où j'ai pris des leçons de précision et d'ingéniosité qui m'ont tenu lieu d'études poétiques. Après L'Hermine, j'ai décidé de ne vivre que du théâtre, et un peu du cinéma. C'était une folie que j'ai tout de même bien fait de décider. J'ai réussi à ne jamais faire de journalisme, et j'ai sur la conscience, au cinéma, qu'un ou deux vaudevilles et quelques mélodramas et non signés. La resté est ma vie, et tant que le ciel voudra que ce soit encore mon affaire personnelle, j'en réserve les détails."  

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But concerning his first interests in the theater, Leonard Pronko states that Jean Anouilh spent some time listening to operettas which were performed in the Casino at Arcachon where his mother was the pianist and his father the director. Such represents almost everything available about Anouilh's first interests in the theater.5

Anouilh was sixteen years old when he began writing plays imitating Edmond Rostand. In 1931, his first play to be produced, Mandarine, was staged after he had become secretary to Louis Jouvet's troupe. The young dramatist had little money with which to produce his first attempts in the theater, and it is perhaps this very struggle which is reflected in his later works and in their major themes of money, family and purity. As an astute student of society, Anouilh is aware of the straining of family relationships which often accompanies financial problems—whether a lack of money or an overabundance. In the midst of all these trials one must remain true to one's self or pure in the Anouilhan sense.

To date Anouilh has created some thirty plays, ranging from Humulus le muet in 1929 to Ne réveillez pas Madame in 1970. Most of his plays have been grouped into certain categories, according to their mood, under the headings

pieces roses, pièces brillantes, pièces grinçantes, pièces noires and nouvelles pièces noires. However, if one attempts to examine these plays under the designations which they have been given, one might find himself constricted and at times misled since Anouilh purposefully overlaps the comic--rose--and the tragic--noire--elements in his plays and often combines aspects of each of these categories in a single play.

Many of Anouilh's plays have a historical and political flavor, though he is said by some of his critics--such as Leonard Pronko--to be apolitical in his attitudes. In Becket much of the strength of the play lies in its historical background, the Norman Conquest. However, political undertones were never more strongly exemplified; one senses a strong support of separation of church and state. Further, one detects a slight cry against monarchy and its financial abuse, in support of the plight of the poor people and about the effect upon a government when the masses of the poor realize their power. A similar situation exists in L'Alouette where Anouilh's political tones have been described by Theodore Joseph Shank in the following statement: "The play has been described as an attempt to accent the idea of Joan's and France's triumph over the picayune demands of worldly institutions." 6 Perhaps in the four plays these "worldly

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institutions" are represented by government, asylums and the church; the protagonists strive to overcome these institutions and to seek purity.

Although Le Voyageur sans bagage does not present the political undertones of the two preceding plays, the dilemma stemming from World War I produces the same uncompromising pursuit of purity. Antigone is considered by many the most political of the four. According to Pronko, the popularity of the play in France was a result of its political nature, and he states that

it appeared during the German Occupation and served as a rallying point for the disheartened French, who could see their own struggle reflected in the conflict between the uncompromising attitude of Antigone and the expediency of Créon. They identified Antigone with the spirit of freedom and Créon with the Vichy government. . . . However, it seems doubtful that Anouilh intended his play, to have the political meaning that was found in it. 

Whether or not the French audience read too much into Antigone, the basic point to note is that the familiar Anouilhan theme of purity occurs again. Some critics—such as Pucciani—have accused Anouilh of exhausting this topic without ever presenting a solution to the problem. But as Pronko states, "It is not the function of the dramatist to supply us with answers. It is enough if he presents his picture of the human predicament in a dramatically

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7 Pronko, op. cit., p. xxi.

The appeal of Anouilh’s plays stems from the clear picture he renders of the human predicament, especially the quest for purity. Twentieth-century French theatergoers and readers find his portrayals of the struggling hero quite applicable to present circumstances whether his subject is a popular Catholic hero pitted against the state or an amnesiac striving for an ideal in life. His talent for presenting any character in situations which are universal in scope and appeal continues to guarantee him a top position among the dramatists of the twentieth century.

9 Pronko, op. cit., p. 61.
CHAPTER II

GASTON’S SEARCH FOR PURITY IN

LE VOYAGEUR SANS BAGAGE

In 1936, Jean Anouilh wrote the play which was to become his first really successful contribution to the theater world. Although the basic theme of Le Voyageur sans bagage had already been treated by him in Le Sauvage, it was the uniqueness of plot, character and presentation which made this play more appealing than any preceding play. Anouilh used a similar situation, that of a refusal of one’s past, but unlike other cases of refusal in life, Gaston’s case ended triumphantly.

In this five-act play—acts are labeled "tableaux" in this particular play, for no stated reason—Gaston, who proves to be Jacques Renaud, has spent the past eighteen years in an asylum, a victim of amnesia owing to a wound he received during the First World War. The play is centered around the interview between Gaston and the Renaud family, which was arranged by the Duchess Dupont-Dufort, who became interested in the case while Gaston was at the asylum. He is now thirty-six years old and has spent half of his life as an amnesiac. Gaston was accustomed to a totally different life from that which the "former" Jacques Renaud had
reportedly led. Further, Gaston has envisioned a kind and compassionate boy who would go out and feed the birds, play with a toy boat, or perhaps save a friend's life. But he learns, to his dismay, that the missing relative had been the lover of his brother's wife, harsh with his mother, and had crippled a childhood friend. As Gaston learns more and more about his past from the mother, the brother, Georges, the sister-in-law, Valentine, and the servants, he becomes more firm in his insistence that he is not the missing Jacques Renaud. Finally, after receiving proof from Valentine that he is truly Jacques, because of a scar on his back which she herself had given him, he refuses his family. Not able to bear the sordidness of his own past nor that of his family, he claims the kinship of an English family whose only surviving member is a little boy ten years old. The little boy, accompanied by an old lawyer, has come in search of his nephew, without whose help he will lose a fortune.

As Gaston's motives for this refusal are revealed, the reader realizes that, as Pucciani explains, "Gaston has lived two lives, each of eighteen years duration." The first act gives a brief résumé of this second half of his life which reveals a young man who had no memory but who became well adjusted to his situation. He was without burdens, free of care and pure of spirit. This was a

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1 Pucciani, op. cit., p. 150.
young man who had the good fortune of being able to create with his imagination any type of past that would suit his taste. He thus selected the ideal self and soon firmly believed himself to have had a commendable youth. But now at the end of eighteen years he is suddenly faced with losing that which has been meaningful and beautiful to him. He sums up his true feelings about what he fears is about to take place in the following: "J'étais si tranquille à l'asile. . . . Je m'étais habitué à moi, je me connaissais bien et voilà qu'il faut me quitter, trouver un autre moi et l'endosser comme une vieille veste." Gaston soon learns that his apprehensions are not completely unfounded since, even though this Renaud family is very wealthy and occupies an esteemed social position, they too are susceptible to wrongdoings, as the Duchess Dupont-Dufort suggests to the amnesiac. Gaston is much more realistic about his own forgotten personality than she is when he answers her that "cela veut dire qu'ils ont une belle maison, un beau maître d'hôtel mais quel fils avaient-ils?" With this question Anouilh has prepared his audience for the rest of the play.

In Act Two the spectator or reader learns through the servants that Jacques Renaud was indeed a young scoundrel.

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3 Ibid.
Worst of all was his affair with the wife of a brother who loves him. All of the servants make unfavorable reports about Jacques—whom they believe Gaston to be—except Juliette, who had at one time been in love with him. By revealing first to the spectator the type of person Gaston had been, before informing Gaston himself—also a spectator—Anouilh has made it possible for the reader to observe the impact of this gradual disclosure upon his character—a dramatic technique not unlike the Pirandellian teatro di specchio. Perhaps this manner of presentation is an element of clever writing and perhaps it is one of the essentials which make this play successful. But one cannot help wondering what effect the work would have had on the audience if this second act had been omitted. Apart from learning that the servants did not like him, the audience learns little else. Perhaps the dramatic effect would have been more successful if the audience had been stunned by the events along with Gaston.

The third act is the most important because here the circumstances and persons are established that directly influenced his refusal to accept the Renauds and what was once Jacques. Moreover, in this act one learns why he had to make the choice he made. As the act begins Gaston is being escorted through the Renaud house by Mme. Renaud and

\[4\] Cf. Pronko, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
Georges. She begins to disclose in a rather dispassionate and cold tone the violent nature he possessed when a boy. Although he broke everything which displeased him, including all his toys, there remains one object—a slingshot—which he had used not for childish fun but for killing birds. For a mother who is trying to help her unfortunate amnesiac son regain his memory and supposedly loves her child deeply, Mme. Renaud displays a rather tactless and cold disposition in the situation. Although all that she tells Gaston is factual, she does not once voice any compassion or sympathy that will help to soften the blows he is receiving. In one of her most unfeeling statements describing the use Gaston made of his slingshot, she says:

En tuais-tu des oiseaux, avec cela, mon Dieu:
Tu étais un vrai monstre. . . . Et tu sais, tu ne te contentais pas des oiseaux du jardin. . . .
J’avais une volière avec des oiseaux de prix; une fois, tu es entré dedans et tu les as tous abattus.

In spite of the protestations of Gaston that the person who did all of these horrible things could not have been him, Mme. Renaud continually thinks of other wrongdoings and ends by destroying the hope that Gaston entertained—that of the warm friendship he may have had with a comrade. This ideal extended even to the possibility of his having once saved the life of this friend while sacrificing his own. However, he soon learns that in reality he had almost killed

5 Anouilh, op. cit., p. 171.
his best friend, who now consequently remains paralyzed. The knowledge of his past is most assuredly a rude awakening for one who is now so benevolent and gentle.

The conversation between Gaston and Mme. Renaud reaches its climactic point when, for the first time, Gaston experiences the feeling that he is truly Jacques Renaud; at the same time, the spectator or reader can likewise feel deep emotional involvement while sharing the discovery. In this teatro di specchio scene, Gaston discovers that shortly before he left for the war his mother and he had had a violent quarrel concerning her objection to his marriage to a girl who worked in a dressmaker's shop. The quarrel ended with his telling her that he hated her. They remained angry with each other, and thus he left for the war without a word or gesture from his mother. At the end of the conversation, Gaston, feeling sympathetic toward the young Jacques, says defensively to Mme. Renaud:

Et je suis mort à dix-huit ans sans avoir eu ma petite joie, sous prétexte que c'était une bêtise, et sans que vous m'ayez reparlé. J'ai été couché sur le dos toute une nuit avec ma blessure à l'épaule, et j'étais deux fois plus seul que les autres qui appelaient leur mère. C'est vrai, je vous déteste. 6

Gaston subsequently orders Mme. Renaud to leave his presence and in a final confirmation states that he is not her son. With her pride wounded, Mme. Renaud leaves the

6 Ibid., p. 182.
room while saying to him that "quand les autres t'auront prouvé que je suis ta mère, il faudra bien que tu viennes me demander pardon." It is easy to see from this statement that Mme. Renaud has retained the same attitude as far as her son is concerned and that she is expecting Jacques to be the person he was eighteen years ago. The important factor in question here is that, at this point, the mother is unreasonable in expecting this man to fall suddenly back into the life-style of the person who he was eighteen years ago and about whom he remembers nothing. Her attitude might be better justified had all the efforts at making Gaston regain his memory succeeded. Anouilh has made it impossible for Gaston to accept her as his mother or himself as Jacques; for Jacques the child was cruel, corrupt, selfish, and, as the Duchess called him in the first act of the play, like a piece of marble. On the other hand, Jacques the man is kind, compassionate, and, above all, committed to the search for purity.

By the time one gets halfway through the third act it is quite evident that the Renaud family has failed to regain its lost son. But the sister-in-law, Valentine, makes one last attempt which also furnished Anouilh with a means to end the play on a fantastic note. Valentine, a caricature of high society, is desperately in love. She

7 Ibid.
represents what the future would have in store for Gaston once he assumed the name of Jacques Renaud.\(^8\) She has decided from the outset that Jacques's relationship and hers would be as in former times but she is summarily rejected by Gaston. Here the position Jacques maintains is rather ambiguous in that he implies in his conversation with Valentine that he could not be her lover again if he is in fact the brother of Georges Renaud. But if he learns that he is not, there might be opportunity enough for the two of them. For a devotee of purity and a person who is eschewing the sordidness of a family such as he is dealing with, this line of thinking is not at all to be expected.

In spite of Gaston's justifications of his feelings when he tells her that "je suis un homme d'un certain âge, mais j'arrive frais écos au monde,"\(^9\) Valentine must make one last effort to prove to him that he is Jacques and therefore not beyond reproach. She informs him that at the beginning she was his friend but was literally stolen from him by his brother. Of course, all of this information does not alter the attitude of Gaston, who feels that this amorous history was simply part of his youth and that he has been cleansed of such sins for a long time. Her final attempt is to tell him about the scar on his back as the result of a


\(^9\) Anouilh, op. cit., p. 183.
minor wound she had inflicted upon him in a lover's quarrel. Still hoping to remain free of this family which is growing even more detestable to him, Gaston in his most realistic moments realizes that he is the lost son and that perhaps he must accept this fact. But he does not have to accept all that might accompany the relationship and tells Valentine in no uncertain terms: "Si j'y suis obligé par quelque preuve, il faudra bien que je m'accepte; mais je ne vous accepterai pas."  

Valentine is more practical about the situation than Gaston as evidenced by her statement:

Ecoute, Jacques, il faut pourtant que tu t'acceptes. Toute notre vie avec notre belle morale et notre chère liberté, cela consiste en fin de compte à nous accepter tels que nous sommes... ces dix-sept ans d'asile pendant lesquels tu t'es conservé si pur, c'est la durée exacte d'une adolescence, ta seconde adolescence qui prend fin aujourd'hui. Tu vas redevenir un homme, avec tout ce que cela comporte de tâches, de ratures et de joies.

From the sister-in-law's description one can see that Gaston has been living a second adolescence, both periods having been completely different. One of the most important features to note here is that Gaston is necessarily what he is at present for it is as impossible for one to live in the past as it is to live in the future. Gaston at this point is too idealistic to accept his past even after Act Four reveals the scar which proves him to be Jacques Renaud. If he were

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10 Ibid., p. 185.  
11 Ibid.
to accept himself, Gaston would be a captive of that alter ego, and it is only through purity that he can be free. Although when he was in the asylum he was physically bound, he was nevertheless morally and mentally free—aspects of freedom that have come to mean the most to him. In order to remain free, Gaston has decided to return to that asylum rather than search for his place with any of the other families.

After Valentine and Mme. Renaud fail in their attempts to influence Gaston, Georges is the only person who manages to touch his heart and who sincerely cares for him or loves him. Despite the fact that Gaston had deceived him and had had an affair with his wife, Georges pardons him for all by declaring that Jacques was only a poor little boy, quite helpless and innocent and badly in need of help. He declares to Gaston his unceasing fraternal devotion in a touching scene where he states:

Vous n'avez jamais rêvé d'un ami qui aurait été d'abord un petit garçon que vous auriez promené par la main? Vous qui aimez l'amitié, songez quelle aubaine cela peut être pour elle un ami assez neuf pour qu'il doive tenir de vous le secret des premières lettres de l'alphabet, des premiers coups de pédale à bicyclette, des premières brasses dans l'eau. Un ami assez fragile pour qu'il ait tout le temps besoin de vous pour le défendre.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^\text{12}\) Ibid., p. 192.
Gaston cannot accept or understand how his brother can forgive such a scoundrel or how he can still love him after all the incredibly base things he had done to him and his family. Earlier in the play Gaston questioned Mme. Renaud about some moment of extreme joy in his childhood, an affectionate moment that would tie in with the impression he had of himself, and it is now Georges who is furnishing him with this link of affection. This is not the manner which he was expecting, but it is, it would seem, a much more meaningful one. To Gaston, such a bond is insufficient in that it does not offer him a means of escaping his past. Pucciani states that "what he seeks is not his past at all; he seeks rather what he sought as a child: total, absolute freedom." Georges feels that the latter was above all a victim of misfortune and asks Gaston not to hate Jacques too much. Now that Gaston has had a chance to hear about the past as related by the various members of his family, which for him is a sordid representation of family life in general, he makes his choice in this fifth and final act to refuse this monstrosity of reality. Few people are as fortunate as Gaston to be expurgated of all past baseness. Some eighteenth-century writers, like Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, would call this release "a return to a state of nature".

a state in which Gaston would be free to choose which path his life would take thenceforth.

To make his existence as Gaston a reality, Jacques, with the aid of a twist of fantasy furnished by Anouilh, must perform one final act which renders an otherwise quite realistic play one of rather more fanciful character. One can anticipate the outcome of Gaston's dilemma, but the manner in which it is resolved is surprising. Gaston knows that the only way he can be free is to rid himself permanently of Jacques Renaud, and it is only by murdering him in an imaginative sense that his freedom can be assured.

Thus, as the butler is serving him he says:

Gaston: C'est une épouvantable sensation d'être en train de tuer quelqu'un pour vivre.

Le Maître d'Hôtel: Monsieur le dit bien, épouvantable: surtout pour la victime. . . .

Gaston: Imaginez que, pour vivre, il vous faille plonger à jamais dans le néant un jeune homme. Un jeune homme de dix-huit ans. . . . Un petit orgueilleux, une petite fripouille, mais tout de même . . . un pauvre petit. Vous serez libre, maître d'hôtel, l'homme le plus libre du monde, mais pour être libre, il vous faut laisser ce petit cadavre innocent derrière vous. Qu'allez-vous faire?14

It is in these last pronouncements that Gaston realizes what he must do to become free of Jacques Renaud. The only obstacle between Gaston and freedom and purity is the idea that Jacques is still alive. In order to succeed at this

"pseudo-murder" he refuses his past while at the same time admitting to Valentine that he is perhaps Jacques Renaud. In spite of her protest that one cannot reject reality and her threats that he might be apprehended by the authorities if he refused to accept a family, Gaston states unequivocally that he would prefer returning to the asylum. At this point in the story, it is questionable what the result might have been had the hand of Anouilh not interceded with a quasi-deus ex machina. When Valentine reminds Gaston of the lack of freedom he experienced in the institution, the amnesiac responds in a hopeless tone: "Allez-vous-en, maintenant. Il ne me reste pas le plus petit espoir: vous avez joué votre rôle."15 By this statement he seems to imply that he is caught and would have to take his chances in the asylum. It would have been interesting to see what alternative climax Anouilh might have used to resolve such a situation.

Nevertheless, there have been numerous comments on the climax that he did employ. A play which has been up to now quite realistic, rather tragic, and very noire becomes fantasy—a bit light and certainly rose. As Valentine goes from the room leaving Gaston benumbed, the latter, after having broken a mirror in his room, is awakened from his stupor by the sound of music. A boy enters the room in search of, in the familiar French idiom, a "little place

15 Ibid., p. 196.
where he can be tranquil. Gaston laughs in spite of himself and says he is also looking for this place. He then directs the little boy to the lavatory. When the little boy returns, Gaston questions him and assumes the person of the missing English nephew whom the boy is seeking. The play ends here, leaving the spectator perhaps less sympathetic toward Gaston than he had been. In viewing this unusual dénouement, one might read into it several symbolic elements that perhaps Anouilh intended to stand out. For example, it seems that when Gaston breaks the mirror in which he perceives his image, it is this reflection, this last remnant of Jacques Renaud that he is shattering, murdering. He is not destroying this reflection for his own sake alone but also for the only member of the Renaud family who really loves him and for whom he is able to show any sympathy. It is this sympathy which prompts him to leave the following message for Georges:

Vous direz à Georges Renaud que l'ombre légère
de son frère dort sûrement quelque part dans une
fosse commune en Allemagne. Qu'il n'a jamais été
qu'un enfant digne de tous les pardons, un enfant
qu'il peut aimer sans crainte, maintenant, de jamais
rien lire de laid sur son visage d'homme. . . . 16

Also symbolic is the place where one can be at ease or tranquil and where Gaston directs the boy. The appearance of the boy suggests the similarity of the innocent state in

16 Ibid., p. 200.
which Gaston finds himself after having discarded all of his past. The youth symbolizes perhaps Gaston's new life with all that is candid, light, gay and carefree. Paralleled with the purity of his new life is the lie that he will be living. For anyone lacking the belief that good and evil, gaiety and dullness, purity and sordidness can and do exist in life will then be unable to adjust. Gaston, unlike many others, is fortunate in having a unique opportunity to find a new life.

Moreover, it seems that by ending the play on a note of fantasy Anouilh is saying to his audience that problems in life, or that part of it involving the family, should be accepted somewhat less seriously at times. The mixture of reality and fantasy are missing in the protagonist of this work as he is completely oblivious to the darker side of life in his almost blind search for the purity, freedom, happiness and innocence he envisions. Gaston, then, is not only refusing his past and his family but is saying "no" to duty and obligation, cruelty and remorse. The important factor he has failed to take into account is that all of those elements not only represent human memory but human life as well. Memory is a storage of the human experience which includes those elements that he cannot face or accept. Thus, his triumph remains dubious since in his attempts to be free and to remain pure he is going to live a lie by
assuming the identity of another who he knows for a fact he is not. Although he will be helping a fellow human by doing this, he is essentially selfish in his decision—perhaps he weighs the monetary gain he can achieve for the English family in contrast to the mental anguish he feels he would suffer in the Renaud household—at any rate, he seeks an escape from Jacques, and the English family provides this personal escape. Be that as it may, the spectator cannot feel the same sympathy toward him because the playwright failed to leave some doubt as to Gaston's true identity. Rather, he chose to allow Valentine to reveal his identity to him with positive proof and the amnesiac's final decision strays from pure idealism and very much resembles the action of Jacques Renaud.

If one concludes that the manner in which Gaston seems to have found purity is questionable, a clarification of that purity seems in order. It is fair to say that for him purity—or a semblance of it—is the only means by which he can be free and through which existence has any value. He thus rejects his family because they represent all that is opposed to his concept of purity: a mother who has failed in her duties to an innocent son because of blind pride, a sister-in-law who plans to continue in her adulterous relationship with Gaston, and a brother who is still seeing him with the blind eyes of a love out of the past.
Each member of this family has become a victim in failing to recognize that a man is what he is in the present. That purity which Gaston seeks is to be found in the place the little boy describes at the end of the play as "le petit endroit où on est tranquille." Finding a quiet place or a retreat from the unwholesome elements of the Renauds, or even society itself, is a central goal for Gaston, too. But such a quiet retreat, where purity and freedom flourish, is an almost unattainable goal for man, as acknowledged by Rousseau. Purity or "the state of nature" as seen by Gaston and Rousseau is a goal toward which to strive, but one must wonder about such optimism when applied to practical situations.

17 Ibid., p. 196.
CHAPTER III

ANOUILH'S ANTIGONE IN
SEARCH OF PURITY

Although Antigone has much in common with Gaston and is entangled in a similar situation to that of the amnesiac, the protagonist of this play is not as fortunate as the former hero in his search for earthly happiness. Looking at Anouilh's adaptation of the Greek classic, one finds the framework of his play essentially the same as that of Sophocles'. The striking differences of Anouilh's interpretation may be found in Antigone's twentieth-century attitude toward life, in the author's portrayal of the dilemma of man in a modern world that is more complex than the world of the Ancients, and in Anouilh's manner of bringing the entire concept of the play close to the problems of today which he accomplishes through modern costumes, language, action and anachronisms. Although the use of the chorus is a bit archaic, still the chorus adds to the clarity and smoothness of plot and, by its comments on the action, involves the viewer in controversial points.¹

Antigone, like Gaston in Le Voyeur sans bagage, cannot accept the baseness which she finds as part of the life

around her. Refusing the compromise in order to live, she chooses to die. In her failure to find earthly purity Antigone decides it is meaningless to live in a world where everything is uncertain and nothing can be taken for granted. At times the audience might be unsure as to whether it should sympathize with King Créon, who represents mankind or the general situation of mankind, or should follow Antigone in her walled tomb of individuality.

Numerous comments have been made concerning the extent of Anouilh's political involvement as reflected in this play, and many have cited it as his most political work. However, because of the fact that the work appeared during the time of the German Occupation in France the audiences may have read more into the work than had been intended by the playwright. Yet, it is quite conceivable that Anouilh, like any other Frenchman, had his personal views about the political upheaval, which may have consciously or unconsciously found their way into this play. The story as it first appeared in Greek literature had its own political flavor, and therefore every aspect of it must be considered if one is to avoid giving a fragmentary view of the play as a whole.

As stated earlier, there are few new additions appearing in Anouilh's interpretation of Sophocles' basic plot. The sons of Oedipe, Étèocle (the elder) and Polynice, have
killed each other in a dispute over possession of the right to succeed to the throne of Thèbes. Créon, who was the uncle of these two men, became king and gave Étéocles, whom he believed to be serving justice, a splendid burial. For Polynice, whom he believed to be wrong, he sent out a decree forbidding burial of any sort. The latter was to be left lying in the open for the vultures to devour, and anyone who attempted to bury him would necessarily be executed. Antigone, believing both of her brothers worthy of burial, defies the ruling of Créon and spreads dirt over her brother's corpse. When she is apprehended and brought before Créon, the latter tries to reason with her by showing her that it is pointless to die and that she would better serve her country by marrying his son, Héméon, and bearing children. After much torment and confusion Antigone finally refuses his supplication. She is ordered to be walled into a tomb, but poor Héméon, hearing of his beloved Antigone's sentence, Hurts himself into her walled tomb and eventually kills himself. Adding to Créon's nightmare, his wife Eurydice, upon learning of the suicide of her son, goes to her room and slashes her throat. Thus, the unfortunate Créon, never wishing anything less than happiness for anyone, is left alone to cope with the many misfortunes of the family dilemma.

The most significant moments of the play occur in the first encounter of Antigone and Créon, when both characters
strongly uphold two opposing views of life, each justifiable. At the beginning of the meeting, it appears that the only reason Antigone can give to the King for her defiant action is that her brother must have a burial, without which his soul will continue to wander. Then she admits to the Chorus that she must bury her brother for personal satisfaction. As the meeting progresses Créon accuses Antigone of relying upon her royal heritage and her engagement to his son for protection from punishment. Antigone refutes this accusation in the following:

\[
\text{Si j'avais été une servante en train de faire sa vaisselle, quand j'ai entendu lire l'édit, j'aurais essayé l'eau grasse de mes bras et je serais sortie avec mon tablier pour aller enterrer mon frère.}
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But Créon continues to see her as a haughty royal criminal. The King refuses to grant her amnesty because of her royal blood, but he is willing to allow her to live in order to furnish Hémon with sons. Antigone makes her intentions apparent by refusing to cooperate with the King in his plan of marriage. She does not fail to point out in her argument that she has a duty just as Créon has and that he should not fail to do what duty requires of him—even though this means her life. When she states that "je n'aurai pas du courage éternellement," she reveals that she knows there are limits

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upon her personal strength and courage. Créon wishes to save her, as he says in the following passage, but the courageous Antigone points out the absurdity and impossibility of one human being trying to alter the destiny of another:

Créon: Je veux te sauver, Antigone.

Antigone: Vous êtes le roi, vous pouvez tout, mais cela, vous ne le pouvez pas.  

The action of the play is outstanding in showing a balance between character portrayal and presentation of ideas upheld by both Antigone and Créon. The critic Edward Marsh says that "this is the only Anouilh play where the two sides of the conflict of life and death are properly developed into an argument." Créon is unable to convince Antigone that her action was wrong and that it would be for the good of everyone to forget the entire incident, and similarly, Antigone is unable to make Créon understand her position. At this point, whose argument is stronger is not made clear by Anouilh; perhaps this ambiguity is meant to represent a more precise picture of reality with all its ambivalence. After much discussion, however, it seems as though Antigone will be the victor when Créon makes the mistake of revealing his true self to Antigone thereby leaving himself open for attack. The following lines

5 Ibid.

reveal some of the most sincere discourses spoken by Anouilhan characters:

Créon: Un matin, je me suis réveillé roi de Thèbes. Et Dieu sait si j’aimais autre chose dans la vie que d’être puissant.

Antigone: Il fallait dire non, alors!

Créon: Je le pouvais. Seulement, je me suis senti tout d’un coup comme un ouvrier qui refusait un ouvrage. Cela ne m’a pas paru honnête. J’ai dit oui.

Antigone: Eh bien, tant pis pour vous. Moi, je peux dire "non" encore à tout ce que je n’aime pas et je suis seul juge. Et vous, avec votre couronne... vous pouvez seulement me faire mourir, parce que vous avez dit "oui."

In these lines Anouilh introduces the actual theme of the play, that of the significance of and difference between saying "oui" and "non" in life. Antigone is an example of the twentieth-century individual who grasps the ideals, principles, and rules which are his, without which he is no longer an individual. ³ Man is no longer in a position to judge right and wrong without these ideals. Contrary to the King, Antigone is free. Like Gaston in Le Voyageur sans bagage, she can finally choose to listen to Créon or, if she prefers, she can choose to die. On the other hand, because he has said "yes" and because he has accepted the crown, Créon must act, not according to what he wants to do, but

7 Anouilh, Antigone, pp. 79-80.

according to what will be right for the people of Thèbes and its government. He is no longer master of his wishes or actions; for, as he admits to Antigone, he personally does not want her death, but for the good of the state this is something he must do unless she compromises. Anouilh presents a clear view of the binding responsibility which power has always carried with it. Yet the audience can still be sympathetic with the burdened Crèon because there is a task to be completed and he must accept the responsibility as king.

Just when it seems as though Crèon has failed in all of his attempts to make Antigone realize that her death would be foolish, the situation takes a different turn by means of the technical originality of the author which enables Crèon to bring about a change of mind in Antigone as he relates to her the sordid story of her two brothers:

Mais je vais te dire quelque chose, à toi, quelque chose que je sais seul, quelque chose d'effroyable: Étèocle... ne valait pas plus cher que Polynice. Le bon fils avait essayé, lui aussi, de faire assassiner son père, ... de vendre Thèbes au plus offrant. ... Cette trahison pour laquelle le corps de Polynice est en train de pourrir au soleil, j'ai la preuve maintenant qu'Étèocle, qui dort dans son tombeau de marbre, se préparait, lui aussi, à la commettre.9

Marsh comments upon this statement when he says that "Antigone's gesture of loyalty is ridiculous in the extreme— it has no reasonable justification, it is utterly senseless."10

9 Anouilh, Antigone, p. 80.
10 Marsh, op. cit., pp. 115-16.
After having been disillusioned by the King, Antigone at last consents to his wishes and says "oui" to his plan for her life. According to him the only thing that is important for her is to marry Hémon and be happy. But it is at the utterance of the word "happy" that her perplexity returns. She begins to wonder and subsequently asks Créon what happiness will consist of, what she will have to pay for the small glimmer of happiness she might receive, and how she will go about finding happiness. As it becomes more and more apparent that Créon cannot furnish her with acceptable answers to these universal questions, it appears evident to her that this happiness, which she labels "sale bonheur" and of which he speaks, is synonymous with saying "oui."\textsuperscript{11}

At this point, Antigone resembles Gaston in Le Voyageur sans bagage and Jeanne in L'Alouette in that she is not willing to jeopardize her principles by accepting a compromise which she does not believe in and cannot uphold. Her present life is one in which she may refuse to endure mediocrity. She is not obliged to face the cruel and sometimes kind, sordid and at times pleasant state that one labels life. She is not compelled as Créon is to say "oui" when she does not actually want or intend to compromise.

Antigone expresses what she really wants and expects of life in the ensuing passage:

Vous me dégoûtez tous avec votre bonheur! Avec votre vie qu'il faut aimer coûte que coûte. On dirait des chiens qui lèchent tout ce qu'ils trouvent. Et cette petite chance pour tous les jours, si on n'est pas trop exigeant. Moi, je veux tout, tout de suite,—et que ce soit entier—ou alors je refuse! Je ne veux pas être modeste, moi, et me contenter d'un petit morceau si j'ai été bien sage. Je veux être sûre de tout aujourd'hui et que cela soit aussi beau que quand j'étais petite—ou mourir.\(^\text{12}\)

Antigone's argument is strong and at this point she seems no longer in doubt as to her own choice in life. Because of her self-confidence and of her own desires, she is able to dismantle all the seemingly logical reasoning of Créon. Again Antigone, very much like Gaston, cannot accept a pretense which she views as thoughtless cooperation with circumstance. Even her love for Hémon risks the possibility of being altered by the uncertain conditions of her life. This view of a mediocre and partially fulfilled life is not at all the picture she has in mind for her own. If she says "oui" to prepared life that Créon has in store for her, eventually she would in all likelihood be consumed by the inherently mediocre and futile situation. To speculate even further, one might say that Antigone resembles the imaginary dead body that Gaston left behind in rejection of his life with the Renauds. Therefore, it is

better and more fitting to her beliefs to say "non" and die honorably now.

Crôon realizes he cannot bring about a change in the position Antigone has assumed and subsequently considers her negative response a cowardly position. In his opinion, to refuse is easy for anyone whereas only those who consent can bring about change and thus progress. As the realistic Crôon listens to the idealistic notions of Antigone, he recognizes that she, like her father—and like many of Anouilh's protagonists—is an individual for whom human happiness is hopeless. The futility of human happiness is one of the views which makes this protagonist comparable to other contemporary characters—such as those in Rhinocéros by Ionesco. On the other hand Crôon represents those who compromise and who live in a more realistic world than that represented by Antigone. John Harvey goes as far as to say "while the first audiences in 1944 reviled him as a collaborationist, many have since come to regard him and not Antigone as the true hero of this tragedy of character." 

One's sympathy for Crôon increases as the futility of Antigone's refusal becomes even clearer. Her refusal is

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based on the realization that the demands she makes of life can be assured neither by Creon nor by any other mortal. In her search for purity, she aspires to the type of life that she experienced as a little girl when her demands were granted and she felt she had a guarantee of complete happiness. Thus, when Antigone makes her final choice to refuse human reason and authority, she is not making this choice as a result of her own experiences in an adult world, but rather from a child's naïve view of the world. Though Antigone like Gaston is seeking absolute purity in every aspect of life, she differs in that her aspirations can only be realized in the after-life. Gaston, after a dim view of a corrupted life of which he had formerly been a part, does not resign himself to physical death since he has already killed his evil alter ego. By assuming another identity he is able to continue living and aspiring to a purity which is beyond the reach of corruptible mankind. His is also a dream world but does not deny earthly existence. Unlike Gaston, Antigone could not accept a final choice like his, a compromise, because she can only agree to an instant, complete and guaranteed state of purity. Gaston is able to isolate himself from the ugliness of life, whereas Antigone does not allow herself a chance to discover possible values in life. It then becomes evident that her death is established
a priori. Créon is also aware of this fact as he responds to the Chorus:

Je le comprends maintenant, Antigone était faite pour être morte. Elle-même ne le savait peut-être pas, mais Polynice n'était qu'un prétexte. Quand elle a dû y renoncer, elle a trouvé autre chose tout de suite. Ce qui importait pour elle, c'était de refuser et de mourir.17

The confrontation of characters in the hero and heroine of this drama is further displayed when Créon meets in a final scene with his son Hémon, whom he gives the following advice:

Il faudra bien que tu acceptes, Hémon. Chacun de nous a un jour, plus ou moins triste, plus ou moins lointain, où il doit enfin accepter d'être un homme...18

Harvey comments on this clear awakening to the value of life in these words:

Créon finally realizes that accepting life does not mean complacency in the face of all its horrors as one clutches at meager happiness; he realizes that to accept life is to accept being a man, to shed the comforts of infantile dreams, and to behold for once the world in all its beauty and ugliness.19

Unfortunately Antigone does not come to this realization until it is too late. But one feels that she does reach this point of maturity as she reveals to the Guard that

17 Anouilh, Antigone, p. 102.
18 Ibid., p. 104.  
19 Harvey, loc. cit.
"Crêon avait raison, c'est terrible, maintenant, à côté de cet homme, je ne sais plus pourquoi je meurs. J'ai peur."²⁰

Beyond the political labels Antigone was given by critics during its first presentations, there lies an exposition of the many complexities of life that man has had to cope with from the beginning of time to the present day. However, Anouilh's heroine is perhaps most representative of the young people of the second half of the twentieth century, who are continually raising controversial questions and strongly rebelling against conformity. She represents an extremely idealistic attitude toward life for which many aspire but few attain. She is a combination of purity, straightforwardness, bravery and determination. No one individual has influenced her life. Her refusal, which appears on the surface to be a rejection of the demands of Crêon but is in fact a refusal of human authority and pragmatism, stems from her disappointment with mankind in general. The realization of happiness as no more than another mediocre aspect of life becomes to her a realization of an object of scorn.²¹

Crêon represents that majority of individuals throughout history who have molded ideas and notions in a manner

²⁰ Anouilh, Antigone, p. 115.
²¹ Cf. Lassalle, op. cit., p. 68.
necessary to arrive at a happy medium. He is among those who recognize the futility of eternal resistance to life and who have hope for the future.

Modern man is able to identify in varying degrees with the important characters of this play and the ideals they uphold partially because Anouilh "employs a language that is simple yet beautiful, universal and yet not base." The work has a contemporary atmosphere and is a mixture of realism and fantasy. Objects out of place in time appear throughout Antigone—such as the band at the engagement ball, the antique shops in Thèbes, and the pictures described as hanging in Eurydice's bedroom. The use of anachronisms is at times startling and may have an influence on the effectiveness of the work. Perhaps Anouilh utilizes anachronisms to bring the whole situation even closer to modern times and thereby make the awareness of man's situation in life even more acute.

While acknowledging the many strong points of this play, there also appear weak ones, though not so numerous or major as to diminish the success of the work. The manner in which the prologue sets the stage for the ensuing action seems to minimize the seriousness of the drama by introducing each character as an actor who already knows his role and actions in the play. Also, at times, one has the

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23 Cf. Grossvogel, op. cit., p. 163.
feeling that Antigone makes a deliberate pursuit of death, especially when she says to Créon that she is not supposed to understand, but only to die. Marsh describes this phase of the play as "the apparent pointlessness of Antigone's sacrifice." This attitude might be justified if the gods were the controlling force as in Sophocles' play, but Anouilh has divorced this aspect from his modern presentation.

Jean Anouilh's major themes of purity, idealism and rejection recur throughout Antigone. There is found the same individual confidence in attaining these goals as in Le Voyageur sans bagage and other Anouilhan plays. The general tenor of Antigone, unlike that of the aforementioned, remains pessimistic. Créon's final advice to the little page, whom he tells never to grow up, reflects the general pessimism of this play concerning the many struggles which accompany adulthood. Antigone cannot cope with these struggles and this plight confronts her in her search for a purity unattainable on earth.

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24 Marsh, op. cit., p. 118.
CHAPTER IV

JEANNE’S QUEST FOR PURITY

IN L’ALOUETTE

L’Alouette goes far beyond the retelling of the political and patriotic deeds of a poor young shepherd girl who left her mark on the history of France. It displays the extraordinary theatrical techniques of Jean Anouilh, unfolding thoughts that are quite pessimistic but at the same time interwoven with glowing ideals. The latter part of the life of Jeanne is dramatized by the playwright in a series of flashbacks, projections and the play within a play. In the development of the drama Anouilh discards the sequence of time by a mixture of present, past and future. Very often the audience must stop to take note of what moment in Jeanne’s life a particular action is a part.

The manner of presentation in this play resembles closely that of Le voyageur sans bagage, where the characters simultaneously witness and act out a drama. With respect to this method Anouilh has been compared to the earlier Italian playwright Pirandello.¹ The action commences on a day in the trial of Jeanne; then it shifts to the past at the time when she first heard the Voices. She relates her

story, but an air of fantasy soon manifests itself in the play as the various characters await their turn to play their roles and are cued either by their own initiative or by another character, since all of the characters stand on the stage during the entire performance. This light tone appears after Warwick, the chief English minister at the investigation, remarks that the trial is ready to begin, but his aide Cauchon states, "mais, Monseigneur, il y a toute l'histoire à jouer. Domrémy, les Voix, Vaucouleurs, Chinon, le Sacre..." So there exist the realistic and tragic developments of the trial as well as the imaginary scenes of a play centered on Jeanne's past life. Pronko comments on this same aspect as being a play "built on two levels... the courtroom and the burning and... a stage." The play, which is the enactment of significant scenes from Jeanne's life, is to serve the judges at the trial as an aid in determining her fate. The interaction of the characters in L'Alouette becomes the driving force in Jeanne's search for purity, more so than the historical events which take place.

The role of the Père becomes one of condemnation, anger, and even brutality as he strikes his daughter mercilessly in public. The Frère is no more than a reporter of his

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3 Pronko, op. cit., p. 155.
sister's behavior, and the Mère becomes the protective yet unsympathetic individual who must defenselessly witness her daughter's fate. Thus, the family of Jeanne has little influence on either her immediate actions or her final choice.

As Jeanne continues her story with frequent interruptions, comments and questions from the judges of the trial, her position in the medieval society gradually crystalizes. The Englishman, Warwick, does not fail to notice the extraordinary qualities of this heroine, but he must perform the duty for which he was sent. It is he who first refers to her as "l'alouette." As the trial continues, he reminds Jeanne of the fact that the French have abandoned her after the victory she helped them achieve. But the fact that her king, the very weak Charles, and all of the soldiers she once commanded have abandoned her does not shatter her faith in her country or her countrymen, and Jeanne can still faithfully say of mankind:

Il me semble seulement que les vrais miracles, cela ne doit pas être ces tours de passe-passe ou de physique amusante. Les romanichels sur la place de mon village en faisaient aussi. . . Les vrais miracles, ceux qui font sourire Dieu de plaisir dans le Ciel, ce doit être ceux que les hommes font tout seuls, avec le courage et l'intelligence qu'il leur a donnés.  

As the Promoteur continues in his efforts to confuse her and thus convict her of heresy, it is the intervention of the Inquisiteur which leads the trial to its climactic point

4 Anouilh, L'Alouette, p. 90.
and which thus results in Jeanne's final choice. The Inquisiteur represents the church and concerns himself solely with upholding what he believes to be just before God. In these scenes with him, Jeanne's most mature and clever comments appear. She becomes even more firm in her beliefs and realizes her role in life as she says "pour ce qui est de la foi, je m'en remets à l'Église. Mais pour ce qui est de ce que j'ai fait, je ne m'en dédirai jamais." The Inquisiteur succeeds only in confirming her deep faith in mankind and finally must resort to demanding her death. A final effort is made on the part of a few sympathizers to save her life, resulting temporarily in her acceptance of a compromise. But soon Jeanne is aware of the impossibility of this compromise and chooses death.

Throughout L'Alouette Anouilh strongly attacks society, religion, and the family. Although this attack is common to his theater, perhaps never before has he expressed his views in such bitter and adamant terms, nor has his assault so obviously reached as many aspects of life. The idea of the family is bombarded as the author presents Jeanne's family as divisive and without love or understanding. Above all, her family has no faith in her and fails to support her during the crisis. In effect, this shattering portrayal of the family is reminiscent of André Gide's work Les Nourritures

\[5\text{ Ibid., p. 108.}\]
terrestres, in which the narrator says to Nathanaël: "Familles! je vous hais!"  

Society is first assailed in terms of its system of justice as the trial begins and Warwick queries: "Nous sommes tous là? Bon. Alors le procès, tout de suite. Plus vite elle sera jugée et brulée, mieux cela sera. Pour tout le monde." Since the action of the play begins at this point in her life and the trial does not recapture the truth of her past, it appears that Warwick, as well as some of the other judges at the trial, has already passed judgment on the defendant. Anouilh here stresses man's inability to see clearly the action of another and thus to judge him.  

Though the medieval system of justice of L'Alouette was not as progressive as justice is today, the underlying idea suggests justice is impossible for man to maintain in any period of history no matter how "progressive" it may be considered. Secondly, Anouilh points out that in conjunction with social injustice there also exists the corruption of government. Charles appears as the epitome of a worthless head of state whose dealings lack consideration for the welfare of the people he governs.  

Religion is also included as Anouilh attacks both its spiritual and temporal aspects through the Roman Catholic

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7 Anouilh, L'Alouette, p. 11.  
8 Cf. Fowlie, op. cit., p. 121.
Church. His heroine is one of God's most faithful servants. Yet, in her most troubled moment, she calls upon Him for mercy and He seems to be silent:

"Monseigneur saint Michel, Mesdames Catherine et Marguerite, vous ne me parlerez donc plus? Pourquoi m'avez-vous laissée seule depuis que les Anglais m'ont prise? Vous étiez là pour me conduire à la victoire, mais c'est surtout dans la peine que j'avais besoin de vous. Sans doute avez-vous voulu que je vive?—C'est question—là, aussi."

The playwright presents God as favoring opposing groups or individuals in various situations. It seems that He is on the side of the English when Warwick states: "Fort heureusement Dieu est avec le droit anglais, il l'a prouvé à Azincourt. Dieu et notre droit. Ce sont deux notions maintenant tout à fait confondues." But at another point, Warwick becomes confused about a situation where the same God, who led the English through so many victories, would later lead the French to conquer the English army. In the following scene he admits to the Bishop that this did occur and that God must have it His way in any case: "Non, ce qu'il y a eu en plus—ayons l'élégance d'en convenir—c'est l'impondérable. Dieu si vous y tenez... ."

It is especially in the discourses of Charles and the minor character, La Trémouille, that Anouilh shows man's

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10 Ibid., p. 25.
11 Ibid., p. 83.
life on earth as being far more advantageous without the intervention of God. Anouilh makes inevitable the uselessness of man's struggle when God intervenes. For example, it is clear that Charles' lack of faith and trust in God is motivated by the fact that during the time when he and France had need of divine assistance, God had seemingly deserted them. Charles assumes an almost infantile attitude yet one that becomes both pitiable and understandable. The king expresses this lack of faith by saying "alors, il ne m'aime pas. Et s'il ne m'aime pas, pourquoi veux-tu que je l'aime? Il n'avait qu'à m'en donner du courage. Je ne demandais pas mieux, moi!"

At times an undertone of simplistic and nationalistic theism appears in L'Alouette. In one scene when Charles is explaining the game of cards to Jeanne, he makes a somewhat simplistic analogy with God to the most powerful card by saying "l'as précisément. L'as c'est Dieu si tu veux." Another instance, demonstrating nationalism-become-religion, quoted previously, occurs when Warwick accepts God and the English right as being the same. Although the author does not clearly state his beliefs, throughout the play he expresses views which are contrary to Christian beliefs or to

13 Anouilh, L'Alouette, p. 76.
14 Ibid., p. 75.
a conventional belief in God, while still acknowledging the existence of a Supreme Being. Though Charles rejects God, it is not to deny a supreme force, but rather to show a lack of faith in the God of the Church: he believes that God does exist for those who are prosperous. For Warwick there exists a supreme power which causes triumph or defeat, be it called God or some other name.

Nevertheless, at no time can the church—in this instance the Roman Catholic Church—be a representative of the supreme force or of God, in Anouilh's assessment.15 Not only does he reject the Church as a representative, but he goes on to bombard its dogma with respect to salvation in a scene between Jeanne and the Promoteur:

Jeanne: Alors si le diable est beau, comment peut-on savoir que c'est le diable?

Le Promoteur: En le demandant à ton curé.

Jeanne: On ne peut pas le savoir tout seul?

Le Promoteur: Non. C'est pourquoi il n'y a pas de salut hors l'Eglise.

Jeanne: On n'a pas toujours son curé avec soi, sauf les riches. C'est difficile pour les pauvres.

Le Promoteur: C'est difficile pour tout le monde de ne pas être damné.16

Thus, the author points out that, even within the Church itself, salvation becomes almost impossible. In this attack

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the playwright brings to focus a current opinion shared by many of his fellowmen.17 Secondly, he typifies French anticlericalism by assailing the Church's representatives, or the priests. The Inquisiteur is portrayed as an unfeeling, inhuman, bitter but intelligent man whose celestial concerns have left no room for human beings. Not only does he almost appear a caricature of cruelty, but in the proposition he introduces in his first discourse, he seems almost too villainous to be real:

La Sainte Inquisition . . . lutte dans l'invisible, secrètement contre un ennemi qu'elle seule sait déteeter . . . son seul ennemi, tu viens, te dévoilant, de prononcer, son nom: c'est l'homme.
Et qui aime l'homme, n'aime pas Dieu.18

Jean Anouilh has ultimately placed mankind in conflict with God. Viewing this conflict, one might interpret man's plight on earth as useless and the hope for a better future as completely preposterous. Further, after considering Anouilh's portrayal of the corruption of the Church and society together with man's conflict with God, one would likely infer that the only recourse for the individual seeking purity is death.

The playwright's final assault is against man in general. In Jean-Pierre Lassalle's brief but interesting book he comments on Anouilh's attitude toward humanity in these terms:

18 Anouilh, L'Alouette, pp. 92, 96.
Although Anouilh has expressed man's corruption in Le Voyageur sans bagage and Antigone as well as in many other works, this is the first play in which the theme is brought forth in such dramatic and direct terms. That is, in the other two dramas the corruption of mankind is presented through the actions of the antagonist and rejected by the protagonist as being sordid. Cauchon opens the way for this base portrayal of man by branding him as sinful and awkward, but it is especially through the Promoteur and the Inquisiteur that the playwright's main points on the subject are revealed. Man is referred to as impure and lusty, and his acts compared to those of an animal. After much exposition on the sordid state of mankind, the Inquisiteur concludes with the following:

Le diable est notre allié. ... L'homme, l'homme transparent et tranquille me fait mille fois plus peur. Regardez-le, enchaîné, désarmé, abandonné des siens et plus très sûr--n'est-ce pas Jeanne? ... Tant qu'il restera un homme qui ne sera pas brisé, l'Idée, même si elle domine et broie tout reste du monde, sera en danger de périr. C'est pourquoi je réclame pour Jeanne l'excommunication

19 Lassalle, op. cit., p. 51.
Jeanne does not lose courage when she hears the demands of the Inquisiteur which appear as punishment for her faith in man; this is in reality Anouilh demanding punishment for mankind.

Again, in depicting the tragedy of man, Anouilh has not stopped at a one-sided presentation which might totally limit his plays to protagonists of one philosophy. To add balance to this ignoble view of mankind, he places a defense for it in the statements of Jeanne. Thus, unlike that of Le Voyageur sans bagage, Antigone and others, the protagonist in this work is the defender of mankind. In fact, Jeanne's support of humanity is as strong as the Promoteur's and the Inquisiteur's attacks against it. Unlike the typical Anouilhan hero who believes in a dichotomous life made up of the two irreconcilable forces of good and evil, Jeanne believes herself to be a servant of God and views man as His greatest miracle. Within this miracle, which is man, God has placed good and evil, and therefore, these two opposing forces become part of society and life. Her argument is so well-founded and lucid that at times one wonders if Anouilh

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has perhaps convinced himself of the worthiness of mankind.\textsuperscript{21}

One of the most striking and rational moments of \textit{L'Alouette} is captured in a tableau where Jeanne presents just such a defense:

\begin{center}
\begin{quote}
Il pêche, il est ignoble. Et puis soudain, on ne sait pas pourquoi (il aimait tant vivre et jouir, ce porcasse), il se jette à la tête d'un cheval emballe, en sortant d'une maison de débauche, pour sauver un petit inconnu et les os brisés, meurt tranquille, lui que s'était donné tant de mal pour organiser sa nuit de plaisir . . .
Dieu l'attend en souriant. Car il a agi deux fois comme un homme, en faisant le mal et en faisant le bien. Et Dieu l'aurait justement créé pour cette contradiction.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}
\end{center}

Anouilh shows sympathy for those who are not as extreme in their demands as Gaston, yet who are as he is in expecting to maintain a life superior to the baseness of mankind. Thus, he seems to sympathize with those persons who deem it selfish or impractical to take those radically individualistic steps of an Antigone or a Gaston. Although it is usual in the philosophical aspect of Anouilh's theater to esteem the individual act—a respect somewhat reminiscent of existentialism—it becomes more evident here that the individual act in itself has little or no significance except to the person involved.\textsuperscript{23} The acts performed which affect his personal situation are important.

\textsuperscript{21} Cf. Brodin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 439.

\textsuperscript{22} Anouilh, \textit{L'Alouette}, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{23} Cf. Brodin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 438.
Though the ultimate goal of all of these protagonists is the state of absolute purity, the heroine of _L'Alouette_ is again in a different setting. As has been discussed, Gaston to a limited degree and Antigone in particular had to seek purity in an existence after death. Jeanne does not reject the evil that is part of man's life. Thus, when she is led to abjure her Voices she feels that in doing so she is also repudiating herself. During a conversation with Warwick, Jeanne realizes this grave injustice done to her, and in a final gesture she rejects her confession:

Vouz voyez Jeanne, en hennin, emprunte dans ses robes, s'occupant de son petit chien ou avec un homme à ses trousses ... mais je ne veux pas faire une fin ... pas celle-là ... Messire Saint Michel! Sainte Marguerite! Sainte Catherine. ... Je n'ai vécu que du jour où j'ai fait ce que vous m'avez dit de faire ... ce n'est que celle-là, Jeanne. ... Hé bien j'assume, mon Dieu! Je prends sur moi! Je vous rends Jeanne! ... Appelle tes Soldats, Warwick. ... Je renonce à l'abjuration. ... 24

Jeanne has discovered her true position in the framework of life on earth and courageously anticipates her eternal position in the after-life. In his critical study of the theatriics of Anouilh, John Harvey, like many other major critics, comments on the heroine's renunciation of her confession in terms of its weak motive:

Jeanne is depressed at the picture of herself growing old, fat and complacent. She realizes now ... that her true self is the maiden warrior. To recapture this true self and to hold it forever, she retracts

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her confession and invites death. . . . The dramatist found no better motive for his lark's firmness of principle than a feminine fear of aging.  

One must consider carefully the position taken in the statement above, but it seems evident that this feminine fear of aging, which Harvey considers as the motive for Jeanne's final decision, is superficial. Beyond this probably lies the actual motive which is the fear of living the rest of her life in a lie. This is a rejection of a life of the mediocre and the impure—an attitude closely resembling that of Antigone. They are both guilty of being what Pucciani terms Ancilhan heroines who are to choose "destruction rather than tamper with their own notions of perfection." Besides this, Jeanne knows that death is inevitable and that once she accepts this compromise of mediocre life, people will soon forget her. When death does arrive, it would be far less noble with the compromise than without it as she has envisioned death in her search for purity.

The conclusion of L'Alouette is fitting to Jeanne's refusal to compromise. As the play is about to end with the burning of Jeanne at the stake, the court is reminded that the scene of the coronation has not yet been enacted. It is then that Charles very sincerely says:

26 Pucciani, op. cit., p. 147.
La vraie fin de l'histoire de Jeanne . . . n'est pas dans sa misère de bête traquée à Rouen, c'est l'alouette en plein ciel, c'est Jeanne à Reims dans toute sa gloire. . . . La vraie fin de l'histoire de Jeanne est joyeuse. . . .

Thus, in the final discourse of Charles, Anouilh has justified a happy ending to an otherwise tragic play. One critic interprets such a happy ending somewhat differently when he comments that "si fort est le désir d'Anouilh de reconstituer sur le plateau l'imagerie d'enfance, qu'il supprime le dénouement tragique." Nevertheless, there still exists the parallel between Jeanne's renunciation of her confession and the rose ending of the play; for just as she acted in order to retain her true self, the joyful dénouement symbolizes a happy and triumphant France marked by the coronation itself.

L'Alouette shows exceptional use of form, especially in the author's handling of the time element. The drift from present to past to future is achieved in such natural manner that the characters, as well as the drama, ultimately acquire a greater aspect of authenticity. His presentation of a play within a play has caused the reality of the story of Jeanne to be even more striking. He leaves few aspects of man's plight untouched and at the same time he supplies

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no practical solution to any of the major problems encountered. L'Alouette is not only the tale of a girl who had great influence on a part of French history, but is also the story of another Anouilhan hero in search of purity.

The final play of this discussion, *Becket ou l'Honneur de Dieu*, is often considered Anouilh's finest work though it required much less of his time than most of his other plays. According to the playwright, the idea of writing his version of a popular but not exhausted subject was suggested to him by his wife after his giving her the story of Becket to read in order to relieve her boredom.\(^1\) Thus, a situation fostered entirely by chance developed into one of the most, if not the most, successful endeavors Anouilh has attempted to date.

Although the subject of Thomas Becket has been treated previously by Thomas Stearns Eliot, it is the approach Anouilh employed, as well as the Anouilhan style, which makes the play a unique, intriguing and successful dramatic achievement.

In the four-act version of this drama, Anouilh presents the close relationship that existed between Henry II of England and Thomas Becket, and the evolution of their

friendship into hate and destruction. As the play begins in
the cathedral, Henry lies prostrate before the tomb of
Becket, ready to be flagellated by the followers of the
martyr. The action of the rest of the play then represents
a flashback through the king's reminiscences.

Henry remembers talking to Becket about the days when
the latter was his defender, his advisor, and the person
he loved most in the world. Becket, then Chancellor of
England, protected the king's cause without limitations and,
being far superior in intelligence to all those around him--
including the king--was able to manage the affairs of England
with as much dedication as any monarch could have. Theodore
Shank sees Becket as "a noble and cultivated figure, altru-
istic and unrelenting in his dedication" whereas Henry is
"a rough, simple-hearted roisterer..." It is through
this sharp difference between the characterizations of the
two main figures that Anouilh develops the plot of the play.
As the action progresses, Becket is made Chancellor of England,
keeper of the Triple Lion Seal. From the following scene,
one can see that the king worships and depends upon Becket
and delights in surprising his champion:

Le Roi: Je suis bien content, pour une fois j'ai
réussi à te surprendre, petit Saxon.

Thomas: Mon prince, c'est une marque de votre

2 Shank, op. cit., p. 187.
confidence dont j'ai peur de ne pas être digne.
Je suis très jeune, peut-être léger...

Le Roi: Moi aussi, je suis jeune, et tu en sais plus long que nous tous! (aux autres) Il a étudié, vous savez! C'est incroyable tout ce qu'il connaît."

The love and confidence King Henry has for Becket continue to grow, and the latter does not fail in being the faithful servant of the king. Becket's intelligence, wit, and composure are indispensable tools to Henry in his fight against his enemies, especially against the clergy. In making Becket chancellor and archbishop, Henry rightly feels that together they will ably manage the affairs of state. Of course, Becket, younger than most of the members of the clergy and himself a cleric—though he did not complete his final vows—soon gains enemies in his new position; but the chancellor is as quick to uphold the honor of the state and the king as he is to uphold his own. Although Becket knows little of what the future holds or how these tides will turn, Anouilh gives a hint of the future soon before the former is honored with his new position: the Archbishop of Canterbury says "nous devons être très circonspects. Notre rôle est de sonder les coeurs. Et je ne suis pas sûr que celui-ci soit toujours notre ennemi."¹

Anouilh lets the audience know in advance what the situation

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² Ibid., pp. 162-63.
will become. As soon as the former Archbishop of Canterbury

dies, Henry assigns the bishopric to Thomas, hoping to

strengthen the throne's cause against the clergy and believing

his closest and most trustworthy friend to be best suited for

the position. Since Becket only lacks his vows, this minor

obstacle can be easily overcome in order to suit Henry's

ingenious plan. In spite of the protests from Becket him-

self, the king insists upon having his wishes obeyed. The

archbishop realizes the king desires an impossible alliance

between the honor of God and the honor of the state. A

beautiful friendship ends quite tragically and finally

brings about the martyrdom of Becket and the sorrow of Henry.

The action of the first two acts is built upon friend-

ship, which is one of the main themes of the play. In

developing this relationship between Becket and Henry, the

author returns to the familiar subject of poverty—a topic

which filled his earlier dramas—in order to show the dif-

ference between the two close friends. Anouilh still scorns

the society which breeds poverty, but even worse is the

effect of poverty on the lives of the people marked by it.

Germaine Brée comments on this subject: "Not that Anouilh's

heroes revolt against poverty for purely materialistic

reasons: poverty for them is daily degradation—the sure

path of humiliation, pettiness, resignation, and bitterness."5

5 Germaine Brée, "The Innocent Amusements of Jean

Though Becket shows compassion for the poor, it is not until after he becomes archbishop that he shows open revolt against the unjust condition of poverty. In contrast, Henry feels contempt for poverty's victims, as can be seen when he and Becket are obliged to seek shelter in the dwelling of a peasant family:

Le Roi: (Il regarde l'homme, exaspéré.) Regarde-moi ça... c'est must, c'est obtus, ça grouillé, ça pué, il y en a partout... (Il rattrape la petite qui a tenté de s'éloigner.) Reste là, toi! Cela sert à quoi, je te le demande?

Becket: Ça gratte le sol, ça fait du pain...

Le Roi: Ce qui est curieux, c'est que ce soit si vilain et que cela fasse de si jolies filles! Comment expliques-tu ça, toi qui expliques tout?

Becket: A vingt ans, avant d'avoir perdu ses dents et pris cet âge indéfinissable du peuple, celui-là a peut-être été beau. Il a peut-être eu une nuit d'amour, une minuit où il a été roi lui aussi... Après, sa vie de pauvre a repris, pareille. Sa femme et lui ont même dû oublier. Mais la somme était jetée.

Le Roi: (Il regarde la fille.) Tu crois qu'elle deviendra laide comme les autres?

Becket: Sûrement. 6

The friendship of these two men is explored with its trials and delights—the former predominating.

Again, the signs of an attack on religion appear in Becket as in L'Alouette. Unlike Charles, Henry is a strong

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6 Anouilh, Becket, p. 170.
ruler and believes that, even against God, he is strong enough to defend the honor of the realm. Once more the idea of conflict between man and God develops. Having once championed the honor of the state and now the honor of God, Becket vainly hopes for an alliance of the two causes:

Becket: Mon prince, Je voudrais tant pouvoir vous aider.

Le Roi: Qu'est-ce que tu attends? Tu vois que je suis en train d'en crever!

Becket: Que l'honneur de Dieu et l'honneur du roi se confondent.

Le Roi: Cela risque d'être long! 7

Moreover, the corruption that exists in the Roman Catholic Church does not go unnoticed. The manner in which the Church's high officials manoeuvre situations and positions for financial gains might shatter any man's faith in the Church as a guiding force. Anouilh again furnishes an example of anticlericalism in France and now extends it to England.

To complete his tableau of the sordidness of various aspects of authority, Anouilh brings forth the baseness of man especially exemplified in the character of King Henry. He has no concern for human integrity and happiness, as he shows when he obliges Becket to give Guendoline, Thomas' mistress, to him, and when he sends a peasant girl to

7 Ibid., pp. 270-71.
replace Gwendoline. The king's detached attitude toward his family may be included in Anouilh's portrayal of corruption.

The other important theme of the play, honor, not only involves the honor of God, as the subtitle suggests, but the many other aspects of honor. All action in Becket is centered around this theme of honor. Although honor was important to Jeanne and to Antigone in the two previous chapters, Becket's story represents the first time honor has been used as a weapon of justice. Germaine Brée defines "honor," as it applies to Anouilh's theater, as a "word that his Joan of Arc and his Antigone also understand; it is fidelity to the role one is designated to play, the acceptance of oneself in a given part, whatever its essential absurdity."\(^8\) Considering this definition in terms of the honor of the state, one might say that Becket performed his role in upholding the honor of the state exceptionally well until he felt this role no longer to be his duty. The honor of the king was to him a matter of paramount importance; he even taught the king its true importance. Henry learned the meaning of honor, which his friend had taught him, so well that he subordinates the deep love he feels for Becket in order to maintain the honor of the realm.

\(^8\) Brée, loc. cit.
The honor of God recurs as a major theme in the last two acts of the play and provides the reason for the conflict between Becket and Henry. For the archbishop, the honor of God means defending and upholding all that he deems just in God's scheme of life, and in his final meeting with the king it is evident that Becket is sure of his task on earth:


The honor of God becomes Becket's weapon for defending His kingdom on earth. Brēe views the honor of God as found in Becket as "the weapon of the dispossessed." This phrase seems to emphasize the function of religion as a refuge for those who have been abandoned by all else.

The honor of self is closely related to that of God. Becket states that honor has always been an idea which he adored but that he lacked this quality until finally he donned the miter and shared the honor of God. Having accepted himself in his role as defender of God's honor, the archbishop faces a final choice between death and a compromise with Henry:

10 Brēe, loc. cit.
Le Roi: Lèveras-tu l'excommunication de Guillaume d'Aynesford et les autres que tu as prononcées contre des hommes à moi?

Becket: Non, mon roi, car je n'ai que cette arme pour défendre cet enfant à moi confié, qui est nu. 11

Becket's refusal to compromise resembles that of Jeanne in that the compromise represents a repudiation of what he considers his true role and a rejection of his own notions of purity. In his search for purity Becket's first important step had been to renounce all riches and material pleasures; however, it was not until after his period of exile that he actually realized perfection in his life. Thus, he rejects the corrupt life that Henry's compromise offers him. His death is one of honor and a means of preserving the purity which is now his and of maintaining the advantages for the Church which he has already won.

The framework of Becket is presented as a game, or interplay of opposing views, and within this game are found several others. The dilemmas which Becket faces in his relationships with the Church and Henry, the intrigues of the Church and the State, and life's general problems—such as poverty and personal integrity—furnish a complex structure for Anouilh's drama. There is the game of honor, discussed earlier, which takes on many aspects. Then,

11 Anouilh, Becket, p. 274.
there is God's game in which Becket acknowledges his position as archbishop and knows the moves he must make:

Il Vous a plu de me faire Archevêque-Primat et de me mettre comme un pion solitaire, et presque aussi grand que lui, en face du roi, sur le jeu. Je retournerai à cette première place, humblement, laissant le monde m'accuser d'orgueil, pour y faire ce que je crois mon ouvrage.\textsuperscript{12}

The game of religion not only includes the king and the archbishop but the Church and all of its officials. The object of this game is to acquire all of the wealth possible, at any cost. The game of politics, on the same board with religion, places two kings on the chessboard along with the archbishop and other chessmen. King Louis VIII of France is indebted to Henry II of England, and the payoff is the return of Becket, who is temporarily exiled in France.

No less important a game is that of love—Henry's love for Becket and Becket's love for God. Brée comments that "no amount of discussion . . . can draw out of Anouilh's plays a general theory of love; in each of them love precipitates the action, and that is all."\textsuperscript{13} Becket's love for God is quite simply in Henry's path. The latter wishes to share Becket with no one and has become jealous of even God. So, the game of love involves jealousy and devotion.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 260.

\textsuperscript{13} Brée, loc. cit.
All of these various forms of games culminate in the game of life which is played as a chess game with the world as the chessboard and mankind the chessmen. The championship awaits the man who is able to endure its many challenges. The play ends with a game of criminal investigation: the king pretends not to know Thomas' assassins and, while they stand beside him, he states his intention to seek them out and punish them.

Anouilhan characters seem very conscious of their actions. Very often a character idealizes his role in society as presented in the play and tries to live up to his ideals even in a world adverse to them. Becket similarly guides his action; he played several parts in this drama of friendship and honor, but the part to which he was infinitely faithful was the champion of God's cause, which he envisioned to be his only role in life. He was tempted by earthly pleasure, earthly power and treason. However, even the final temptation of sainthood does not make him yield, and this refusal lends integrity to his role.

Becket's search for purity involves not only a refusal to compromise, like Antigone's, but also a preoccupation with God's honor, not unlike Jeanne's.14 Although many games of life hinder his quest, he eventually achieves the supreme

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14 Cf. Pronko, op. cit., p. 60.
goal of complete dedication to purity and to honor and, thus, dies.
Chapter VI

Conclusion

The theater of Jean Anouilh cannot be captured or briefly summarized in one discussion, but concrete remarks can be made with respect to certain aspects of his theater. There are important factors to consider with reference to the mechanics of the four plays concerned: Anouilh's superb ability to construct intriguing dramas and his manner of combining the modern and the ancient in the plot, setting, and costumes enable the audience to shift its focus from a false setting—the stage—to a more emphatic, clear picture of reality thereby creating a closer contact between the audience and the playwright. In regard to construction, one of the outstanding elements one notes is the use he makes of the flashback and the play within a play, both of which capture the alternating moments of the entire play—the superficial and profound, the illusory and real, the false and true.

Anouilh's presentations stress the daily concerns of life—life is a play, or rather the play. As he creates plays, characters and situations, he is showing the complexity of life. The method of categorizing his dramas basically into pièces roses, pièces noires, pièces brillantes and pièces grincantes, emphasizes the various aspects of life, and the many roles people may assume.
In the works treated in this discussion, the principal theme has been the search for purity. As Anouilh's characters encounter the problems of honor, family, religion and love, their quest for purity becomes more interesting and pertinent to problems which affect all men. The Anouilhan hero is inevitably faced with the task of directing his life on a path of purity whereby he must either reject all that is or appears to be a threat to attaining ultimate perfection, or accept and become a member of this dichotomous world of good and evil. In Anouilh's theater, one can neither accept life as it is and achieve true happiness, nor can one discover an alliance with life's contradictions. Thus, Anouilh makes no attempts to present a solution to this basic conflict in human existence but does make the audience vividly aware of its ramifications.

Although there are parts to be played and themes to be found in this enormous play of life, most important are the characters who perform these parts, for they symbolize mankind. The author's characters represent man in every aspect, both positive and negative. Although there is significant change from the attitudes of his main characters in his earlier plays to those in his later plays, the underlying objective and conflict of each remain unchanged. Gaston in *Le Voyageur sans bagage* refuses compromise and maintains his notions of purity to the extent of denying
his past and accepting the lie of a fantasy life. Antigone
too refuses to compromise, but the refusal seems more universal
as it is primarily a rejection of the mediocrity of life.
Similarly, in L'Alouette Jeanne opposes the possibility of
a mediocre life, but most important to her or any individual
is being true to one's self. And in the most recent play
herein discussed, Becket's attitude, which might be con-
sidered more mature than that of Gaston, also denies a
compromise since he discovers his true self and chooses
his own role in life without denying his past.

Whether Jean Anouilh intended his theater to be aesthetic
or didactic, the fact remains that by the strong character-
izations, the exceptional use of theatrics and, most of all,
the dramatic presentation of life's problems, he has at-
tracted the attention of the theater world. His efforts to
entertain have developed into a means of making his
audience profoundly aware of the essence of life and of its
briefness. There are some things that man must do for him-
self if he is ever to be free in life; it is apparent from
his theater that Anouilh also is aware of man's responsibility,
for beneath his heroes' and heroines' search for purity
their actual motive and their ultimate goal lie in an effort
to be free from other's making their moral choices for them.
Therefore, just as the individual acts of Gaston, Antigone,
Jeanne and Becket afforded them their liberty, so the
possibility of freedom appears attainable for mankind. Although we have a feeling of hope by the end of each play, the audience after reflection leaves somewhat disheartened since the attainment of earthly happiness before death remains only a possibility and not a certainty.

The quest for purity remains a worthy task, but the goal—purity—lacks some of its splendor after we study what Anouilh has to say about it. Searching for purity provides us with stimulation and varying degrees of satisfaction; our searching has merit even if we do not reach perfection and purity. The effort is worthwhile.
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