

University of Southampton

THE COMEDIE-FRANCAISE UNDER THE OCCUPATION: THE
1942-1943 SEASON, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO LA
REINE MORTE, HAMLET, AND PHEDRE.

by Kenneth Guy Charisse

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ABSTRACT

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My thesis examines the relationship between French culture in the unique situation of the Occupation, and the Comédie-Française, both as an institution of the state and as a theatre. The work is divided into three main elements : the cultural shock engendered by the Occupation, and the special position, the theatre, and particularly the Comédie-Française, found itself in; a detailed analysis of three productions, with particular reference to their relationship with the situation; finally the manner in which the institutional life of the Comédie-Française reacted to the Occupation.

First of all a definition of culture is established, and the nature of Nazi culture analyzed. Because of the totalitarian emphasis detected, drastic effects on French culture are inevitable, and it is apparent that a radical transformation of the indigenous culture is imminent. These circumstances create a unique duty for the Comédie-Française to fulfil.

Each of the three plays is then studied with specific relevance to its appositeness in the cultural situation, by an examination of the themes and artistic forms; of the relationships of the works with the French cultural heritage; of the pertinence of the 'mises en scène' to contemporary circumstances.

An analysis of the institutional life of the Comédie-Française reveals how, through fortuitous historical circumstances, it was paradoxically able to derive strength from a situation which, in other realms of French culture, had effected vital changes.

The particular tension created between French culture, the Occupation, and the Comédie-Française, obliged the state theatre to fulfil a cultural rôle of greater significance than usual. With the end of hostilities, and the consequent elimination of the conditions discussed, this tension would be destroyed, and the incipient crisis apparent before the war would finally materialize.

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1) Introduction

This thesis is an examination of the relationship between the Comédie-Française, both as a state institution and as a theatre, and French culture in the unique situation of the Occupation. Since I have chosen to limit my study to the 1942-1943 season, which I consider to have been the period of greatest cultural shock,¹ it is advisable to have some awareness of the general situation in the theatre,² not only during the Occupation, but also in the years immediately preceding it. The appreciation of this general background allows a clearer perspective on my arguments.

Although I do not intend to make my work primarily a sociological study, since I am ~~obviously~~ not qualified to do so,³ nevertheless, I must impinge on this discipline to some extent. A rational evaluation of the exceptional social circumstances of the Occupation is vital to an understanding of the

- 1 - I will deal with this point in greater detail in the next chapter.
- 2 - There have been a number of excellent ~~writings~~ on this topic, dealing not only with the theatre in this time, but also the other arts.
Of particular interest are :
 - a) Forkey, Leo, 'The Theatre of Paris during the Occupation', French Review, 22, no.4 (February 1949), pp.299-306.
 - b) Forkey, Leo, 'The Comédie-Française and the Occupation', French Review, 24, no.6 (May 1951), pp.480-489.
 - c) Marsh, P., 'The Theatre in Paris during the Occupation, 1940-1944, with special reference to the Comédie-Française' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1973),
 - d) French Literature and its Background, Volume 6, The Twentieth Century, edited by J. Cruickshank (Oxford, 1970), pp.205-225.
 - e) Knowles, D., French Drama of the Inter-War Years, 1918-1939 (London, 1967).
 - f) Anders, F., Jacques Copeau et le Cartel des Quatre (Paris, 1959).
 - g) 'La Poésie et la Résistance', Europe, nos.543-544 (July-August, 1974).
- 3 - I have had to rely to some extent on secondary texts with reference to the sociological aspect of my work. However, I have attempted to maintain intellectual autonomy in the basic principles I have adopted, and the conclusions I have reached.

unusually significant rôle bestowed on and fulfilled by the Comédie-Française. Therefore it would seem vital, before I begin my detailed analysis of this season at the Comédie-Française, to outline the methodology adopted.

Fundamentally, my thesis divides into three parts. An examination of the precise nature and immediate effects of alien occupation on French culture; this leads to an appreciation of the singular social importance of the duty discharged by the 'Maison de Molière'. Given the exceptional prominence of this duty, the next two parts concentrate on an evaluation of the relationship of both the artistic and institutional aspects of the Comédie-Française to this situation. The first of these two aspects is approached through an analysis of three productions, Phèdre, Hamlet, and La Reine Morte; the second, through a close study of the administrative life, with particular reference to the minutes of the 'Comité de Lecture', and of the 'Comité d'Administration'.

As can be appreciated, this period remains a very sensitive area in France, subject to constant re-assessment and crises of conscience; consequently it has been extremely difficult, not simply to obtain information, but to ascertain the exact quality of any information obtained. The considerable lapse of time involved has aggravated the problems created by the often violent emotions still felt by many about the Occupation. Several of the people I have contacted could supply no enlightenment, for reasons varying from lack of time to difficulty in remembering the events. Some documents, such as the 'mise en scène' of Hamlet have been mislaid; others, such as various letters written by Montherlant, I was able to read only once, and then they too did not reappear. A further hindrance was the closure of my prime source of information on the Comédie-Française, its own private library, for over a year from March 1973. However, two people were extremely generous with their

time in helping my research, André Boll, 'décorateur' of Hamlet, and Jean Hugo, 'décorateur' of Phèdre. Nevertheless, although I feel that I may have lost some depth of reference because of the circumstances, I consider that I have been able to research sufficient material to make my conclusions valid. Thus, the remarks above are not intended as any kind of apology for the quality of the work; they are intended first to prepare any other researcher who wishes to indulge in a similar study, and to present an additional element which I had to take into consideration when I analyzed my findings.

Throughout my thesis I have made use of the best illustrations available which are relevant to the text. Again, because of the generally chaotic circumstances of penury and restriction during the Occupation, much of this material has either disappeared, or is not of a suitable quality. However, I believe that the illustrative documentation here is of an adequate standard to provide effective illustration of the written text.

- 2) The Cultural Predicament

Louis Jouvet once described the theatre as 'l'attestation la plus vraie et la plus vivante d'une civilisation';¹ the truth of this statement was fully realized during the Occupation when the theatre assumed a social rôle more vital and more essential than in pre-war years. The inter-war period in France had been a particularly fertile one in theatrical evolution, as Jacques Copeau and the Cartel des Quatre reacted against the commercialism which had not only created a vapid and superficial theatre, but had also brought about a concomitant shallowness in the attitudes and expectations of the public. The Cartel strove both to achieve a more vital theatre and to re-educate the public into a true awareness of theatrical quality. With the onset of the Occupation, the invaluable work of the Cartel was disrupted, and one would expect a consequent period of stagnation as these talents were either stifled into submission, or driven into exile.

Jacques Copeau, as we shall see later, immediately attracted the hostility of the Germans. Louis Jouvet felt obliged to leave Paris, since the authorities would not allow him to stage plays by Giraudoux or Jules Romains, who were considered 'anti-culturels'. On September 17th, 1939, Pitoëff had died near Geneva. Only Baty at the Théâtre Montparnasse, and Dullin at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, renamed Théâtre de la Cité because of the Jewish origins of the actress, managed to maintain something like their pre-war activity. Nevertheless it was the work of these five men which had given new life to the serious theatre, a life which was now in danger of disruption. Yet it was during the Occupation that the social relevance of the theatre, and particularly the Comédie-Française, became emphatically apparent. Although not overtly, and perhaps not designedly, it provided protection and stability

1 - Jouvet, Louis , Témoignages (Paris, 1952)
p.242.

for a society facing slow dissolution, as Béatrix Dussane recalls in her Notes de Théâtre.

Le théâtre fut un des moyens que les Parisiens employèrent pour ne pas se laisser détruire.²

By 1944 a contemporary critic could describe this period as a golden age for French theatre.

... il (l'historien futur) sera frappé de la place que les arts dramatiques ont prise à Paris dans cette époque tourmentée. En examinant les comptes des établissements de spectacle il s'apercevra même qu'ils ont connu dans notre temps une espèce d'âge d'or.³

I have restricted my study to an examination of three productions, Hamlet, Phèdre, and La Reine Morte, at the Comédie-Française, during the 1942-1943 season. My selection of productions for analysis was governed by a desire to deal with as wide a spectrum of serious plays as possible, in this case, one from the classical repertory of the Comédie-Française, one foreign play in translation, and finally a completely new play. In addition, my choice was influenced by the fact that, apart from Cyrano de Bergerac, these were the productions which achieved the highest attendance figures in this season. I have concentrated on the 1942-1943 season, since at this time the Occupation was at its height; the French population still felt keenly the humiliation of their defeat, a sentiment aggravated by the daily toil of staying alive, and any hope of forthcoming liberation seemed a desperate fantasy. The defeat of Britain appeared inevitable, and the rest of Europe would soon be under complete subjugation. The Comédie-Française, by its function as a national institution, by the quality of its productions, and by the very nature of the plays produced, had to bear a vital burden in consecrating the threatened culture of a conquered people.

2 - Dussane, Béatrix, Notes de Théâtre (Lyon, 1951), p.32.

Quoted by

3 - [Forkey, Leo O., 'The theatre of Paris during the Occupation', French Review, 22, no.4 (February, 1949), p.229.

Although there was certainly some theatrical activity in the provinces, both in the Occupied and Un-occupied zones, with the birth of such troupes as the Rideau Gris of Louis Ducreux, the Comédie de Lyon of Charles Gentillon, the Comédie en Provence of Jean Serge,⁴ by the end of 1942, this activity was reduced to a negligible amount.⁵ Raymond Cogniat found himself obliged to rescind the favourable impression he had given of the theatre in the provinces in the 1941-1942 season.⁶ A prohibitive tax of 50% of the takings, the virtually insurmountable problem of transport, and the lack of necessary materials⁷ brought about this sudden and unexpected decline.

Certainly other Parisian theatres continued to function, such as the Athénée, the Vieux-Colombier, and the Atelier, but none of these could claim the cultural significance of the Comédie-Française. Even Henry de Montherlant, often in the past a vituperative critic of the Comédie-Française,⁸ realized its importance as a point of stability in the anguished chaos of a humiliating defeat.

Il y a, paraît-il, au milieu des tourbillons de la mer, des points qui restent immobiles quasiment. La Comédie-Française et avec elle la destinée de La Reine Morte se sont trouvés à un de ces points de calme.⁹

4 - Florisoone, M., and Cogniat, R., Un An de théâtre (1941-1942), (Lyon, 1943) p.28.

5 - Duchesne, Jacques, 'Réflexions sur le théâtre', France Libre 7, no.42 (April 15th, 1944), p.438

6 - Florisoone and Cogniat, Un An de théâtre (1942-1943), (Lyon, 1944), p.23.

7 - We will see below how the Comédie-Française was able to surmount this problem by extensive use of the materials in the 'réserves'.

8 - Montherlant describes the Comédie-Française as '... créée censément pour conserver pur le goût français', and goes on to maintain, '... fausse ce goût en maintenant au repertoire des "dessus de pendule" exécrables, modèles de sottise et de médiocrité, tels que Gringoire, Le Passant'.
Carnets (Paris, 1957), p.320.

9 - Montherlant, Théâtre (Paris, 1954), p.246.

Before I begin to discuss the cultural rôle of the Comédie-Française, I must first establish my particular interpretation of the word 'culture'. Obviously I cannot hope to provide a definitive meaning for so nebulous and controversial a word - the very diversity and frequent incompatibility of definitions negate any such attempt. From the material definition of husbandry which we find in Horace and Varrius to the humanistic and Hellenocentric definitions of Matthew Arnold and John Cowper Powys, we now have an increasing emphasis on the purely anthropological aspect of this word, as seen in the works of such contemporary sociologists as Case, Sapir and Nadel. Therefore, while realizing that any conclusion reached must appear largely arbitrary, I have adopted those definitions which most closely concur with my own viewpoint and seem most relevant to my work and to the specific conditions of the Occupation. Purely behaviouristic definitions, such as Linton's 'society is a permanent collection of human beings; the institutions by which they live together are their culture',¹⁰ I find inadequate. Equally incomplete is the absolutist conception of humanists such as Jaeger, derived from the Greek 'paideia' (ideal development) and 'arete' (excellence), that is, the highest culture is man's realization of what is most perfect in him, 'the conscious ideal of human perfection'.¹¹ This is a view shared by Matthew Arnold in Culture and Anarchy. He states that man can achieve 'the two noblest of things, sweetness and light,' only through culture.

... culture seeking the determination of this question through all the voices of human experience which have been heard upon it, of art, science, poetry, philosophy, history ...¹²

10 - Kardiner, A., The Individual and his Society (New York, 1939), p.7.

11 - Kroeber, A.L., and Kluckhohn, Clyde, Culture (New York, no date), p.60, (quoting W. Jaeger).

12 - Arnold, Matthew, Culture and Anarchy (London, 1909), p.8.

The most comprehensive and valid definition must fuse these two elements. The 'ideal of human perfection' will vary with each national grouping, since each race will have a unique history and environment. 'Environment and race may be regarded as in a sense original, with culture emerging from (their) interaction.'¹³ It is the function of culture to maintain and transmit this ideal and to protect the particular fundamental institutions. Thus it is to Kroeber and Kluckhohn that I turn for a final definition.

Culture consists of patterns explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (that is, historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may on the one hand be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.¹⁴

Due to the attempt at conciseness, the definition betrays a certain lack of precision in vocabulary which I will try to clarify. I take 'patterns' to mean the customs and values accepted in social intercourse and cohabitation; 'symbols' to mean both the artistic and institutional embodiments of these traditions. Of necessity, if the 'patterns' are destroyed or threatened, in order to maintain the 'distinctive achievements', that is, the especial ethnic traits of a particular culture, a heavy burden must fall on the 'symbols'. If they are both totally destroyed, then that particular culture and race must lose its identity, as the 'conditioning elements' which assured the propagation of the original culture have been removed. The importance of the Comédie-Française as a 'symbol' of culture, both institutionally and artistically, will become evident as we see the gradual disruption and incipient annihilation which confronted the rest of French culture.

13 - Case, C.M., Outlines of Introductory Sociology : a textbook of Reading in Social Science (New York, 1924), p.106.

14 - Kroeber, A.L., and Kluckhohn, Clyde, op.cit., p.357.

The totalitarian culture of the Third Reich did not attempt to coexist with that of France, but strove to impose itself, sometimes brutally but often insidiously. However, this threat of destruction to a national culture only served to strengthen the desire for cultural unity.

.... this inner cohesion becomes more powerful when it is threatened by external enemies.¹⁵

Physically and materially a people may have been defeated, but total defeat will only follow the far more arduous and complex task demanded by the absolute eradication of their personal culture.

.... cultural forces have extraordinary powers of survival. Defeat, enslavement and long alien domination are often powerless against them.¹⁶

A people such as the Jews could find strength in its religion, but such a religiously heterogeneous race as the French, with their pronounced national tendency to dispute, needed to find unity in its culture. With the German military administration dominating and changing French social customs and institutions, it was to the areas least affected, in this case the theatre, that the conquered people wittingly or unwittingly turned. Margaret Mounot admirably describes this movement when she marvels at the booked-out performances of Hamlet and Phèdre:

Je pense que dans cette espèce de crise des valeurs que nous traversons, instinctivement on se tourne vers les grandes traditions morales, vers les chefs-d'oeuvres littéraires ou artistiques.¹⁷

In order to establish the unquestionable threat posed by the culture of the Third Reich to that of the French people, it is necessary first to examine the nature of Nazi culture. That Hitler considered culture important, and the arts ('symbols') an integral part, is manifest both from his own

15 - Cowell, F.R., Culture (London, 1959), p.133.

16 - Cowell, F.R., op.cit., p.135.

17 - Mounot, Margaret, 'En attendant le réveil au théâtre', Paris-Midi (August 15th, 1944).

writings and from the obvious desire of the German administration to eradicate both the 'patterns' and 'symbols' of France. Hitler states in Mein Kampf: 'In this world human culture and civilization are inseparably bound up with the existence of the Aryan. His dying off, or his decline, would again lower upon this earth dark veils of a time without culture.'¹⁸ While clearly Hitler's definition of culture does not correspond exactly with that of Kroeber and Kluckhohn, and in fact he nowhere provides a lucid or adequate definition, it is evident from his actions and instructions to his staff that the two viewpoints coincide to a great extent in their elements, if not in their natures: obviously Hitler replaces the absence of political bias apparent in Kroeber's and Kluckhohn's definition by a complete emphasis on totalitarianism. Hitler regarded the Aryan as mentor of the true culture, without which man would be plunged into barbarian chaos; this culture constituted a vital part of his credo from the very beginning.

During the long years in which I planned the formation of a new Reich, I gave much thought to the tasks which would await us in the cultural cleansing of the people's life: there was to be a cultural renaissance as well as a political and economic reform.¹⁹

I cannot hope adequately to characterize the whole of Nazi culture; thus my intention is to describe those aspects both in its historical and philosophical foundation, and in its completed vision, which are most relevant to this particular study. The incompatibility of Nazi culture with that of France lies in its very totalitarian and destructive nature. It admits of no criteria save those of the Aryan, (I am here adopting Hitler's definition of Aryan as German-speaking peoples); his culture alone must be preserved; all others must be destroyed to maintain its perfection. Hitler's obsessive and ultimately fanatical belief in German nationalism and racial superiority is obvious from an early age. Already,

18 - Hitler, Adolf, Mein Kampf (New York, 1939), trans. by Helmut Ripperger, p.581.

19 - Baynes, Norman H., trans./ed. Speeches of Adolf Hitler April 1922 - August 1939, 1 (Oxford, 1942), p.591.

by the age of sixteen, he was exhibiting a virulent hatred of the Hapsburgs, of the multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire over which they ruled.²⁰ During his early years spent in Vienna he studied the multifarious pan-German parties then active -- such as the Christian Socialists of Karl Lueger and the Social Democrats. By the time he left Vienna his basic ideology was already formed: his burning nationalism; his violent hatred of Jews, Marxists and communists; his absolute conviction of Aryan superiority. Hitler gleaned the major part of the philosophical justification for his beliefs secondhand, from his early spiritual mentor, the alcoholic and mentally unstable poet, Dietrich Eckart, and from the official Nazi philosopher, Alfred Rosenberg.²¹ These two drew from literary and philosophical works only those points acceptable to Hitler's fundamental concepts: even if this meant misrepresenting or mutilating the particular work. For example, they readily endorsed Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau's credo of Aryan superiority in Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races, but ignored his pessimistic conclusion that by an implacable historical law the Aryans, like all previous great civilizations, must inevitably face extinction.²² As William Shirer states in The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, there is a very solid tradition in German thinking which provided some historical precedence for Hitler's views; as early as 1807, after the humiliating defeat of the Prussians by Napoleon, Fichte, who had the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Berlin, declared that the Latins were a decadent race, that the Germans alone were pure and thus would institute a new era of cosmic order. Hitler could find ready justification for military conquest in Hegel; he believed that anything important took the form of war, that war had a positive moral value.²³

20 - Shirer, William L., The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (London, 1970), p.15.

21 - Shirer, William L., op.cit., p.97.

22 - Gobineau, Arthur de, The Inequality of Human Races (New York, 1967), trans. Adrian Collins, p.2.

23 - Russell, Bertrand, History of Western Philosophy (new ed. London, 1961), p.711.

However, without doubt the principal philosophical tract adopted by the Third Reich was Houston Stewart Chamberlain's Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (Foundation of the Nineteenth Century). That this work was considered of great significance and value by Hitler is amply illustrated by this account of Chamberlain's death by George L. Mosse:

In a dramatic scene Hitler visited the paralyzed and dying apostle of Germanism and kissed his hands.²⁴

This work shows that the Teuton, (which Hitler obviously took to mean German-speaking peoples), was to be the founder and protector of human perfection.

.... all those who from the sixth century onwards appear as genuine shapers of the destinies of mankind, whether as builders of states or as discoverers of new thoughts and of original art, belong to the Teutonic race.²⁵

Of the other two remaining races the Jews are dismissed as materialistic and pernicious, the Latins as a 'Chaos of Peoples'.²⁶ The passage which patently and unmistakably demonstrates the proclaimed superiority of Aryan culture and its consequent inability to coexist with any other is found in the chapter headed 'The Teutons as creators of a new Culture':

The civilization and culture which, radiating from Northern Europe, today dominate, (though in varying degrees), a considerable part of the world are the work of Teutonism; what is not Teutonic consists either of alien elements, not yet exorcized, which were formerly forcibly introduced and still like baneful germs circulate in the blood, or of alien wares ... This work of Teutonism is beyond question the greatest that has been accomplished by man. It was achieved not by the delusion of a 'humanity' but by sound selfish power.... by insatiable ravenous hunger.²⁷

24 - Mosse, George L., The Crisis of German Ideology (London, 1966), p.93.

25 - Chamberlain, Houston Stewart, Foundations of the Nineteenth Century, trans. John Lees (New York, 1968), author's introduction p.xxviii.

26 - *ibid.*, 2, p.209.

27 - *ibid.*, 2, p.228.

This totalitarianism is echoed in Mein Kampf:

... in order to save a certain culture the man who created it has to be saved. But the preservation is bound to be the brazen law of necessity and of the right of the victory of the best and the strongest in the world.²⁸

It is from him (the Aryan) that the foundations and the walls of all human creations originate, and only the external form and colour depend on the characteristics of the various peoples involved.²⁹

Thus we can plainly see that Hitler's credo, forged by personal prejudice and fanaticism, strenthened by an avid acceptance of secondhand philosophy, was confirmed in the belief of the necessity of destruction of any non-Aryan culture - especially one such as that of France, a race derived from that 'Chaos of Peoples'.

The immediacy of the threat to their national identity became obvious to the French very soon after the 1940 armistice. The complete acceptance and use of a certain language presupposes the acceptance of the culture of which it is the verbal 'symbol'. We have seen how in contemporary times cultural deviation and conflict have found legitimate expression through language, as in the case of the separatist tendencies in Brittany, Occitania, Wales and Quebec. The Nazi régime obviously realized the political implications of language as an integrating or a separative factor, and coupling this realization to Gobineau's axiom, '... that the hierarchy of languages is in strict correspondance with the hierarchy of races',³⁰ set out, in blatant violation of the armistice agreement, to eradicate the French language in Alsace-Lorraine, and thus to attack the conceptual framework which it expressed. All street names were changed into German, as were family names:

.... les Flageolet s'appelleront désormais Bohn; les Rochet, Roth; les Ponton, Burger; les Dupont, Brückner.³¹

28 - Hitler, Adolf, op.cit., p.390.

29 - ibid., p.398.

30 - Gobineau, op.cit., p.204.

31 - Amouroux, Henri, La Vie des Français sous l'Occupation, 1 (Paris, 1961), p.79.

The metamorphosis of Alsace-Lorraine, described in Pantagruel of October 1941, delivered an ample warning to the rest of France that the coexistence believed in by Vichy was a dangerously complacent fantasy. It was anathema to Hitler to allow any subject race to escape its servitude and cause the decline of pure Aryan culture by intermixture.

Despite the fond but misguided belief of Laval and Pétain that Germany merely wished to install France in its rightful place in a European federation,³² it was clear that in such a federation France would be relegated to a condition of colonial serfdom. Social intercourse began to disintegrate under the increasing influence of hypocrisy and disloyalty. Betrayal was a frequent occurrence.

La lettre anonyme fleurit à Paris.³³

Material difficulties, particularly of finding sufficient food, emphasized and soon aggravated the imminent danger of social collapse.

Il est inutile d'évoquer longuement à propos des difficultés de ravitaillement cette guerre civile qui fait rage entre les Français et a la lettre anonyme pour arme.³⁴

Paris was stripped of any autonomy in its internal government and administration; the Germans either overtly or surreptitiously controlled all aspects of Parisian life, as Pierre Audiat observes:

Ils intervenaient, directement ou indirectement dans tous les domaines de son (Paris) activité.³⁵

32 - Warner, Geoffrey, 'The Decline and Fall of Pierre Laval' History Today, 2, no.12 (1961), p.822.

33 - Walter, Gérard, La Vie à Paris sous l'Occupation (Paris, 1960), p.155.

34 - Amouroux, Henri, op.cit. 2, p.173.

35 - Paris pendant la Guerre (Paris, 1946), p.24.

Hitler's concern to transmute the 'symbols' of French culture, and to impose the validity of his own was immediately apparent in Paris. He attempted to demonstrate that the Third Reich created an artistically inspiring climate by establishing in June 1942 an exhibition of the work of Arno Breker in the garden of the Tuileries and proclaiming this German the finest living sculptor. On September 27th, 1941, in the Faubourg St. Honoré, there was an exhibition of the painting and sculpture of the occupying forces; the 'highlight' was a huge portrait of the Kommandant von Gross Paris, Schaumburg. A deliberate effort was made to diffuse Nazi culture by bestowing this specific purpose on the Institut Allemand, established in the old Polish Embassy building in the rue de Talleyrand.

One of the less obvious, but no less effective methods used to erode French national spirit, was the conversion of the capital into a haven of pure recreation and amusement for the occupying troops: it was solely 'un but d'excursion'. For the Germans Paris had this one fundamental purpose.

L'essentiel est de tirer toutes les joies possibles de ce paradis terrestre.³⁶

The Nazi administration went to the extent of publishing a newspaper specifically for its troops, the Parisier Zeitung, which contained a map dividing Paris into three sections: Montmartre, Montparnasse, Champs-Élysées - marking the recommended places of entertainment. The French were helplessly witnessing a radical transfiguration of their traditional values and beliefs.

Dans leur âme comme dans leur chair, dans leur fortune comme dans leur standing social, les restrictions ont profondément modifié les Français de tous les âges et de toutes conditions.

36 - Audiat, Pierre, op.cit., p.108

37 - Amouroux, Henri, op.cit., p.184.

and the gradual infusion of the vapid and prosaic principles of Vichy into their arts.

Les mots d'ordre et les principes de Vichy appliqués à l'Art Dramatique nous ont plongés dans le conformisme et la banalité.³⁸

Vichy itself, on April 19th 1942, came under the presidential rule of Pierre Laval. The sympathy felt both by the Germans and the Italians for Laval had been made abundantly clear as early as 1936. Ample evidence of this is provided by a close examination of the Documents Diplomatiques Français of 1936. Wherever mention is made of Franco-German cooperation, Laval's name is used as a prime example of 'rapprochement'. *M. Delbos, the foreign minister, made this statement to the Italian ambassador, M. Cerutti.*

.... je lui ai déclaré que le peuple de France tout entier et tous les hommes politiques, de M.Cachin à M.Laval, avaient le même désir d'un rapprochement franco-allemand; que celui qui le réaliserait serait l'homme le plus populaire qu'il y ait jamais eu en France....³⁹

Any decrease in Laval's power is felt to be a direct attack on this friendship.

On peut déterminer d'une manière presque précise le moment où ils ont commencé à nous en vouloir: c'est à la chute du cabinet Laval. Dans le mouvement d'opinion publique et parlementaire qui a déterminé la retraite de ce ministre, ils ont vu un acte de désaffection à leur endroit.⁴⁰

The collapse of Laval's position as Foreign Minister⁴¹ in January 1936 was much regretted by the Germans, who feared he might be replaced by someone less inclined to favour a close understanding with them.

38 - Lenormand, 'Demain au Théâtre', L'Oeuvre (February 21st, 1941).

39 - Documents Diplomatiques Français, 3 (July 19th - November 19th, 1936) no.440, p.685.

40 - *ibid.*, no.114, p.166.

41 - He was appointed in October 1934.

L'Allemagne a assisté avec regret au départ de M.Laval. Mais elle a trouvé chez ses successeurs, moins d'hostilité flagrante qu'elle s'y attendait.⁴²

He was a master of French parliamentary intrigue, competent in national affairs, but totally at a loss in major international diplomacy. His pro-Fascist inclination demonstrated itself indisputably in the now notorious radio broadcast on June 22nd, 1942, when, after announcing that 150,000 French workers would be sent to the Rhineland factories in exchange for the return of 50,000 prisoners, he stated unequivocally:

Je souhaite la victoire à l'Allemagne.⁴³

Hence the sole remaining sphere of French self-government became dominated by a diplomat whose aim was to save the body of France even if it meant the immolation of her spirit.

We can see how real the threat was to both the 'patterns' and 'symbols' of French life. Yet, faced with the denigration of their language, the prospect of perpetual servitude, the progressive eradication of the traditional mores, the relegation of the capital to a holiday resort, the deprivation of political and administrative autonomy - faced with these immediate disasters, initially the majority of the French people had little heart for any but passive resistance. Though it is obviously impossible to evaluate the individual psychological motivations to resist or to submit because of their sheer multiplicity, there are nevertheless certain general factors which encouraged this overall passivity - not least the frenzied confusion following the mass exodus to the south, and the stunning effect of the absolute and incredibly swift defeat of the army, victorious thirty years before. Whatever the reasons, the traditional xenophobia and, more particularly, germanophobia of the French people lay dormant for some time.⁴⁴ The now famous broadcast by Charles de Gaulle from London, on June 18th,

42 - *ibid.*, 1 (January 1st - March 31st, 1936), no.242, p.343.

43 - Warner, Geoffrey, *op.cit.*, p.29

44 - Michel, Henri, 'The Psychology of the French Resister', Journal of Contemporary History 5, no.3 (1970), p.164.

1940, giving his countrymen hope and inciting them to resist, was in fact heard at the time by very few people. During the production of his film, Le Chagrin et la pitié, Max Ophuls did not find one person who had heard this broadcast. Thus, what resistance there was, was mainly tacit; in Paris the citizens studiously ignored their oppressors, who became '... pour ainsi dire transparents aux yeux des Parisiens',⁴⁵ and soon the Germans nicknamed the city 'die Stadt ohne Blick' (the sightless city).

Naturally, in order to preserve their national identity as they unwillingly submitted to this violent and drastic transformation of social institutions and mores, of the 'symbols' and 'patterns' of their lives, the French needed to find a focal point of relative calm where the essence of their national culture had to a great extent survived. This is not to deny the invaluable work of the various Resistance movements, but as they themselves were not unified until 1943 by Jean Moulin, they could not provide a sense of unity to the average Frenchman. In the theatre, and especially in the Comédie-Française, the French witnessed the continuing embodiment of their essential national individuality. Other media of communication and entertainment were subject to a far more stringent and inflexible censorship than the theatre. Doubtless one important reason for this was Hitler's own lack of interest in the theatre; in Mein Kampf he rapidly dismisses its function: it

.... should exist for the education of youth and not for the amusement of old blasé generations.⁴⁶

He does not consider the theatre worthy of any deeper or more intensive analysis. Its sole purpose is as an element whose educative function must concord with that of all art forms.

Literature, the theatre and the cinema will be used as a means of educating the people, supported by the press and the radio.⁴⁷

45 - Audiat, Pierre, op.cit., p.29.

46 - Mein Kampf, p.355.

47 - Calic, Unmasked (Chatto and Windus, 1971), p.56.

This book is a record of the author's interviews with Hitler; the first on May 4th, 1931, and the second in June, 1931.

Art therefore, in whatever form, would be deliberately made subservient to the needs of propaganda. However, the Nazis failed to realize the incipient danger of an art form which could group into one space at one time a large number of people in direct communion with a live performance. During the Occupation the theatre would often become the scene of vociferous anti-Nazi demonstrations, particularly in the Comédie-Française. This fact was certainly apparent to many Germans, and a matter of serious concern, as can be seen in this passage by a German theatre critic, translated in France Libre.

Un journaliste allemand, Albert Buesch, écrit dans Das Reich du 12 septembre 1943: 'Le théâtre est, comme dans ses grandes époques, redevenu le forum sur lequel se livrent les batailles d'idées de notre temps, sous une forme d'autant plus pure que l'actualité, au sens direct et bon marché, est interdite pour des raisons de tact, de politique intérieure et extérieure. Il n'y a pas eu de pièce qui ait porté sur la scène l'exode, le drame de la guerre ou des épisodes de l'occupation allemande. Et pourtant la scène est plus d'une fois devenue un tribunal.

Le Parisien souffre dans son tempérament, dans son besoin de s'exprimer et de discuter, de devoir renoncer à la discussion ouverte des événements de la guerre. En dehors de la diffusion des rumeurs; qui ne saurait satisfaire que de petits esprits, le théâtre est devenu la seule soupape. Le public, dans la représentation des pièces d'idées, donne trop souvent l'impression d'une réunion politique. Des applaudissements, au moment approprié, prennent le caractère de manifestations. Aux représentations destinées à la jeunesse universitaire, cela devint une sorte de méthode. La scène du Théâtre-Français se transforme pour ainsi dire en tribune de la Chambre des Députés, de telle sorte qu'il fallut intervenir sérieusement.⁴⁸

From July 18th, 1940, all the other media differed little in content from those of Hamburg and Berlin. Hitler very soon realized the propaganda potential of the cinema, and the French screen was inundated with German films and with German-influenced French films such as La Duchesse de Langeais, scripted by Jean Giraudoux.⁴⁹ The omnipotence of the

48 - Duchesne, Jacques, 'Réflexions sur le théâtre', France Libre, 7, no.42 (1944), p.439.

49 - Audiart, Pierre, op.cit., p.179.

Propagandastaffel was not always overt; they allowed inconsequential French films to be shown, like the opulently luxurious Visiteurs du Soir of Marcel Carné, or delicate nostalgic pieces that could encourage a sense of quietude, like Douce and Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne. Radio was also totally under their control. Though the Propagandastaffel introduced several German language programmes, they attempted as far as possible to imitate pre-war French radio. An expert on French language and psychology, Doctor Friedrich, was employed to seduce the spirits of any dissident Frenchmen. Later an insignificant French journalist, Jean-Hérolde Paquis would be used for the same purpose; his cliché-ridden but passionate rhetoric earned him an audience of some 2,000.⁵⁰ The press, while expressly forbidden to indulge in any kind of anti-Nazi references, was allowed maximum latitude in criticizing the failure of the national administration to cope with the exigencies of war. The Germans had no need to intimidate the press, as there was already a large coterie of pro-Fascist intellectuals, eager to realize their political ideologies in print - Marcel Déat became editor of L'Oeuvre, Doriot of Le Cri du Peuple, Jean Luchaire of Les Nouveaux Temps. Jacques de Lesdain, a clumsily obvious and leaden doctrinaire in the national socialist mould, became editor of L'Illustration,⁵¹ and through it tried to infuse Paris with a new personality. There were a great number of Resistance newspapers, beginning with the publication of Pantagruel in October 1940 by Raymond Deiss, and they represented every shade of French political opinion. Owing to the extreme danger entailed in their distribution, their influence was fairly small; only 10,000 copies of Pantagruel were printed although obviously many more people must have read them as they were passed by hand,⁵² while the average monthly distribution of L'Oeuvre was 100,000,⁵³ and that of Au Piliori (an anti-semitic newspaper) was 90,000. Newspapers could not even

50 - Audiat, Pierre, op.cit., p.173.

51 - ibid., pp.40-44.

52 - Bourget, Pierre, and Lachretelle, Charles, Sur les Murs de Paris 1940-1944 (Paris, 1959), p.114.

53 - Walter, Gérard, op.cit. p.244.

safely adopt a position of political neutrality, since the Service Lehmann of the Propagandastaffel had complete control of paper distribution and would frequently choose to deny any non-affiliated periodical. Heavy censorship was exercised on all works of literature; the Otto list banned all works which criticized directly or indirectly the philosophy of Nazism, the person of its leader, and of course those which dealt with the fate of those countries occupied by the Germans. Works concerning Jews and Judaism were also banned, unless they were an attack on the religion and its followers. Anybody like Léon Blum, considered to have tendencies too far to the left, was also subject to censure; an artist and writer such as Aragon would come under a double condemnation because of his political beliefs and because he had been a member of the Surrealist movement. Even such an apparently inoffensive author as the Rumanian, Panaït Istrati, found his works banned. Of course, any work by De Gaulle was on the list, whether it referred directly to Nazi Germany and the Occupation or not, as was the case with his military treatises, La France et son armée, and Vers l'armée de métier.⁵⁴

Two lists were published, one in September 1940, and a second one in July 1942; the second one was not only more extensive, but also included a coda at the end stating unequivocally the philosophy behind the selection process, in order that any books which came within the categories described, but had escaped detection, should also automatically be banned.

Traductions de l'anglais

En principe, toutes les traductions de l'anglais, excepté les ouvrages des classiques anglais, sont retirées de la vente. Toutes les exceptions ultérieures devront chaque fois être autorisées particulièrement par le service de la Propaganda-Abteilung en France.

54 - Copies of both lists can be found in 'La Poésie et la Résistance', Europe (juillet-août 1974).

Ouvrages d'auteurs juifs et biographies consacrées
à des juifs

Tous les livres des auteurs juifs, ainsi que les livres auxquels des juifs ont collaboré, sont à retirer de la vente, à l'exception d'ouvrages d'un contenu scientifique au sujet desquels des mesures particulières sont réservées. Mais dès à présent des biographies, même rédigées par des Français aryans, consacrées à des juifs, comme par exemple les biographies relatives aux musiciens juifs Offenbach, Meyerbeer, Darius Milhaud, etc....., sont à retirer de la vente.⁵⁵

There were further numerous examples of interference in the publishing of French literature. Duhamel had just completed a novel, Lieu d'asile, which had at first been accepted for publication, but was subsequently rejected since he would not include a 'mot aimable' about the Germans.⁵⁶

Several works of considerable literary value were published by the Resistance: novels such as Emmanuel d'Astier's Sept fois Sept Jours and Jean-Louis Curtis' Les Forêts de la Nuit, or poetry such as that of Eluard, Aragon and Jouve. However, here again their immediate influence could only be very small - Vercor's Le Silence de la Mer was printed in only 350 copies when first published in February 1943.⁵⁷ While no noted dramatist arose from the pro-Fascist intelligentsia, several novelists, essayists and poets found aesthetic inspiration in the Nazi credo - Béraud, Brasillach, Drieu la Rochelle, Benoist-Méchin. As they had embraced an unpopular political doctrine, any true creative worth these writers displayed was largely ignored in post-war France. The French even witnessed the conversion of their traditional literary and historical 'symbols' into supporters of the Nazi credo, a process amply demonstrated by the Nazi use of posters.⁵⁸ The

55 - Second Liste Otto, p.15.

56 - This event was recorded anonymously by a person actually residing in Paris at the time, in 'Dans Paris occupé', France Libre, 3, no.14 (1941), p.159.

57 - John, S.B., 'Vichy France, 1940-44: the literary image', in French Literature and its Background, ed. John Cruickshank, 6 (London, 1970), p.213.

58 - See Appendix, G1.

artifacts of French society, such as the Eiffel Tower and the Chambre des Deputés, were defaced with monstrous banners proclaiming:

Deutschland siegt an allen Fronten. (Germany is victorious on all fronts.)

As always the opera held the greatest attraction for the Germans and consequently suffered most from their patronage. In Wagner, and especially in the Nibelungen Ring, Hitler, and thus his party, found the highest aesthetic and spiritual satisfaction. Shirer relates how Hitler, on the evening of January 24th, 1942, talked to his generals of the great inspirations of his life, and particularly of the opera.

The ten days of the Bayreuth season were always one of the blessed seasons of my existence. And I rejoice at the idea that one day I shall be able to resume the pilgrimage.⁵⁹

Thus it was specifically 'à la demande des Allemands' that the doors of the Opéra were quickly reopened.

The theatre, though free of the emphatic pro-Nazi prejudice enforced on the other media, nevertheless suffered some impositions. The Comédie-Française was prevented from staging Edmond Rostand's L'Aiglon because the Germans feared the inflammatory speeches of Flambeau. Jacques Copeau, director of the Comédie-Française at the outbreak of the war, demonstrated an intractable and overt hostility towards the German administration, and was subsequently removed from office through their pressure.⁶⁰ Athalie of Racine was never produced since it was considered to be too greatly orientated towards the Jews. We know also from his memoirs how Jean-Louis Barrault came very close to being deported to Germany. His memory of the episode is sufficiently vivid for him to be able to quote the actual conversation.

59 - Shirer, William L., op.cit., pp.101-102.

60 - Dussane, Béatrix, op.cit., p.28.

J'eus un jour une singulière visite. Un officier allemand demandait à me voir: un homme 'courtois et cultivé'.

- La Kommandatur vous a choisi pour mettre en scène à l'Opéra l'oeuvre de Werner Eck (je ne me rappelle plus le nom de l'oeuvre).

- Désolé, mais je monte le Soulier de satin.

- Si nous retardons le Soulier?

- Mon inspiration sera retardée d'autant.

- Mais nous n'aimons pas Claudel.

- Nous, nous l'aimons. Vous ne pouvez pas nous retirer ça.

- Nous pouvons interdire le Soulier.

- Vous le pouvez, mais j'en serais si abattu que je ne pourrai plus rien faire d'autre.

- Vous pourriez aller travailler en Allemagne.

- Oui, ça, vous le pouvez également.

- Mais je ne suis venu que pour me placer sur le plan culturel.

- Je vous en remercie.

Le lendemain Honneger vient me voir.

- Tu devrais envoyer une lettre aimable à ce monsieur, il t'a défendu. Grâce à lui, tu ne seras pas embarqué.

J'envoyai une lettre polie à cet officier et nous poursuivîmes les répétitions de 'mon' Soulier.⁶¹

However, though the Schiller Theater of Berlin visited the Comédie-Française twice, performing Schiller's Kabale und Liebe in April 1941, and Calderon's El Alcalde de Zalamea in November 1943, the Nazi influence, either through censorship or through imposed productions, was relatively small.

Often the Propagandastaffel would fail to realize the proper significance of a work; they encouraged the sudden glut of Joan of Arc plays, such as Claude Vermorel's Jeanne avec nous at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, believing them to be anti-British in spirit; yet Jeanne to the French is above all a symbol of resistance to any invader. However, any work of art which finds its roots in the conglomerate traditions and national spirit of a particular people, necessarily becomes virtually incomprehensible in its more subtle thematic content to those not initiated into that cultural heritage. The few pro-Nazi plays produced were

61 - Barrault, Jean-Louis, Souvenirs pour demain (Paris, 1972), p.162.

always ill-received, and always too dogmatic and clumsy. In Les Pirates de Paris, Alain Laubreaux satirized the political, social and economic disorders of pre-war France: the only good reviews it received were from Le Petit Parisien and Je suis partout, of which newspaper Alain Laubreaux was the drama critic.⁶² Initially the French visited the theatre in order to seize on any word, phrase or symbol which, however inadvertently, hinted at hatred of the Nazis.⁶³ Every night these two lines in Henri de Montherlant's La Reine Morte were fiercely applauded: 'Il est rare qu'un homme de valeur ne finisse pas par être arrêté.' 'En prison se trouve la fleur du royaume.' Unlike in the cinemas, where such virulent manifestations incurred the imposition of heavy sanctions both on the audience and the management, the Germans reacted slowly to these events in the theatre.

As I have shown, the Germans were successively destroying or mutilating the 'patterns' and 'symbols' which maintained the distinctive nature of French culture, and thus of the French national identity. In the given conditions it fell to the theatre to be the stabilizing force; it fell especially to the Comédie-Française because it was a 'symbol', not only artistically, but institutionally by its rôle as a government-sponsored national theatre. But it was not sufficient for the Comédie-Française merely to continue functioning; it also needed to attract good audiences so that the largest number of people possible could share in the knowledge that their national culture remained here at least almost intact. To attract them, the Comédie had to answer the greatly multiplied desire for escapism.

It is necessary to enumerate only a few of the exceptional material difficulties prevalent during the Occupation to understand why the desire for escapism became both greater and more imperative. Thiebaut unequivocally points to the intimate relationship between the heightened material diffi-

62 - Audiat, Pierre, op.cit., p.177.

63 - Amouroux, op.cit., 1, p.463.

culties and the predilection for escapist entertainment:

La souffrance ne suscite pas infailliblement le goût du tragique, elle appelle aussi par réaction le comique délirant.⁶⁴

The inevitable consequence of physical deprivation was a certain reluctance to contemplate aspects of life not directly linked to the immediate problem of physical survival. If the theatre wished to achieve consistent success, there would be a need for it to provide in its productions an easy avenue of escape from the problems of daily existence, and the obvious danger here was of a return to the vapid values of commercially orientated theatre. Any play which presented a social or philosophical problem with unmitigated directness was likely to meet with little success. Such was the fate of Sartre's Les Mouches.⁶⁵ Physical survival alone did not suffice:

.... vivre pendant l'occupation cela signifie aller à la conquête des haricots mais aussi à la poursuite du bonheur.⁶⁶

The most persistently demoralizing deprivation was the lack of adequate food. Both Audiat and Amouroux describe this perpetual quest for nutriment as 'une obsession'; by October 31st, 1941, it was announced in several newspapers that '... certaines personnes affamées ne craignent pas de capturer des chats pour en faire un bon civet.'⁶⁷ Agricultural production had fallen to 25% of its pre-war level, and the Germans claimed priority in their needs - in the five months from February to June 1941, 14,000 head of sheep and cattle were exported to Germany, 24,000 tons of vegetables, 40,000 tons of wheat.⁶⁸ Rationing queues were in evidence everywhere and had their personal philosophy created by the mental resilience and

64 - Thiebaut, Marcel, 'Le Théâtre à Paris pendant la Guerre', Cornhill Magazine, no.964 (April, 1945), p.337.

65 - cf. Sartre, Un Théâtre de situations (Textes choisis et présentés par Michel Contat et Michel Rybalka) (Paris, 1973), pp.226-227.

66 - Amouroux, Henri, op.cit., 1, p.460.

67 - ibid., p.131.

68 - Entente (London, 1942) p.56

patience needed to queue all morning and afternoon for a particular food product, with minimal hope of success at the end.

Ce qui est désolant, c'est que si vous faites la queue devant un marchand de légumes dans l'espoir incertain d'acheter des carottes, il ne faut pas compter que le même jour vous pourrez aussi faire la queue pour du poisson ou pour du lait. La première queue vous aura demandé toute votre matinée: la queue pour le poisson devra être remise au lendemain. Bien heureux encore si vous n'avez pas fait la queue pour rien du tout.⁶⁹

Since, by the end of 1944, waiting had become a normal aspect of daily life, the French found themselves imbued with a new and unexpected characteristic, that of extreme patience.

Les Français sont devenus les gens les plus patients de la terre. Voilà deux heures que je suis dans la salle d'attente de Mâcon. Il y a deux espèces: les victimes de la fatalité qui dorment ou ruminent, les autres - sans doute les coupables - qui prennent un air faussement dégagé: tout ça devant des consommations invraisemblables qui vont de la limonade saccharinée au pernod sans absinthe ni alcool.⁷⁰

The small shopkeeper became an omnipotent figure, as we see in France-Europe of November 26th, 1943:

On ne contrarie pas une marchande de légumes par le temps qui court.

After eighteen months of the Occupation, the Journal Officiel of Vichy published a list of the rations for the month of November 1942: 100 gr. of bread a day (depending on the category of the consumer), 130-250 gr. of meat a week, 450 gr. of fats a month, 500 gr. of sugar a month, and 250 gr. of rice a month. Some indication of the drastic nature of this reduction in nutrition can be found in the fact that the average daily pre-war consumption of meat was 111 gr. Of

69 - Mengin, Robert, 'Images de Paris' (propos recueillis à Londres de quelques rescapés), France Libre, 3, no.17 (March 16th, 1942), p.408.

70 - D'Astier, Emmanuel, 'Sept Jours en hiver', Horizon 10, no.59 (November, 1944), p.330.

course this brought about a sharp increase, of about 29%, in the rate of infant mortality between the ages of 1 and 9.⁷¹ Before the war the newspapers had been full of the squabbles caused by the conflicting interests and attitudes in fashion; this concern was now replaced by a concentration on fantasies about food.

A Paris naissait la mode, et l'Académie s'en mêlait. A la saison qui précéda la campagne de France, Abel Bonnard consacrait un article aux 'robes de guerre', et un poète en vogue se prenait de querelle avec un journaliste pour un parfum. Maintenant Paris occupé a aussi ses passades; tous les journaux étaient pleins d'une 'histoire': un arrivage de morue allait parvenir à la capitale.⁷²

The demoralizing effect of hunger was obvious everywhere as mutual distrust and exploitation gradually developed between the supplier and the buyer, between the country and the town -- a situation considerably exacerbated by the birth of the phenomenon of the Black Market. Everything necessary for daily life was rationed, and this included all combustibles required for heating. Both audience and performer in the theatre had to endure considerable physical discomfort, as Jean-Louis Barrault recalls:

L'hiver nous jouâmes dans le froid (il n'y avait plus de chauffage), parfois par moins de deux degrés. Il m'est arrivé de pincer Marie Bell qui, décolletée, était sur le point de s'évanouir. Les spectateurs venait avec des couvertures et, pour ne pas sortir les mains, applaudissaient avec les pieds.⁷³

Large crowds would collect in the few buildings consistently heated -- such as hospitals and post offices. In 1942 this shortage of fuel reached crisis point when distribution was limited to exceptional cases; morale was further menaced by a total blackout of the city from January 23rd to the 24th.⁷⁴ In this atmosphere of material privation and imminent famine the need for escapism became much greater.

71 - 'La Condition humaine', Entente (London, 1942), p.40.

72 - De Fricambaut, F., 'Paris ville occupé', France Libre, 1, no.6 (April, 1941), pp.566-567.

73 - Barrault, Souvenirs pour demain, p.165.

74 - Audiat, Pierre, op.cit., p.159.

To a large extent this was provided by the music-halls: indeed the first places of entertainment to reopen after the Armistice were the music-halls, A.B.C. and Pigalle on July 4th and 5th, 1940, then on July 9th the Alcazar, and two days later the Mayol, Palace and Tyrol.⁷⁵ By September 26th, seventeen music-halls and cabarets were already open. The desire for escapist recreation engendered an expansion in variety entertainment, paradoxical in such materially difficult times. The music-halls and cabarets could obviously no longer make use of international performers and thus had to share their indigenous artistes.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, several new clubs opened, from the Club des Vedettes in the final months of 1940 to the Théâtre de Chanson, founded a few days before the Liberation. The music-halls thus fulfilled their traditional, and now extraordinarily valuable, rôle with great vitality:

(...) le music-hall (...) s'efforça aussi dans des conditions difficiles de remplir son rôle traditionnel envers ce qui restait du public parisien, en ouvrant aux hommes accablés sous la peine des jours les routes du rêve et de l'espérance.⁷⁷

The tenacious will to believe in a more auspicious future is reflected in the motif of hope in the majority of songs, often evident in their titles - Demain, Ah que la France est belle, Chanson d'Espoir, Notre Espoir. Resistance to the oppressor was frequently blatant and fearless, as when the variety singer, Martini, began his act with the Hitler salute, declaiming:

Jusque-là! Jusque-là! Nous sommes dans la merde
jusque-là.⁷⁸

Indicative of the desire for escapism was the popularity of Cyrano de Bergerac at the Comédie-Française. Always a favourite, this play of grandiose bravura attained even greater popularity

75 - 'Les Théâtres Parisiens sous l'Occupation', Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre, no.1 (1948), p.52.

76 - Fréjaville, Gustave, 'Les Spectacles de Variétés à Paris pendant la Guerre', no.2 (1950), p.53.

77 - *ibid.*, p.52.

78 - Amouroux, Henri, *op.cit.*, p.461.

as it consistently attracted large audiences during the height of the Occupation. In the 1941/42 season it had 23 performances, behind Hamlet (29) and Maître Pathelin (24); in the 1942/43 season it played 40 times, second only to La Reine Morte.⁷⁹ Yet in the 1943/44 season, as the prospect of liberation became an increasing certainty, Cyrano de Bergerac had only 11 performances. It would seem that the pressing need for escapism had begun to dwindle as historical reality furnished proof of release from oppression. It is also extremely relevant that the two most successful new plays produced by the Comédie-Française during the Occupation, Claudel's Le Soulier de Satin and Montherlant's La Reine Morte, had a heavy Spanish influence in the actual subject matter. Apart from any natural inclination of the dramatists for the Spanish character, (obvious in Montherlant; less so in Claudel), the French have always regarded Spain as essentially a romantic country (in the sense of a savage, heroic people, violent in love).⁸⁰ This inclination towards Spain was already obvious in the 1941/42 season, as young directors such as Jean Dasté were attracted by the mixture of heroic violence and exalted sentiment, by the Golden Age of Spanish

79 - Forkey, Leo O., 'The Comédie-Française and the German Occupation', French Review, 24, no.6 (May 1951), pp.482-484.

80 - As early as the reign of Henry IV, Barthélemy Joly, companion to the Abbé of Cîteaux on his mission to Spain, thus described the Spanish people:

'Mélancholiques, taciturnes, sages, prudents en conseils, graves, sévères, religieux, colériques, guerriers de conséquent.'

The same attitude is obvious throughout French literature - from Corneille's Le Cid to Victor Hugo's Hernani and Ruy Blas to the twentieth century with this poem of Anna de Noailles:

Fiévreuses promenades
Sous un ciel sans pâleur, sans
 ombre sans oiseau
Dans les vallons jaunes et secs
 du Toloso
Provinces de Tolède et de
 l'Andalousie
D'où vient cette ardente et
 sourde frénésie?....
Quel désir j'ai de vous ce
 soir, divine Espagne.

(Jean Descola, 'L'Espagne dans les livres français', La Table Ronde, no.144 (1959), p.150).

drama embodied mainly in the work of Lope de Vega and later Calderon. Michel Florisoone recorded this fact in 1943:

... cette affectation assez soudaine portée au théâtre espagnol, non seulement à celui de Lope de Vega et de Calderon, mais à celui de la vieille tragi-comédie, est comme une confession. Un jeune théâtre s'est manifesté cherchant la passion avec ses tendresses, comme avec ses cruautés, voulant se retremper dans la grandeur, fût-elle encore marquée quelque peu de barbarie dans la violence des sentiments, dans une réalité exaltée.⁸¹

To the French people, enduring the monotonous deprivations of occupation, this image of Spain provided a source of escapism from their uniformly drab existence.

Though other 'symbols' of French culture, such as the circus or the music-hall, could to a great extent provide for the need of escapism, they could not fulfil a cultural rôle as significant as the Comédie-Française in this period. The Comédie-Française was able to accomplish this duty, a vitally necessary and immediate one; 'in the midst of chaos, despair and uncertainty'⁸² it continued to function almost independently and thus assured the continuation of a vital element of French 'distinctive achievements', both by its rôle as an institution and by its theatrical productions.

81 - Florisoone, Michel, and Cogniat, Raymond, op.cit., p.7.

82 - Forkey, Leo O., op.cit., p.481.

- 3) The Comédie-Française as a theatre :
La Reine morte

To understand fully the particular importance of La Reine Morte during the Occupation, it is necessary first of all to see clearly that Montherlant presented it purely as a work of art, and in no way, directly or indirectly, intended it to be a political exegesis. Certainly some contemporary critics wilfully distorted the dramatist's intentions, as in La Gerbe of January 14th 1943, where a whole political edifice was erected by a reader from Neuilly to "explain" the play.

La jeune Infante de Navarre, si femme de gouvernement, c'est l'Allemagne. Elle doit épouser Pedro, lâche et apathique - qui est les Etats-Unis - fils du cruel Ferrante - qui est l'Angleterre. Mais Inès de Castro - la France - est mariée secrètement à Pedro. Inès (la France) mourra victime de Ferrante (l'Angleterre) pour n'avoir pas voulu écouter les sages conseils de l'Infante (l'Allemagne). En même temps qu'elle, mourra Ferrante. ¹

Although this interpretation is not lacking in a certain prejudiced ingenuity, we can only regard it with a contempt equal to that of Montherlant. 'La coupure la plus amusante est celle-ci, extraite de La Gerbe due 14 janvier 1943 : "Des spectateurs 'font un sort' à certaines répliques de La Reine Morte, où ils croient voir des allusions politiques. Mais aucun, sans doute, s'y met autant de subtilité et de fantaisie qu'un de nos lecteurs de Neuilly, qui nous propose de la pièce de Montherlant l'interprétation suivante' ²

However the article is symptomatic of the extreme and diverse reactions to La Reine Morte,³ and to Montherlant's work in general during the Occupation. The Germans would feel obliged

1 - Montherlant, 'Souvenirs sur la création de La Reine Morte', Revue des Deux Mondes, vol.5 (Sept.- Oct. 1966), p.482.

2 - ibid p.482. Montherlant is content to quote the journalist.

3 - op. cit. pp.481/2. Montherlant here lists examples of both sides of the reaction to his play, from Jean Laurent in La Gerbe 'On vit rarement une salle aussi froide, aussi réticente' to Maurice Sachs in Lettres de Hambourg 'Peut-être que nul aujourd'hui n'est plus chaud que Montherlant brûlant même'.

to ban Le Solstice de Juin, yet the Resistance would condemn the same book.⁴ P. Toynbee would even go to the extreme of classifying Montherlant as a collaborationist writer along with Drieu la Rochelle, Céline, Giono, Jouhandeau, and Maurras.⁵ Though he was never directly accused of collaboration with the Germans, nevertheless a legal enquiry into his wartime activities was instigated by the Comité National des Ecrivains at the end of the war.⁶ This apparently paradoxical situation is resolved by a close study of Montherlant's artistic ethos.⁷

Firstly we should look at his work contemporary to La Reine Morte. The total absence of commitment to any political ideal is made obvious in his Carnets:

On ne s'occupe pas de politique quand on a une oeuvre
à faire qu'on sait qui vaudra sous tous les régimes.⁸

Indeed he virtually never mentions war in these Carnets except

- 4 - Beer, Jean de, Montherlant (Paris, 1963) pp. 226/227.
- 5 - Toynbee, P. 'Notes on the literary situation in France', Horizon, vol.X, no.59 (November, 1944), p.296.
- 6 - Pierre-Quint, Léon, 'Henry de Montherlant' La Table Ronde, no.155 (1960), p.161.
The Editor's introductory note to this article explains that, although the Commission d'épuration de la Société de gens de Lettres dismissed any blame, the Commission d'épuration des Arts et des Lettres, when only two members were present, condemned him to one year's suspension ('rétroactive') of publication.
- 7 - I intend here to deal only with those details of his ethos particularly relevant to the Occupation.
- 8 - Montherlant, Carnets années 1930/1940 (Paris, 1957), p. 255. See also p. 345, where Montherlant expresses the conviction that an artist has neither the time nor the freedom to become involved in political affairs.

obliquely through poetic images.⁹ His isolation from political events is conscious and self-willed; he depicts it facetiously in an image of flood representing the destructiveness of war.¹⁰ Amid the floating carcasses only three people are left alive, sitting on a rooftop; one is a dramatist, who, blind to the tragic chaos around him, blithely reads out his latest manuscript. The artist is proclaimed a totally autonomous being, subservient only to the demands of his art.

Yet to some extent, Montherlant welcomed the state of war, and saw it as a natural historical consequence.¹¹ Again in his Carnets we can see his scorn of pre-war France bathing in the euphoria of peace,¹² the same France he virulently criticized as having a 'morale de midinette'.¹³ He presents '..... le symbole de tout ce qui est en retard dans l'Etat français.', since the ^{civil service} wrote to him at an address he had left four years before, and misspelt his name.¹⁴ He believed that ^{only} war could restore France's lost 'grandeur',

9 - This attitude is apparent also in Le Solstice de Juin, (Paris, 1942).

'Que dois-je penser moi-même de mes mouvements de l'été 1940? Nous étions des hommes qui fuyaient humiliés et le fer au coeur. Je rencontrai la Poésie, je m'appuyai à son bras; nous fîmes un bout de route ensemble. Au vrai les événements ne m'ont jamais importé. Je ne les aimais que dans les rayons qu'ils faisaient en moi'

10 - Carnets, p.370.

11 - L'Equinoxe de Septembre, (Paris, 1947).

12 - Carnets, p.329.

13 - L'Equinoxe de Septembre.

14 - Carnets, p.336.

when in defeat she would find the nobility of her tragic destiny.¹⁵ War is a virile order where men can realize their dreams of heroic action, and cast off the strictures of bourgeois society, of domestic banality.¹⁶ Even in the total humiliation and decisive defeat of his fatherland a man must maintain his 'hauteur' above all.¹⁷ In Montherlant's case, he would protect this 'hauteur' by maintaining his literary development, and would even enter the Comédie-Française for the first time, with outstanding success. We find in Textes sous une Occupation, Kosrau, who provides much of the basis for the character of Ferrante in La Reine Morte;¹⁸ he decides to sacrifice his life to save his 'grandeur'.¹⁹ How important this concept of 'grandeur' is to Montherlant, we will see again in La Reine Morte. Thus his apparently ambivalent attitude to war is seen to have a sure philosophical basis.

At the very heart of Montherlant's artistic beliefs is his theory of Alternance; it is a theory which permits the artist to adopt any philosophical system as all are fundamentally correct.

15 - Carnets, p.337.

'Le destin tragique de la France. Un des plus grands destins tragiques de sorte que ce peuple qui fait si piteuse figure depuis tant d'années, reprend une espèce de grandeur dans le comble de son abaissement.'

16 - Mohrt, Michel, 'L'Ordre de la Guerre', La Table Ronde, no.155, 1960 (special number on Montherlant) p.52.

17 - Pierre-Quint, Léon, op. cit., p.171, quoting Montherlant 'L'essentiel est la hauteur elle vous tiendra lieu de patrie le jour ou l'autre vous manquera.'

18 - Textes sous une Occupation, Montherlant (Paris, 1953) p.7, 'L'Assomption du Roi des Rois donne la germe du roi Ferrante...'

19 - Textes sous une Occupation, p.91.

Chaque système résout complètement les problèmes de l'univers. 20

Je ne me lasserai de répéter : ne jamais perdre de vue que tout est confusion. Le mal naît du bien, et le bien du mal. 21

His concern is seen to be not with an abstract system, be it philosophical or political, but with examining the elemental motivations of the human spirit²² within a given framework. This credo is emphasized in his theatre; he uses the plot merely as an external framework²³ within which he intends to examine and express with the most intense concentration the deepest movements of men's souls.

Une pièce de théâtre ne m'intéresse que si l'action extérieure, réduite à sa plus grande simplicité, n'y est qu'un prétexte à l'exploration de l'homme; si l'auteur s'y est donné pour tâche, non d'imaginer et de construire mécaniquement une intrigue, mais d'exprimer avec le maximum de vérité, d'intensité et de profondeur un certain nombre de mouvements de l'âme humaine.²⁴

20 - L'Equinoxe de Septembre.

21 - Carnets, p.360.

22 - Perruchot, Henri, Montherlant (Paris, 1959), p.97.

Perruchot is quoting from an interview that Montherlant gave around 1950 :

'Pour définir mon oeuvre, je ne trouve rien de mieux que ce que disait de la sienne Richard Wagner: "Mon oeuvre est la recherche de l'éternel humain, délivré de toute convention."

23 - Montherlant, 'A propos de La Reine Morte', Comoedia (January 30th, 1943).

Montherlant is examining the various politically-orientated reviews his play had received; he comes to the conclusion that these elements do exist, but only as the framework, not as the essence of the play.

'D'abord je hausse les épaules quand je lis que j'aurais mis à la scène le conflit entre la raison d'Etat et les affections privées. Puis je rouvre mon livre, et je constate qu'il y a bien malgré tout un peu de ça : c'est l'enveloppe superficielle.'

24 - Montherlant, 'Notes de théâtre', Théâtre (Paris, 1954), p.1079."

For his first play, La Reine Morte,²⁵ he did not invent a plot, but borrowed one from Veléz de Guevara, and used the story to exemplify certain aspects of the human spirit. So, unlike writers such as Drieu la Rochelle²⁶, he did not attempt to engage himself in the contemporary political situation.²⁷ He could not commit himself to a war, since his concern above all is with himself and with his artistic credo. 'Je ne m'intéresse qu'à ma vie privée, qui est mes relations avec les êtres que je désire, et à ma création littéraire.'²⁸ He proclaims the absolute freedom of man in the midst of mass turmoil and devastation: '... quel que soit le résultat final, le salut pour moi, est en moi, ne peut venir que de moi.'²⁹

He is the supreme individualist, who wishes to ignore the strictures and impositions of society. This ability to retain his will to self-determination would be a factor in making his play such a success, since it would be fundamentally apolitical, yet essentially French.³⁰

- 25 - There are two earlier works, L'Exil (written in 1914 and published in 1929) and Pasiphaé (published in 1936 and performed at the Théâtre Pigalle in 1938 by Sylvain Itkine and his company, Le Diable Ecarlate). They were however basically experiments in dramatic literature, and the full scope of his theatrical talent would not appear until the first production of La Reine Morte on December 8th, 1942.
- 26 - cf. Chapter 2, p.22.
- 27 - cf. Also the 'littérature engagée' of the Resistance and the Liberation, and the contributors to the Resistance newspaper, Combat, such as Camus and Sartre.
- 28 - Carnets, p.253.
- 29 - Carnets, p.316.
- 30 - It is interesting to note that Montherlant was sufficiently aware of the presence of the occupying forces not to show the first version of Port-Royal, begun in 1940 and finished in 1942, to Vaudoyer. He realized that its thematic content would not be considered suitable by the Germans, so he chose to write a completely new play. Montherlant recalls this problem in his 'Préface' to Port-Royal (Paris, 1954), p.9.
 'J'écrivis un premier Port-Royal entre 1940 et 1942. Il parut que sa mise à la scène ne serait pas acceptée par l'occupant.'
 Jean de Beer (Montherlant (Paris, 1963)p.264) quotes a more detailed explanation given by Montherlant:
 'Si je ne montrai pas à Vaudoyer le premier Port-Royal commencé en 1940, terminé en 1942, ce fut surtout parce que le sujet, avec ses histoires de police, de perquisitions, d'emprisonnements, eût paru aux Allemands plein d'allusions à la situation d'alors et eût fait interdire la pièce.'

We can see now why some of his countrymen would, after the war, accuse him of defeatism and virtual collaboration. He chose to ignore the war, yet he felt fatefully attracted by it. He welcomed it yet he loathed it. However his 'crime', in purely political terms, could only be termed indifference, not active collaboration. Montherlant believes war to be the natural consequence of the parallel growth of two great nations: 'Eh bien de même que notre hostilité d'hier n'empêche pas, à mon sens, une sympathie d'aujourd'hui, de même cette sympathie d'aujourd'hui ne me semble pas être gênée par la possibilité d'une hostilité de demain.'³¹ The defeat of France was transient and therefore unimportant, since it could be seen in the consoling myth of the 'Roue Solaire'.³² Finally, his rejection of this war was, to some extent, due to an 'amour déçu'; from it were absent the two cardinal virtues inherent to World War One, 'la valeur et la pureté'.³³ It is clear then that philosophically and artistically Montherlant could^{not} but ignore this war. Nevertheless, in the Occupation his play achieved great cultural

31 - L'Equinoxe de Septembre, where Montherlant quotes a passage from his own Mors et Vita. It is part of a speech he intended to deliver to some German university students, but was rejected by their mainly Jewish professors since they considered it a dangerous incitement to war.

32 - Textes sous une Occupation, p.64. In the chapter headed 'Le Rêve des Guerriers', Montherlant examines both wars, and culminates the chapter by stating in the tragic defeat of his fatherland, he could find solace in 'le mythe consolant' that was the basis of Le Solstice de Juin.
'... Toute la mythologie du Solstice est fondée sur la Roue Solaire, symbole de ce qui ne décline que pour se relever.'

33 - Textes sous une Occupation, p.63.
cf. also Carnets, p.352. Montherlant also regrets the final destruction of that sense of honour apparent in World War One.

'Voici fini aussi ce sentiment si obsédant en l'autre guerre et un peu aussi en '40, que c'était une affaire entre hommes.'

This horrified reaction to World War Two was caused by the inhuman bombing of cities in the West.

significance, which derived from the peculiarly ethnic quality of the work. La Reine Morte exemplifies the fundamentals of the French tragic ethos, and has that endemically French quality so apparent in Montherlant's art.

J'ai le plus grand respect des hommes qui représentent vraiment la France; et, dans la littérature, je compte parmi eux, Henry de Montherlant. On n'est pas plus français que lui.³⁴

The tragic story of Inès de Castro was not new to the French stage. There had been several earlier versions, notably Houdart de Lamotte's Inès de Castro, first performed in the theatre of Molière in 1723; it was a great success and was revived several times until 1801, when it was finally removed from the repertoire. Later in 1823, Lucien Arnault would produce Pierre de Portugal, based on the same subject, but with considerably less success. This too vanished from the repertoire in 1828. However, necessarily, we must look at the basis for the story in Portuguese legend and history. Inès de Castro died in 1355, but it was not until 200 years later that the first known version of the tale was written, by the Portuguese Antonio de Ferreira.³⁵ Veléz de Guevara's play would appear in the 17th century, in the Golden Age of Spanish drama; it is this version, translated by Charles Habeneck,³⁶ that would inspire Henry de Montherlant to write La Reine Morte. It is in his adaptation, and in fact virtual

34 - Ce Soir (December 7th, 1938). A surprising tribute from one of the founders of Surrealism and a supporter of Communism, Louis Aragon.

35 - The details of the theatrical history of this subject are taken from an unpublished article written by the 'bibliothécaire' in the Occupation, Nepveu-Degas.

36 - Montherlant, La Reine Morte, with Charles Habeneck's translation of Reinar después de morir (Paris, 1942).

recreation of this story, that we can see how completely his play fulfils the traditions of French tragic theatre.³⁷

The most obvious and notable metamorphosis is from the tragi-comic aspect of the Spanish version to the pure tragic vein of the Montherlant play. The French mind finds it all but impossible to assimilate the unique aspects of Spanish tragi-comedy; the strong element of farce, provided by the buffoon, Brito, in Veléz de Guevara's play, is totally absent from La Reine Morte. Parallel to Pedro's love laments in Reinar después de morir,

Ah! Inez! mon âme, c'est à toi que je pense en souffrant, en pleurant, en gémissant³⁸

Brito provides a chorus of coarse ribaldry:

Je n'ai plus mes entrailles, elles me sont remontées à la gorge, et je m'en gargarise. Quant à la partie de mon corps, qui touchait la selle, elle est en tranches de saumon.³⁹

Two other elements traditional to Golden Age Spanish drama, the theme of the 'pundonor' and the concern with the retention of the pre-ordained cosmic and social order,⁴⁰ are apparent

37 - A comparison of the lists of protagonists immediately demonstrates that changes have been made. Brito is not in Montherlant's play, and nor are Inès de Castro's children, Alonso and Dionsis. Obviously Alonso's careless farewell to his doomed mother would be inappropriate to La Reine Morte.

'Console-toi, mère, reste avec Dieu. Nous allons avec notre grand-père, il ne voudra pas nous faire de mal.'
op.cit. p.243.

38 - op.cit. p.193.

39 - op.cit. p.195.

40 - In Lope de Vega's plays, society is divided into three definite and firmly separate stations - the king, the nobles and the commons. Each station has both duties and rights to perform, and any transgression by a member of any station must be punished. In Fuenteovejuna, the social accord is disrupted by a nobleman who sins not only against his villagers by his brutality, but also against his King by his revolt. Peace and harmony can only be restored by the removal of the nobleman from office. There are echoes of this theme in some of Pedro Calderón de la Barca's plays, such as El Alcalde de Zalamea.

in Reinar después de morir.⁴¹ Already in French drama Pierre Corneille had taken up the idea of the 'pundonor',⁴² and in his play Montherlant would retain both themes, but only as arbitrary vehicles for his main concern, 'la recherche de l'éternel humain'.⁴³ The Spanish tragic vision allows for some hope; the deaths in Reinar después de morir are seen as regrettable, but absolutely necessary, evils in the re-establishment of social order. Dynastic purity and continuity are assured by the death of Inès, but moral demands are answered by the deaths of the King and his courtiers. Hope then takes the form of the re-establishment of stability. There can be no theme of hope in French tragedy.⁴⁴ In Veléz de Guevera's play, the songs of the Pasteurs de Manzanares continuously remind us of the pervasive presence of God; in La Reine Morte there is no hint of such a compensating Heaven to detract from the tragic import. What makes Montherlant's

41 - op.cit. When Dona Blanca learns of Pedro's love for Inès de Castro, she feels insulted and demands revenge, partly through jealousy (p.205) but mainly through a feeling of slighted honour.

'... une femme de mon importance perd l'honneur lorsqu'elle se laisse insulter ainsi. Plus de conseils! N'oubliez pas que, offensée et méprisée, il me faut mourir ou me venger.' (p.214)

The theme of social stability is the mainspring of the tragedy, since the love of Inès and Pedro must ultimately be subservient to the common good. It is Egas Coelho who presents the social reasons for her death: '...le Portugal entier demande sa vie...' (p.239). Yet cosmic order too has been transgressed since the King and his courtiers have killed an innocent, so they also must die before total harmony is regained.

42 - Le Cid is the obvious example of this theme, since the play concerns a man killing the father of his own fiancée to avenge an insult to his own aged father.

43 - cf.p36, note 22.

44 - This aspect is clearly delineated in another French tragedy produced during the War (on February 4th, 1944, at the Théâtre de l'Atelier), Jean Anouilh's Antigone.

'Dans la tragédie on est tranquille. D'abord on est entre soi. On est tous innocents en somme! Ce n'est pas parce qu'il y en a un qui tue et l'autre qui est tué. C'est une question de distribution. Et puis surtout, c'est reposant, la tragédie, parce qu'on sait qu'il n'y a plus d'espoir, le sale espoir.'

Anouilh, Antigone (Paris, 1964) pp.47/48.

The word 'distribution' is vital here, since it emphasizes the belief in the arbitrary and intractable

play an exclusively French tragedy is, firstly the lucid awareness of an immutable fate and a scrupulous rationality in the observance of it, and secondly an intense concentration on the crisis - there are no deviation or sub-plots. The language is concise and always relevant to the fundamental tragedy. Montherlant realizes the French classical ideal⁴⁵ in his wish to portray eternal truths about man without any specifically contemporary reference. Already we are far removed from the mood and themes of the Spanish original; baroque splendour has been replaced by Jansenist asceticism.⁴⁶

A less obvious, but no less vital factor in French tragic writing, is the conscious scorn of mediocrity.⁴⁷ The extreme heroism of many of Corneille's protagonists, who

- 45 - Though Montherlant does not seek a strict adherence to the classical 'rules', he does seek to achieve the ideals laid down by Racine through the intensity of the language and the concentration of the action. Racine maintains that it must be 'une action simple, chargée de peu de matière, telle que doit être une action qui se passe en un seul jour, et qui s'avancant par degrés vers sa fin, n'est soutenu que par les intérêts, les sentiments et les passions des personnages'. (Racine, Oeuvres Complètes (Paris, 1951), First Préface to Britannicus, p.405). Aristotle demanded that all events should point to one clear, sustained Fable, p.28. (Aristotle, The Poetics (Cambridge, 1953) trans. L.J. Potts).

- 46 - Montherlant has stated his attraction for Jansenism: 'Dans le Jansénisme je trouvais.....des solitaires, des rigoureux, des dissidents, et une minorité : cette famille était et ne cessera d'être la mienne.' and underlined it with his play Port-Royal, based on the Jansenist abbey in Paris of that name.

- 47 - Racine showed that majesty and honour were essential constituents of tragedy. 'Ce n'est point une nécessité qu'il y ait du sang et des morts dans une tragédie; il suffit que l'action en soit grande, que les acteurs en soient héroïques, que les passions y soient excitées, et, que tout s'y ressente de cette tristesse majestueuse qui fait tout le plaisir de la Tragédie.' (Racine, op.cit. Préface to Bérénice, p.483). In La Reine Morte what most galls Ferrante about his son is his mediocrity. 'A quatorze ans, vous vous étiez éteint; vous étiez devenu médiocre et grossier.' (Paris, 1947), p.24.)

finally are in command of their own destinies and realize them in full nobility, would have been incompatible with the contemporary situation. The country had suffered a humiliating defeat, and at this time of crisis, it was necessary to purge the wounds of the past fully; plays depicting victory and glory would have been inappropriate. Corneille is more strongly in the tradition of Spanish drama than Montherlant. Though some critics attributed a Cornelian grandeur to La Reine Morte, '... La Reine Morte s'inscrit dans la lignée des héros cornéliens...' 48

Montherlant looked on such ideas with amused tolerance.

'... qu'on y voit quelque chose de cornélien me plonge dans une douce rêverie. Heureuse d'ailleurs. Toutes les fois qu'un lecteur ou un critique donne d'une oeuvre ou partie d'oeuvre de moi une interprétation radicalement erronée, je me frotte les mains. Plus on se gourre sur une oeuvre, plus elle a la chance de durer.'⁴⁹ The torment and isolation suffered by Ferrante are eternal, so at a time of despair and defeat peculiarly apt; the tragic moment must be timeless.⁵⁰ With La Reine Morte, Montherlant presented to the French public a work which realized the most hallowed concepts particular to French tragedy, and thus was able, albeit unwittingly, to reassure them of the durability of their culture. By fusing the French tragic ethic and a Portuguese legend, Montherlant attains this ideal of timelessness.⁵¹ This is the eternal and sacred task of the writer, and is imaged by Khosrau :

Du moins Khosrau remplit-il mon vide de cette sublime atmosphère d'imprécision sacrée où il n'est tenu compte ni des temps ni des espaces; ou l'on

48 - Charles Merle, Aujourd'hui (December 19th, 1942).

49 - 'A propos de La Reine Morte', Comoedia (January 30th, 1943).

50 - The very fact of historical displacement into the past creates a reassuring and eternal link for a troubled people with previous cultures.

51 - cf. p.33.

ne peut identifier ni un individu ni un lieu; ou le oui et le non tournoient enlacés ... tout cela n'est-ce pas, c'est la même famille; c'est la religion du plafond de la Sixtine, la religion de cet indéterminé que j'étais fait pour incarner dans ma personne et pour exprimer en un magnifique langage.⁵²

It is this feeling of the eternal aspect of man's spirit which Montherlant imparts to his play.

Khosrau exemplifies several elements of Montherlant's artistic credo. His court is a heroic one, devoid of women; he is obsessed by 'grandeur'; he is a sublime individualist who will admit of no social bonds. 'Je n'ai pas plus besoin qu'on m'admire que je n'ai besoin qu'on m'aime.'⁵³

Montherlant's desire to make Ferrante his own unique creation is amply demonstrated in a programme for La Reine Morte in 1959;⁵⁴ he points out that he changed the historical name of the King, Alphonse IV, 'afin d'individualiser davantage ce monarque'. This concentration on the development of the King from a secondary character in Reinar después de morir to the main protagonist in La Reine Morte obviously shifts the whole dramatic emphasis; the play is no longer a fatal love story, but an intense tragic study of a man attracted by purity and innocence, yet dominated by worldly scepticism. There are no extraneous dramatic themes; the death of Inès is vital only in relation to Ferrante. The tragic emphasis is on the King alone. This is not to say that Montherlant identified absolutely with Ferrante; each protagonist displays some element of Montherlant's beliefs or experiences and thus each is rendered unique yet familiar.

L'Infante devenait malade d'orgueil, parce que je fus ainsi en certaines périodes de ma jeunesse. Le Roi, dont le caractère est à peine esquissé chez

52 - Textes sous une Occupation, pp.96/97.

53 - *ibid.* p.91.

54 - Montherlant wrote the introduction to the production of La Reine Morte at the Comédie-Française on July 10th, 1959. Here again he looks back to the success of the play during the Occupation, and how even French prisoners of war were able to put it on in their camps.

Guevara, prenait forme pétrie de moments de moi. Inès n'était plus une femme qui a un enfant, mais une femme qui en attend un, parce qu'il y avait là une matière humaine que des amies m'avaient rendu familière.⁵⁵

Thus Montherlant creates a character completely new to dramatic literature, and makes him realize his fate in an essentially French tragedy.

How Henry de Montherlant came to write La Reine Morte is well known.⁵⁶ Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, appointed as administrator-general of the Comédie-Française in 1941 after the departure of Edouard Bourdet, was instrumental in the creation of this play. He was well aware of the vital duty that the Comédie-Française had to fulfil in those times.

Dans les grands malheurs qui nous ont assaillis, la Comédie-Française a la chance qu'une de nos plus richesses spirituelles, notre repertoire, soit demeurée intacte, et que le moyen d'en exalter les beautés soit resté à notre portée. Ceci nous crée un grand devoir. La Comédie-Française saura n'y pas faillir.⁵⁷

Vaudoyer would devote his first season as general administrator to consolidating the traditional repertoire, in order that a mood of continuity and stability be created.⁵⁸

55 - Montherlant, 'Comment fut écrite La Reine Morte', Textes sous une Occupation, p.162. cf. also p.163, 'Chacune de ces créatures devenait tour à tour le porte-parole d'un de mes moi.' Jacques de Laprade, in his preface to Montherlant's Théâtre (Paris, 1954), quotes the following from the writer: 'Il n'est pas un des personnages de mon théâtre avec lequel je ne sois d'accord, que je n'aie tiré d'un de mes moi-mêmes, Je ne suis aucun d'eux, et je suis chacun d'eux.' p.xiv.

56 - In 'Comment fut écrite La Reine Morte', Montherlant recounts how, in 1941, Vaudoyer lent him three volumes of Golden Age Spanish drama, with the request to translate one for the Comédie-Française - pointing out two particular plays, Lope de Vega's Amar sin saber a quien, and Reinar después de morir. Montherlant eventually asked for total freedom in changing the original.

57 - Yvon Novy quoting Vaudoyer in 'Quelques projets de M. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer pour la saison prochaine.', Comoedia (August 9th, 1941).

58 - See my chapter on the administration of the Comédie-Française.

It would only be in the 1942/43 season that he would invite, and in Montherlant's case virtually commission, new plays. Though Montherlant certainly had some reservations about the quality of the repertoire of the Comédie-Française, as we have already seen, he, too, fully realized its critical task.⁵⁹ Of the two plays suggested to him by Vaudoier, Montherlant decided to use Reinar después de morir, but not in translation, just as the basic framework of his own play.

C'est une armature que je pourrais garder, mais en changeant tout ce qu'il y a dedans, aussi bien les caractères que le dialogue.⁶⁰

Thus in May, 1942, in five weeks of total seclusion in Grasse he created an important play in the Occupation,⁶¹ and one which would endure in the repertoire. Vaudoier was able to present to the French public a new play to inspire them, yet one which embodied the traditional elements of their tragic literature to reassure them.⁶²

59 - cf. Chap. 2, p. 6.

'Il y a, paraît-il, au milieu des tourbillons de la mer des points qui restent immobiles quasiment. La Comédie-Française et avec elle la destinée de La Reine Morte se sont trouvés à un de ces points de calme.'

60 - 'Comment fut écrite La Reine Morte', p. 162. The unique quality of his play earned this tribute from Marcel Arland: 'Tout ce qui compte dans La Reine Morte est de vous.' p. 167.

61 - The success of the play was not restricted to the stage. In his introduction to the programme for the 1959 production, Montherlant states that in the bookshops La Reine Morte was one of the most considerable literary successes of the period, since 231,000 copies were printed.

62 - In 1952 the Comédie-Française took the play on a tour of South America and Belgium, with only one member of the original cast left, Yonnel. In 1966 Pierre Franck would create a completely new 'mise en scène' of the play at the Comédie-Française, with the decor by Simonini.

Since we have seen that the tragedy of La Reine Morte centres on Ferrante, it is necessary to examine how he carries out this rôle. Firstly he conforms to one of the essential qualities demanded of the tragic protagonist by Aristotle; he must be neither wholly good nor utterly evil, as this concentration on either extreme negates a true 'catharsis'. The hero must be a distinguished man who, through some flaw or error, falls from prosperity to misfortune.⁶³ Certainly Ferrante cannot be considered to be at either extreme; Montherlant himself proclaims that the very basis of Ferrante's character is the fusion of the 'clair-obscur', an intensification of what is true for all men. He embodies the inconsistencies inherent to all humanity.⁶⁴

Le théâtre est fondé sur la cohérence des caractères et la vie est fondée sur leur incohérence. L'inconsistance de Ferrante est une des données de La Reine Morte. La cohérence de son caractère est d'être incohérent.⁶⁵

The King adopts the guise of the cynical political tyrant, '... une des meilleures garanties de longue vie est d'être insensible et implacable',⁶⁶ yet he has an immense capacity

63 - 'The Tragic Pattern', Poetics, p.33.

Aristotle states that for true pity and fear to be evoked, the protagonist must not pass from the absolute extreme of good or bad fortune to the other extreme. There can be no sympathy bond established with the audience if the feelings of horror or revulsion are excited in them.

64 - Jacques de Laprade again quoting Montherlant in his preface to the Théâtre,

'... on réclame au théâtre des caractères "nets et bien dessinés" mais ce qu'on réclame ainsi, c'est encore et toujours de la convention, car dans la vie, il est très rare que les caractères soient "nets et bien dessinés". Ou bien ils sont par richesse, disparates et incohérents. Ou bien ils sont par pauvreté, flous et pâles. Ce désir d'unifier et d'accuser un caractère dramatique... est une des raisons pourquoi presque tout le théâtre.... reste superficiel et dégoûte les esprits profonds.' p.xx.

65 - Montherlant, Théâtre, p.254.

66 - La Reine Morte, p.133.

for love. He deeply regrets the mediocrity of his son,⁶⁷ and the inevitable loss of love for this person who could not achieve the metamorphosis from the purity of youthful innocence to the 'grandeur' of an adult.

Treize ans a été l'année de votre gloire; vous avez eu à treize ans une grâce, une gentillesse, une finesse, une intelligence que vous n'avez jamais retrouvées depuis; c'était le dernier et merveilleux rayon du soleil qui se couche; seulement on sait que, dans douze heures, le soleil réapparaîtra, tandis que le génie de l'enfance, quand il s'éteint, c'est à tout jamais.⁶⁸

It is this essential dichotomy between the man capable of love and drawn by innocence, and the cruel man of state, on which the tragic dénouement will be founded. Ferrante is well aware of these contradictions within himself, of the duality of good and evil.

Moi, toute ma vie, j'ai fait incessamment ce trajet; tout le temps à monter et à descendre, de l'enfer aux cieus. Car, avec tous mes péchés, j'ai vécu cependant enveloppé de la main divine.⁶⁹

It is now that the significance of Inès' pregnancy becomes apparent.⁷⁰ Ferrante, to survive at court, necessarily adopts the mask of hypocrisy and political cynicism,⁷¹ but progressively the mask has become the man, he begins even to derive sadistic enjoyment from his evil.

67 - cf. p.42, note 47.

68 - La Reine Morte, p.24.

69 - La Reine Morte, p.155.

70 - As we have already seen, in the Velez de Guevara version, Inès is not pregnant, cf. p.40.

71 - L'Infante is well aware of this danger of the mask becoming the man, and warns Inès of the incipient peril she faces.

'Les princes mettent des lions sur leurs armoiries, sur leurs oriflammes, Et puis un jour ils en trouvent un dans leur coeur.' p.98.

Plus je mesure ce qu'il y a d'injuste et d'atroce dans ce que je fais, plus je m'y enfonce, parce que plus je m'y plais.⁷²

Parallel to this the human spirit in him begins to die.⁷³ The imminent birth of Inès' child recalls to him the purity of childhood, of human love. In 1942, Montherlant wrote a 'notice de programme' for the creation of La Reine Morte (though it was not in fact printed), and in this 'notice' enlarged on this theme: '... cet enfant à venir remue douloureusement l'amour qu'il eut jadis pour Pedro, et qu'il n'a plus, et tout ce qu'il y a en lui est blessé par cette vie nouvelle qui va venir au monde.'⁷⁴ What is left of humanity in him abhors the idea of the merciless eradication of such innocence; surrounded by the harsh empiricism of his courtiers, he asks:

N'est-ce pas cruauté affreuse, que tuer qui n'a pas eu de torts?⁷⁵

However, at the same time he manifestly realizes the political exigencies that would be served by her death.⁷⁶ He is

72 - La Reine Morte, p.156.

73 - In 'En relisant La Reine Morte', Théâtre, Montherlant points to this gradual but immutable estrangement of the King from the humanity within himself.

'Ferrante... semble lentement se séparer de l'humain jusqu'à l'instant où il tombe.' p.254.

74 - In the play itself Ferrante accuses Inès of doing this deliberately.

'Vous vous êtes servie de votre enfant à venir pour remuer mon enfant passé.' p.151.

75 - La Reine Morte, p.64.

76 - P.158, when Ferrante has just given the order for the assassination of Inès.

'Une telle décision ne se prend pas sans douleur. Mais au delà de cette femme infortunée, j'ai mon royaume, j'ai mon peuple, j'ai mes âmes; j'ai la charge que Dieu m'a confiée et j'ai le contrat que j'ai fait avec mes peuples...'

antagonized both by the purity of the unborn child and by the love of life of Inès.⁷⁷ Her one motivation is love: 'Aimer, je ne sais faire rien d'autre.'⁷⁸ But any temptation to kindness or humanity kindled in Ferrante is nullified by his courtiers, especially by the pitilessly rationalistic Egas Coelho who demands Inès' immediate death. The King cannot permit himself the luxury of sentiment, however much he might regret it.

Ferrante

Hélas! Nous sommes bien loin ici du Royaume de Dieu.

Egas Coelho

Lequel en effet, n'a rien à voir dans notre propos.

Ferrante

C'est un simple soupir qui m'échappait en passant.⁷⁹

He is not allowed to revive his humanity. He is even no longer able to recognize or inspire it in others; Dino del Moro, on whose purity Ferrante calls as he dies: 'Que l'innocence de cet enfant me serve de sauvegarde quand je vais apparaître devant mon juge...'⁸⁰ will betray him in life as in death.⁸¹ The Gordian knot of contradictions that torment the King can only be resolved by violence, by his death; he begs to be freed from this turbulence of emotions.

77 - P.149. Ferrante is only too aware of her unblemished and pure enjoyment of life.

'... vous, Inès, vous semblez avoir parié singulièrement pour la vie.'

P.141. Inès seems even to love her own death.

L'Ombre - 'Comme tu aimes ta mort! Comme tu l'auras aimée!'

78 - P.108.

79 - op.cit. p.70.

80 - op.cit. p.161.

81 - Dino has no illusions about deceiving the King; he is quite ready to admit his own part to Inès. 'Tout le monde le trompe ici.' p.124.

O mon Dieu! dans ce répit qui me reste, avant que le sabre repasse et m'écrase, faites qu'il tranche ce noeud épouvantable de contradictions qui sont en moi, de sorte que, un instant au moins avant de cesser d'être, je sache enfin ce que je suis.⁸²

The tragedy is assured and inevitable. The whole play is pervaded by a sense of death; Inès' love for Pedro is tinged with 'peur', 'angoisse', 'tristesse', and she suffers premonitions of an indefinable but definitely tragic fate.⁸³ Ferrante is obsessed with the abyss and dominated by the conviction that his own death is very near. 'Je meurs... depuis longtemps; il ne s'agit que d'achever la chose.'⁸⁴ We can see how within the character of Ferrante and within the atmosphere of the play itself, the Aristotelian tragic ethic is answered.⁸⁵ The tragedy was inevitable from the realization of the task which political expediency had imposed on Ferrante. In human terms, the deaths of Inès and her unborn child are socially blameworthy, in political terms an absolute necessity. From this tension results the tragic import.

82 - op.cit. p.161.

83 - Inès tries to explain her acute sense of fear to Pedro.

'Depuis deux ans, sur nous, cette menace, cette sensation d'une pluie noire sans cesse prête à tomber et qui ne tombe pas. La destinée qu'on sent qui s'accumule en silence.' p.38.

'Souvent, au coucher du soleil, je suis envahie par une angoisse. Tenez, quand je vois les marchands qui ferment leurs volets. Un coup de lance me traverse: "En ce moment même on décide quelque chose d'effroyable contre moi..." ' p.39.

84 - P.115.

85 - Apart from the density of the language and the action, it is the merciless logic of the tragic dénouement which most clearly belongs to the Aristotelian ethic. Aristotle maintains that logic is the best means for the untying of the tragic knot, apart from the probability of the Fable. (Poetics, p.38). Logically Ferrante must die because he has negated the last element of humanity in himself by the assassination of Inès. The logic of social stability is fulfilled by her death.

The particular mood of deceit and hypocrisy which runs parallel to the omnipresent feeling of fear, was uniquely suited to the time of the Occupation. Throughout the play there is a sense of distrust and impending betrayal - a feeling only too familiar to the defeated French. The whole of Act III, Scene VI, a dialogue between Inès and Ferrante, is played out to a background of shifting shadows, of people listening and watching.

Scene VI :

Ferrante, Inès. Au fond de la pièce, dans l'ombre, Egas Coelho et les seigneurs, puis d'autre personnages.

and later on during their conversation these nameless shapes are still present.

Durant les répliques qui suivent jusqu'au départ de l'ombre de l'Infante, dans le fond obscur de la salle, des ombres apparaissent, écoutent un moment, puis disparaissent avec des gestes horrifiés.⁸⁶

Fear is the normal and intractable state of the human race. '... le monde entier vit sous l'empire de la peur.'⁸⁷ The final scene in its baroque and enclosed setting, enacted almost totally in darkness, concentrates this feeling to an almost intolerable intensity, until with the explosion of light we almost welcome the release of death accorded to Ferrante. The unity of love and 'grandeur', finally achieved

86 - pp. 133 and 138

In the circles of the Royal Court, hypocrisy is seen to have a magical rejuvenating quality.

Ferrante

'Un de mes grands, qui est venu tard à la cour, m'a dit que le jour où il avait découvert l'hypocrisie, il avait rajeuni de dix ans, tant c'était bon.' p.76.

During Act III, Scene VI, Ferrante is aware of his hiding courtiers, and knows that it is the truth which so frightens them. The rule of hypocrisy has been transgressed.

'... ils croient qu'ils s'enfuient par peur de mes représailles, alors qu'ils s'enfuient par peur et horreur de la vérité. Le bruit de la vérité les épouvante comme la crécelle d'un lépreux.' p.142.

Thus the catharsis effected in the audience during the Occupation was of a particularly relevant and potent kind.

87 - p.39.

symbolized by the placing of the crown on the belly of the dead Inès, presents a potentially glorious conclusion. In worldly terms the triumph is that of the body politic, since dynastic order has been restored. Yet this is the merely superficial outcome. Our pity is not for the dead Inès, who has achieved 'grandeur' as predicted by l'Infante,⁸⁸ but for the tormented King. The final scene has a unique emotive power; enacted in almost total silence, in stark contrast to the frenzied and turbulent dialogue before, we see the ritual crowning of the assassinated Inès. Initially a sense of hope is evoked, but, as we become aware of the King's body, a feeling of defeat and despair is established. The King is left alone, as the other protagonists gather around the new Queen; his is the tragedy of a man deprived of the 'grandeur' he sought,⁸⁹ betrayed even in death. This

88 - Inès refuses the avenue of escape offered by the eminently realistic Infante, for she will not sacrifice her love to expediency. L'Infante knows that her desire for 'grandeur' will be a fatal one. 'Eh bien! dona Inès, soyez donc sublime, puisque c'est cela décidément qui vous tente. Sublime en ne partant pas. Sublime en ne poussant pas à trahir. Allons, soyez sublime tout votre saoul, et mourez-y. Adieu.' (P.113).

89 - Perhaps the most important factor necessary for the realization of Montherlant's concept of 'grandeur' is the ability to maintain the 'liberté d'esprit'. 'Rien n'est plus victorieux que la liberté d'esprit. Elle a quelque chose de solaire, elle a la force du soleil, qui perce et éclate les nuages, et qui fait tomber la vague. Elle refuse, en notre nom, que nous soumettions aux objets qui nous sont étrangers. Elle est la victoire sur tout : sur le monde extérieur et sur soi-même. Elle est le type même de la victoire.'

Perruchot, Montherlant, p.233, quoting from Le Solstice de Juin.

This is where Ferrante ultimately fails in comparison to Khosrau. Both are weary of their appointed tasks,

Khosrau

'Je suis las de mon armée, de mon trône, de ma couronne... C'est mon âme qui est épuisée et mon coeur qui est vide.'

Op.cit. p.90.

Ferrante

'Moi aussi... je suis crucifié sur moi-même, sur des devoirs qui pour moi n'ont plus de réalité.'

La Reine Morte, p.139.

yet it is only the Persian King who is prepared to choose his own death and assure his glory, both worldly and eternal. Ferrante's plea for purification (p.161) comes too late. He has not shown his 'liberté d'esprit', but remained subservient to temporal demands.

coronation of death is a brutally ironic tragedy for Ferrante; he had suffered the rigorous impositions and solitude of royal power, and now in death he is exiled from the rest of humanity.⁹⁰ Montherlant had a number of problems to resolve in his composition of the final scene. Physical action, which in the rest of the play assumes an essentially secondary rôle, at the end is the dominant interpretative factor, since the culminating image does not arise from the language, but from the movements of the protagonists.

Initially Montherlant was tempted by two extremes; firstly one of divine redemption and eternal hope, which of course would have completely nullified the tragic power.⁹¹

Dans l'acte final, non écrit de La Reine Morte, on verrait Ferrante, grand, faible, assassin pitoyable, mais qui a toujours vécu 'enveloppé de la main divine', s'élever vers le ciel, emportant dans ses bras sa victime et la présenter à Dieu: l'Assomption du Roi des Rois.⁹²

Yet he was also tempted by an intense concentration on the aspects of physical decay which accompanies death.

S'il n'avait tenu qu'à moi, la scène aurait grouillée de vers.⁹³

90 - The theme of solitude and exile is important in Montherlant's work. The sense of communion with the rest of humanity is vital, whether it be in sport, war, school, etc. In L'Exil, Philippe de Presles states: '...Et puis la guerre et l'exil de la guerre. Et demain comme aujourd'hui, exilé de tout ce pourquoi je suis fait, tantôt par ma faute, tantôt par la faute des autres.' Théâtre, p.69.

91 - There can be no tragedy if there is a hint of a compensatory heaven.

92 - Théâtre, p.259.

93 - Montherlant, 'Souvenirs sur la création de La Reine Morte', Revue des deux mondes (September-October, 1966), p.484.

This again would have impaired the power of the tragedy, since the inspiration of the extreme emotion of horror in the audience would have weakened the effect of the catharsis.

Even the original end, as contained in the manuscript of La Reine Morte⁹⁴, is not as fully realized as it would be in the final stage version. The vital action of the page finally deserting the King is not included.

Au milieu de ce tumulte on apporte sur une litière le cadavre d'Inès. Le tumulte à l'instant s'apaise. En silence, tous s'écartent du cadavre du Roi, se massent du côté opposé de la scène autour de la litière, et mettent un genou à terre, à l'exception du petit page, qui, après un geste d'hésitation, s'est agenouillé auprès du cadavre du Roi. A ce moment apparaît Don Pedro; il se jette contre la litière en sanglotant. A l'extrême droite, le corps du Roi Ferrante est étendu sans personne auprès de lui, que le petit page agenouillé à son côté.⁹⁵

In the 1942 Gallimard edition, there is a significant change made to the movements of the page.

Le page glisse un regard, plusieurs fois, vers le groupe des orants. Enfin il se lève et va s'agenouiller parmi eux, lui aussi.⁹⁶

This act of desertion in effect becomes the physical embodiment of the absolute separation from humanity which Ferrante must suffer in the fulfilment of his task, a theme which is one of the main concerns of the play. The manuscript version does not have the same thematic power. However, Montherlant was not yet satisfied; he felt that Dino del Moro's actions should have greater emphatic detail, and we find this exemplified in the version now extant.

Au milieu de ce tumulte, on apporte sur une civière Inès morte, pendant que des cloches sonnent. Le tumulte à l'instant s'apaise. En silence, tous s'écartent du cadavre du Roi étendu sur le sol, se massent du côté opposé de la scène autour de la litière, à l'exception de Dino del Moro qui, après un geste d'hésitation, est resté un genou en terre auprès du Roi. A ce moment apparaît Don Pedro; il se jette contre la litière en sanglotant. Le lieutenant Martins entre à son tour, portant un coussin noir sur lequel repose la couronne royale. Pedro prend la couronne

94 - The original manuscript was bestowed by Montherlant on the Comédie-Française, and is now in their archives.

95 - The manuscript is dated 'Paris, avril 1942'.

96 - La Reine Morte (Paris, 1942), p.184.

et la pose sur le ventre d'Inès, puis il se tourne vers l'officier des gardes; celui-ci dégaine; tous les gardes font de même et présentent l'épée. Alors Pedro force par son regard l'assistance à s'agenouiller; le Prince de la mer ne le fait qu'à regret. Pedro s'agenouille à nouveau, et, la tête sur le corps d'Inès, il sanglote. L'assistance commence à murmurer une prière.

A l'extrême droite, le corps du Roi Ferrante est resté étendu, sans personne auprès de lui, que le page andalou agenouillé à son côté. Le page se lève avec lenteur, regarde longuement le cadavre, passe avec lenteur vers la civière, hésite, se retourne pour regarder encore le Roi, puis, se décidant, va s'agenouiller avec les autres, lui aussi, auprès de la civière. Le cadavre du Roi reste seul.⁹⁷

Another action in this final scene which was changed to achieve a greater significance was the placing of the crown. As can be seen from the photograph of the original production, it was initially placed over the heart of Inès, which served to emphasize her devotion to love. In later productions, at the suggestion of Jean Cocteau, the crown was placed on her stomach.⁹⁸ Thus, those particular aspects of love exemplified by Inès which so troubled Ferrante, purity and innocence, found an emphatic physical symbol. As we shall see below, the successful realization of this final scene demanded extensive interpretation into scenic terminology by Dux.

It becomes vital here to examine the 'mise en scène' for the 1942 production of La Reine Morte by Pierre Dux, and the décor and costumes designed by Roland Oudot. The revolutionary works of Edward Gordon Craig had been published in France in 1920,⁹⁹ and men of the theatre, such as Copeau,

97 - La Reine Morte, p.162.

98 - Montherlant, 'A propos de La Reine Morte', p.1.

99 - De l'Art du Théâtre was published in 1920 with an introduction by Jacques Rouché. During the Occupation, from 1942, Craig in fact lived and worked in Paris; on June 27th, at the Maison de Chimie, in 1945 he would preside over a performance by the Etienne Decroux Company.
(Bablot, Edward Gordon Craig (Paris, 1962) p.236).

freely admitted their indebtedness to this influence. Antonin Artaud's obsessive and violent theatrical credo was also well known.¹⁰⁰ Yet Dux chose to restrict himself to the more conventional elements of the 'mise en scène', though he must certainly have been aware of the innovations in dramatic production wrought by such as Artaud, Craig and Appia.

Dux's theatrical ethic as a 'metteur en scène' is to achieve harmony both in the relationship between the play and its production, and between all those concerned artistically and technically in its realization.¹⁰¹ Above all, the written play itself must be the dominating element.

... le travail de mise en scène comprend en somme deux tâches différentes, bien qu'étroitement liées. La première est de conduire les répétitions de la pièce dans le ton, le style, et le mouvement de l'ouvrage, d'harmoniser le jeu des acteurs, de mettre ceux-ci en valeur, en tenant compte de leur personnalité et des indications de leur rôle. Cette tâche, la plus importante, est inconnue du public. La seconde consiste à réaliser matériellement le spectacle en collaboration avec le décorateur, puis les techniciens du plateau...¹⁰²

Dux also believes that in a theatre such as the Comédie-Française, there must always be an awareness of tradition, but not an uncompromising subservience to it. This awareness should be apparent on stage, as it is in his 'mise en scène' here.

100 - Artaud's Le Théâtre et son Double (a collection of his articles in La Nouvelle Revue Française, his lectures, etc., from 1932 onwards), was published by Gallimard in 1938. His influence was considerable; as we shall see in greater detail later, Jean-Louis Barrault was vitally influenced.

101 - Pierre Dux began his career at the Comédie-Française on April 4th, 1929, in the Barbier de Seville.

102 - J.L., 'Un Entretien avec Pierre Dux', Nouveaux Temps (December 18th, 1943). This statement was also quoted here: 'Mon travail consiste à servir de mon mieux les intentions de l'auteur.'

S'il s'agit de reconstituer un spectacle tel qu'il a été créé et si la Comédie-Française avait procédé ainsi, nous aurions aujourd'hui des mises en scène du dix-septième siècle. A l'opposé, il n'est pas bon, non plus, de se lancer dans n'importe quelle innovation qui ne tient aucun compte de l'acquis traditionnel. Je crois beaucoup à cet acquis, qui se manifeste par un goût de la clarté, par une perfection de la diction, par une analyse logique de la phrase qui la rend nettement compréhensible.¹⁰³

With regard to La Reine Morte he was totally justified in this artistically; too great an emphasis on the visual aspect would have distracted attention from the verbal interplay which provides the essential movement¹⁰⁴ in the tragedy. The language is all important and had to be an important element in the drama. Consequently Dux attempted no startling innovations but strove to follow and accentuate the verbal patterns in his 'mise en scène'. Secondly, the Comédie-Française traditionally is not a place of dramatic revolution, and Dux must have fully realized that the public in the Occupation needed to be reassured, not startled.¹⁰⁵

103 - Dandrel, Louis, 'Un Entretien avec M. Pierre Dux', Le Monde (October 5th, 1972), p.1.

104 - This emphasis on the verbal aspect of course is in direct contradiction to one of Craig's basic ideas, that it is the visual aspect above all which must be concentrated on.

'The first dramatists were children of the theatre. The modern dramatists are not. The first dramatist understood what the modern dramatist does not yet understand. He knew that when he and his fellows appeared in front of them the audience would be more eager to see what he would do than to hear what he might say.'

(Craig, 'The Art of the Theatre' in Theory of the Modern Stage, ed. Eric Bentley (London, 1968) p.115).

105 - In 1943 Michel Florisoone pointed to this need for reassurance.

'Il (le public) veut de la mélodie, il veut du chant. Il veut surtout qu'on ne lui change pas ses habitudes, et il faut qu'on lui enveloppe les nouveautés dans un emballage de courtoisie.'

(Florisoone/Cogniat, Un an de Théâtre (Lyon, 1943) p.9).

However he does attribute this reluctance to accept new ideas partly to the conservative nature of the public in art.

Roland Oudot's décor, too, would not correspond to any of the precepts laid down by Craig¹⁰⁶, and would even go directly against one as he sought historical verisimilitude in the costumes.¹⁰⁷ Oudot worked in close consultation with Dux, and studied works of Portuguese art contemporary to Reinar después de morir; ¹⁰⁸ he tried to find a communion between the thematic content of La Reine Morte and the 'ambiance' unique to Portugal. Both artists avoided any over-emphatic effect which would mar the nobility of the language and themes; they adopted the simplest style.

We become immediately aware of the courtly splendour and empiricism that will dominate the first scene when the curtain lifts. The décor is geometrically symmetrical,¹⁰⁹ and the colours are of a luminous clarity - there is the strong contrast of pure black and white, with the brilliant red of the curtains; the throne is in the centre, alluding to the omnipotence of the King; the whole atmosphere is one of balance and order, dominated by Ferrante. This feeling of rationalism and stability is further emphasized by the calm regality of Ferrante's entrance.

106 - Roland Oudot had been sent in 1912 to work under Léon Bakst for the Russian Ballets of Diaghilev. (Vaudoyer, 'Naissance de La Reine Morte', Comoedia (December 5th, 1942). This would be a strong influence on his designs as we shall see.

107 - cf. Craig's Art of the Theatre, p.124.

108 - Nepveu-Degas, 'La Reine Morte', Revue des Beaux Arts de France (February/March, 1943), no.III, p.152.

109 - cf. the set plan in Appendix. The entrances on either side of the throne recall the Mediaeval 'mystères', when the centre of the stage would be dominated by an altar or crucifix motif with Hell mouth on stage left and the entrance to Heaven on stage right.

Ferrante, suivi de Christoval, Alvar Gonçaves et Einardo, entre de D1 et se dirige vers le trône 4 où il s'assied. Manuel Ocayo à la porte C1 s'incline, fait un signe et redescend prendre place à droite d'Alvar et Christoval après s'être incliné en passant devant le roi.¹¹⁰

However this sense of harmony is shattered by the sudden and rapid arrival of l'Infante, who, unlike Manuel Ocayo, does not immediately show her obeisance to the King.¹¹¹

L'Infante qui entre très rapidement ne voit le roi sur son trône que lorsqu'elle est descendue de quelques pas en scène.¹¹²

Already a sense of disquiet has been created in the audience. From now, as the verbal exchanges take place, the movements of the protagonists follow an almost formal, stylized pattern. The King leaves his throne as if to retreat from the tirade of the enraged Infante, and the two groups stand facing each other. Ferrante has left his throne and thus relinquished the centre of power. Once she has finished her initial outburst, she retreats to her own faction. Now it is Ferrante's turn to advance as he begins to defend himself.¹¹³ Dux's ability to comprehend and highlight the verbal composition

110 - All the references to the 'mise en scène' are taken from Dux's 'livre de régie' for the original production, which is now in the private library of the Comédie-Française. The pages of the 'mise en scène' were incorporated to the 1942 Gallimard edition of La Reine Morte to run parallel with the text. The page numbers will therefore refer to the text of this edition of the play.

111 - Even before there is any speech, we can see how faithful Dux was to the writer's intentions. The essential contrast Dux immediately establishes between the ritual splendour of Ferrante's entrance and the unfettered violence of l'Infante's, is exactly what Montherlant intended. In 'La création de La Reine Morte', Théâtre, Montherlant compared this first encounter between Ferrante and l'Infante to a bullfight.

'Le rideau se lève. Toreros et matador entrent et occupent leurs places respectives en silence. Un temps d'attente. Puis le taureau fonce dans l'arène. Le taureau est Mlle.Faure, Infante de Navarre.' p.250.

112 - op.cit. p.13.

113 - cf. op.cit. pp.13/16.

is amply demonstrated in the directions for l'Infante's first main speech; her physical movements naturally follow the cadences of her speech.¹¹⁴

2-3 She establishes the basic facts relevant to the emotional and political background, and faces the King.

3-1 Now as she leaves the realm of pure fact to concentrate on the abstract, she turns to the audience. This is an important movement, as it prepares us for a new emphasis in her speech; we now have some idea of the task she sets herself, and a natural bridge is formed between the description of the details to the description of the affront of her slighted honour.

1-2 Again she faces the King to explain more fully the facts of the insult.

2-3 This time the growing schism is emphasized as l'Infante turns away from the King, and he walks further away towards his courtiers. The physical distance between them corresponds to the spiritual separation created by the violence of her words.

3-4 Finally, as the speech reaches its crescendo, so the physical action reaches its climax; the opponents again face each other as l'Infante angrily advances.

Thus in no way does Dux seek to impose his own personality on the play;¹¹⁵ his 'mise en scène' is in perfect accord with Montherlant's creation. It is aimed solely at adding visual support to the speech rhythms and to the themes they embody.

In the final scene as Ferrante dies, the halting measure of his speech is admirably matched by the staccato physical action.¹¹⁶ The movement 3-4 is especially important; as Ferrante's spiritual torment reaches a crisis in despair, so Egas Coelho tries frantically to break through the enclosing

114 - See Appendices F5-F6.

115 - This desire to adapt to the play was also true of Pierre Dux as an actor. Dubeux compares him to the actors, Félix Huguenet and Pierre Fresnay, both of whom had personalities rich enough to give new life to any rôle. This is in contrast to performers such as Raimu, who are always basically themselves, with their well-known 'tics', whatever the demands of the rôle.

116 - See Appendices F3-F4.

crowd. He is as condemned to suffer the ultimate punishment as Ferrante is condemned to die without achieving the serene spiritual fulfilment of self-knowledge. Dux restricts himself to what he considers the absolute necessities until the final tableau, which is acted out in silence. This technique of understatement is apparent also in the list of accessories. Until the final Tableau, they are minimal and essential; as the same set is used in the first and third Tableaux, in order to establish that Ferrante is now in his 'cabinet de travail' in the third Tableau, Dux makes use of several vital accessories, such as pens, paper.¹¹⁷ In his original conception there are nine pages of 'mise en scène' to accomplish the crowning of the dead Queen; the tragedy presaged by the violent entrance of l'Infante in Act I, Scene I, is now realized in the turbulent movements of the last scene.

117 - The list is taken from the 'mise en scène' :

Tableau 1 / Tableau 3

Sur table 1 - un encrier (fixé à la table) - deux plumes d'oie - une serviette cuir garnie dossier - un dossier épars - deux feuilles au coin J de la table.

Sur table 7 - un encrier (fixé à la table) - une plume d'oie - une serviette cuir - un dossier épars.

En coulisse - A Ferrante un parchemin

Tableau 2

En coulisse - A Ferrante une canne noire à pomme d'argent.

Tableau 4

En coulisse - A l'Infante un bracelet souple en diamants.

Tableau 5

Scène : à la cheminée - pelle et pincettes

En coulisse

Troisième plan cour :- un soufflet - un candélabre, 3 branches allumées - civière

Fond cour :- 2 bûches, au page:- une lettre griffonnée

A figuration:- 4 torches allumées: 2 candélabres 3 branches et 2 candélabres 2 branches - allumés

A Martins:- un coussin noir, une couronne royale.

This turmoil is finely accentuated by the baroque proportions of Oudot's décor for the final set. Throughout the play his desire for complete harmony with Dux's intentions and Montherlant's wishes is apparent.¹¹⁸ His design for the curtain both announces the theme of 'grandeur'¹¹⁹ and forebodes death. On a simple background stands an almost heraldic motif of a 'chevalier'. The pose suggests the traditional chivalric values, yet he is dressed in black. The main colour motifs in the play are already in evidence here - black, and pastel shades of pink, blue and grey, with the occasional stark contrast of bright red.

In the second Tableau, the house of Inès¹²⁰, the décor is evocative of warmth and freedom. The dominant colours are soft and harmonious shades of blue and purple, in sharp contrast to the first Tableau. The trees and the sky, easily visible in the background, inspire a feeling of space, so lacking in the claustrophobic geometry of Ferrante's court.¹²¹

The third Tableau, Ferrante's 'cabinet de travail', is the same as in Scene I, but with the curtains drawn; red now overpowers. In the next Tableau, we see the Castle of Sanarem in which Pedro is to be imprisoned. Oudot has created a scene oppressed by the sombre grey and white castle, with a

118 - This was in effect Roland Oudot's first attempt at theatre work. He would continue to design for the Comédie-Française, with such productions as Racine's Andromaque in 1947, and André Obey's L'Homme de cendres in 1949.

119 - See above for this theme.

120 - The actual indications given in the text of the play for this Tableau are 'Dans la maison d'Inès, à Mondego, aux Environs de Montemor-o-velho, une pièce donnant sur un jardin.' P.35 (1947 ed.).

121 - See Appendix Fl.

threatening red door, which vividly reminds us of the King. However there is an avenue of escape; through the grey background a winding road leads to the distant horizon. This is the scene created in the greatest physical depth, as can be seen in the set plan.¹²² In this outlet stands l'Infante, and it is she who will offer the final hope of escape to Inès.¹²³ Inès' rejection of this opportunity to save her life and that of her unborn child makes the final enclosed Tableau artistically necessary and thematically inevitable.

The disturbing intricacies of the baroque decor of this last scene¹²⁴ force upon the audience the vivid realization that the rational order of Ferrante faces impending destruction. Here the preponderant colour motif is black, and indeed most of the scene takes place in almost total darkness.

There is a corresponding and harmonious interplay in the colours and patterns of the costumes.¹²⁵ The emphasis in Inès' two costumes is elegance and flowing movement; one

122 - See Appendix F2.

123 - In their first and only meeting, l'Infante strives above all to convince Inès of the grave dangers she faces, and offers her the protection of her own kingdom.

'Ce n'est pas Don Pedro, c'est vous qui je veux sauver. Venez à Pampelune. Pampelune est comme la cour intérieure d'une citadelle, encaissée entre de hautes montagnes... La main du roi ne pourra vous atteindre, par-dessus ces montagnes. Venez à Pampelune, même si ma cour est pour vous sans attrait. La sensation d'être en sécurité donnerait du charme à n'importe quel lieu, et vous retrouverez votre âme avec votre sécurité .' (P.109, 1947 ed.)

124 - Oudot no doubt has in mind here the exuberant style of the Spanish baroque architects, the Churriguerras, who flourished in the late seventeenth century. He had probably seen some of the designs for the Court Theatre in this period, which often show the influence of these architects.

125 - The 'maquettes' for the scenic and costume designs are preserved in the archives of the private library of the Comédie-Française.

has pastel hues of blue and pink,¹²⁶ and the other of yellow, to soften the black and white contrast. Ferrante's costume is dark and oppressive, unrelieved by any pastel shading. The other main female protagonist, l'Infante, shows no hint of delicacy or refinement in her costume; the dominant colours are black and brown, and create an impression of power and authority. Finally the costumes of the pages are a flamboyant combination of all the main colour motifs to exemplify their youthfulness. Oudot's designs concentrate on the evocation of courtly grandeur without any self-indulgent exoticism. Obviously Roland Oudot does not seek to follow the examples of Craig's scenic designs, but adopts the luminous and exotic techniques he had learnt when working for the Ballets Russes, although Oudot's palette is more restrained than the vivid and fantastic images he had seen. His skill is substantially that of the pictorial artist rather than that of the theatrical designer. He is in the line of the artists, such as Picasso, called on by Diaghilev, and is above all a painter, as evinced in this tribute by Vaudoyer.

'M.Oudot.... est fidèle dans ses oeuvres à une double vérité: la vérité de la chose vue et la vérité de la chose rêvée. Il les concilie naturellement, involontairement comme les conciliaient Claude et Poussin, Watteau et Prud'hon, Corot et Renoir.'¹²⁷ The desire of the public for escapism is answered by the splendour of the décor and by the sense of historical displacement engendered by both costumes and décor¹²⁸; the artistic needs of the play are answered by a sparing but dramatically effective 'mise en scène'.

126 - This is the costume that Inès wears in the second Tableau, and demonstrates Oudot's success in harmonizing the costumes and the décor. The subdued warmth of the décor here is complimented by graceful elegance of the costume. It was one of the main precepts of the Ballets Russes that the same man should create both décor and costumes, in contrast to the traditional methods, when often the costumes were put together in a haphazard fashion from existing stores.

127 - 'Naissance de La Reine Morte', Comoedia (December 5th, 1942).

128 - The desire for escapist entertainment has been dealt with in Chapter 2.

The general critical reaction to *La Reine Morte* in 1942 was favourable, although two aspects of the play and its production were deprecated. Firstly the accusation was levelled at Montherlant that this was a purely literary rendering of certain introspective concerns. Jacques Berland, in Paris-Soir (December 14th, 1942), peremptorily dismisses the work by explicitly stating it was the product of 'introspection subjective', and that, apart from the quality of the first few speeches, it was merely 'un magnifique ouvrage littéraire', not a valid piece of theatre. Yvon Novy, in Aujourd'hui (December 10th, 1942), is less blatant in his criticisms; he maintains that the true theatrical activity is over by the end of the second Tableau and that from then on you hear recited 'un langage de romancier, très beau, très riche, lourd d'images'. The second criticism was that the actors were not of a quality to match the play itself. This criticism is typified in France-Socialiste of December 19th, 1942 (no author given).

'... les comédiens ne sont pas à la mesure de l'oeuvre elle-même.' However the dramatist himself was well satisfied with the actors involved. Of Jean Yannel Montherlant says: 'Yannel soutient toute la pièce, comme le maître-mat soutient toute la tente'; of Madeleine Renaud, 'l'expérience, l'intelligence et l'instinct obtenait cette sorte d'équilibre qu'on appelle la qualité'.¹²⁹ However there was an overall approbation of the play,¹³⁰ inspired fundamentally by the clarity and purity of

129 - 'La création de La Reine Morte', pp.249/250.

130 - As befitted the first major theatrical venture by a noted writer, the press was far more concerned with the play itself than with the qualities of the production. The décor did, nevertheless, inspire some considerable praise, notably from Alain Laubreaux in Le Petit Parisien (December 12th, 1942).

'.... le décor est magnifique, notamment celui du dernier acte...' and from Armory in Les Nouveaux Temps (December 15th, 1942).

'Les décors sont d'une somptueuse architecture. Les jeux des couleurs y ajoutent.'

the language,¹³¹ and by the manner in which its tragic elements were seen to be essentially French in origin.

'Henry de Montherlant revient aux plus hautes traditions de notre art: vérité humaine des caractères, l'éloquence d'un verbe où le lyrisme et l'émotion laissent peu de place à la rhétorique, l'action où l'intérieur commande à tout instant l'extérieur, et où la pensée détermine l'acte.'¹³² Some critics even saw in this play a reassertion of French autonomy. 'La Reine Morte est une victoire française. La première depuis longtemps.'¹³³ This 'produit maison'¹³⁴ was the first new play of genuine value to be produced on the stage of the Comédie-Française after the defeat of France in 1940. It was received with the joyful belief that it pledged the continuing greatness of French culture.

131 - Alain Laubreaux (op.cit.) recognized the work as a major achievement, especially with relation to the quality of the language. André Castelot in La Gerbe (December 17th, 1942) was lavish in his praise of the outstanding beauty of the language.

'... plaignons ceux que la violence et la beauté du chant de l'auteur, vrai Shakespeare français, laisseraient indifférents.'
Laubreaux also responded to the theme of 'grandeur'.
'... au cours de ces trois actes, un sentiment permanent de la grandeur...'

132 - Charles Merle, Aujourd'hui (December 19th, 1942).

133 - André Castelot, (loc.cit.), quoting Alphonse de Chateaubriant.

134 - This description of La Reine Morte as a 'produit maison' comes from a report on the celebrations to mark the 250th performance of the play. Apart from the various speeches, the most important event was the handing over of the original manuscript of the play to M. Gazagne, chief librarian of the Comédie-Française at the time, by Montherlant. ('Chronique', Les Cahiers Blancs (1954/55, no.10), p.22).

'La Comédie-Française se hausse à la hauteur de sa mission en présentant, dans les heures sombres que nous vivons, La Reine Morte. Elle honore la France, chose qui, de nos jours, ne lui arrive pas aussi souvent que nous le souhaiterions.'¹³⁵ This evaluation of the play was carried to extremes by the more patriotic members of the audience. Montherlant remembers how some young Resistance workers even saw in one sentence an explicit justification of terrorism, an attitude he sums up in this phrase: 'On tue et le ciel s'éclaircit.' Obviously Montherlant's love of probity and honour could not in fact consider subterfuge, of any kind. This is the particular sentence they seized upon: 'Ah! quand je vois ce peuple d'adorants hébétés, il m'arrive de trouver que le respect est un sentiment horrible.'¹³⁶

Montherlant would in fact realize later the possible contemporary implications which could be attributed to his work. He understood that perhaps, through force of circumstance, his play unwittingly achieved a particular relevance to war in Europe.

Actualité involontaire de La Reine Morte. L'ombre de la mort passe sans cesse sur cette oeuvre. Tous ses personnages vivent dans la peur. Ferrante attend sa mort et a toujours eu peur. Inès vit sous menace de la mort. Pedro est mis en prison. Exécutions, guerres nationales, guerre civile, et jusqu'à la famine, tout cela, qui est l'atmosphère de ce drame, est aussi l'atmosphère de l'Europe d'aujourd'hui. Ceux qui liront plus tard cette oeuvre devront se rappeler en quels moments dramatiques elle fut écrite et montée.¹³⁷

In an unpublished commentary to the public's reaction to the play,¹³⁸ Montherlant explicitly examines the contemporary issues which might easily find parallels in La Reine Morte.

135 - J. Silvain, L'Appel (December 17th, 1942).

136 - 'La création de La Reine Morte', Théâtre pp.251/252.

137 - Montherlant, Théâtre, p.1081.

138 - In the library of the Comédie-Française.

The play was often seen as an attack on the Vichy government, and certainly similarities between the political opportunism of Egas Coelho and that of Laval were seen by many; both were seen to push their respective leaders to political initiatives. There were even direct resemblances in terminology.

On appelait dans la pièce le roi Ferrante, 'notre chef et notre père', ce qui était le cliché par lequel (la presse) désignait le Maréchal Pétain.¹³⁹

Furthermore, the element of imprisonment contained within the play could only find an immediate response from an audience which lived in constant fear of sudden imprisonment.

Même dans l'histoire on n'imagine guère un grand homme qui ne se trouve à un moment devant un juge ou devant un géolier; cela fait parti du personnage. Et un d'entre eux qui n'ont pas passé par la prison, fait figure en quelque sorte de déserteur... 'Dans les prisons, etc.' car enfin, quand ces répliques étaient écrites et prononcées, c'était le temps où c'était les Allemands et les miliciens qui mettaient en prison les Français.

It would seem that in many ways the themes and the atmosphere of the play could be seen as not only the creation of Montherlant's artistic ethic, but also a creation directly, if unwittingly, influenced by events. The implicit parallels between the social and political situation of Occupied France and of Ferrante's court are too apparent to be merely fortuitous. When Montherlant states that:

Au vrai les événements ne m'ont jamais importé. Je ne les aimais que dans les rayons qu'ils faisaient en moi.¹⁴⁰

he provides some evidence that La Reine Morte must have been to some extent the result of his artistic reaction to the war and the Occupation.

139 - Both this quote and the following one are taken from the unpublished article mentioned above.

140 - Montherlant, Le Solstice de juin (Paris, 1942).

Montherlant's search for a permanent quality in his art has been realized in this play; it survived the specific period of the Occupation and has endured in the repertoire of the Comédie-Française with a new and notable 'mise en scène' in 1966. Such was the harmony between the text and the performance in 1942, that Dux's 'mise en scène' also outlasted the war, to be used even as late as 1962.¹⁴¹ The writer rejected and ignored the violent oppression of the Occupation and presented to the public a play that, in its elegance and tragic intensity consolidated their cultural heritage. Moreover, it allowed them to purge their most private emotions of fear and forget the humiliating inflictions they suffered daily. In terms of the history of the theatre, La Reine Morte and its 'mise en scène' have no singular innovatory relevance, yet the primarily verbal quality of the play itself has assured for it a distinct place in French dramatic literature. It is both uniquely Montherlant's creation, and patently French in origin.

Through historical circumstance, through the fusion of personal genius and the traditional classical ethic of French art, this play attained a cultural significance vital in the particular social conditions of the Occupation. In itself it is a 'symbol' of French culture, since it is an artistic embodiment of this particular ethic; yet the artistic quality of La Reine Morte is such that it transcends any limited identification with literary precedents, and achieves a personal identity which has allowed it to become a 'conditioning element' in French cultural evolution. Whether designedly or not, it had undisputed contemporary relevance, and, as I have argued above, must have owed some part of its final form to events. Thus, this play was able to present to the French indisputable proof of the continuing vitality of their culture. Mainly through the décor and the sense of historical and geographical displacement, it answered the need

141 - Pierre Dux was appointed 'administrateur général' of the Comédie-Française in August, 1970.

for escapism. Finally, the intensely tragic quality of the work, with its particular emphasis on subterfuge and betrayal, provided an especially relevant cathartic element for an audience suffering the impositions of alien occupation.

4) The Comédie-Française as a theatre:
Hamlet

Given the amount of diverse and often controversial scholarship on Hamlet, it is not my intention here to attempt a definitive interpretation of the text. However I do propose to elucidate why, in my opinion, this perhaps of all Shakespeare's plays was so uniquely suited to the conditions faced by the French in the Occupation. Though to some extent the choice of the play must have been governed by practical considerations,¹ nevertheless the thematic content, the particular atmosphere engendered by the 'mise en scène' and décor, and even the subject matter had an immediate relevance in 1942. Yet before examining the play in this specific context, we must first make an analysis of the development of the attitude of the French to Shakespeare from their first contact with his work. In this way we will be able to understand why, as Jean-Louis Barrault has stated,² the French need Shakespeare.

Hamlet has always been held in special affection by the French since the days of the Romantics, when the Prince was regarded as the incarnation of the Romantic hero, bewildered by the social, moral and political chaos of his world. Delacroix's thirty lithographs³ completed in 1843, which fascinated the Romantics, epitomized the imaged held of Hamlet. In the first half of the nineteenth century at the Comédie-Française, Mounet-Sully in a highly-charged performance⁴ fulfilled the basic ideals of the movement. Shakespeare had from the very beginning suffered radical metamorphoses in

1 - The 'mise en scène' by Granval and the décor and costumes by André Boll, were first seen in a production at the Comédie-Française in 1932. Thus the material elements for the 1942 production were already available and did not necessitate any great extra expenditure.

2 - Barrault, Jean-Louis, 'Why the French need Shakespeare'.

ont.) - in his anthology of dramatic criticism, These were Actors. Extracts from a Newspaper Cutting Book 1811-1833 (London: Hutchinson, n.d. [1942]) pp.30-33.

translation or adaptation into French. In 1770 Ducis⁵ produced a version of Hamlet, '(Tragédie) imitée de l'anglais',⁶ where all that could offend the accepted norms of classical tragedy was ruthlessly eliminated to leave a severely classical play more reminiscent of Racine's Phèdre than any of Shakespeare's work.⁷ The person who introduced Shakespeare to the French was Voltaire; yet even he, though able to praise the fecundity of the English poet's imagination, regretted that his creative genius was not tempered by a modicum of good taste:

... il avait un génie, plein de force et de fécondité, de naturel et de sublime, sans la moindre étincelle de bon goût et sans la moindre connaissance des règles.⁸

5 - Ducis, Hamlet (Paris 1770), but first performed by the Comédie-Française on September 3rd, 1769.

6 - Ducis had not even read the original Shakespeare and saw no reason to do so. He merely relied on the work of Mr. de la Place. In the 'Avertissement' Ducis plainly states his ignorance of the English language: 'Je n'entends point l'anglais et j'ai osé faire paraître Hamlet sur la scène française.'

7 - Some of the main protagonists in the Shakespeare original have disappeared, notably Horatio, Laertes, Fortinbras and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. To replace them were created Elvire, 'confidente de Gertrude', and Norceste, 'seigneur danois'. There is also the elision of certain scenes, such as the opening scene on the battlements and the gravedigger scene.

In order to realize one of the main precepts of Aristotle, namely that the 'raisons d'état' should be of paramount importance in the tragedy, Hamlet has been made the King and Claudius the 'premier Prince de sang'. Ducis' play opens with Claudius and Polonius plotting to take power.

The Ghost has of course been removed and the presence of Hamlet's father is represented by an urn.

'Oui, Seigneur, la voici cette urne redoutable
Qui contient d'un Héros la cendre déplorable.'
(Act IV, p.43).

8 - Voltaire, 'Lettre XVIII', Lettres Philosophiques (Paris, Larousse, 1964), p.104.

The gravediggers' scene which would be so dear to the Romantics was found to be a foolish dramatic blunder.⁹ Voltaire considered that Shakespeare was denied the ability to reach perfection because he had not been born in the age of Addison, when he could have assimilated to his genius the undoubted elegance and purity of the age.¹⁰ It is obvious then that initially the French found it difficult to accept Shakespeare; indeed the first tour of an English company playing Shakespeare in 1827 was greeted with riots. The Romantics may have accepted him completely, but they only appreciated those elements in his work relevant to their beliefs. He was a powerful weapon in their conflict with the Classicists.¹¹ It is apparent that the French mind finds it a complex and arduous task to assimilate the particular quality of Shakespeare's theatre, since the ethic of reason dominating passion can find little answer in this theatre which explores the recesses of the human spirit where reason penetrates only with difficulty.¹² Mme de Staël pointed out how Shakespeare,

- 9 - '... dans Hamlet, des fossoyeurs creusent une fosse en buvant, en chantant des vaudevilles, et en faisant sur les têtes des morts qu'ils rencontrent des plaisanteries convenables aux gens de leur métier.'

ibid. p.105. This is one of a list of 'sottises' committed by Shakespeare according to Voltaire.

- 10 - He regards Boileau and Racine as having reached perfection in art, and gives his dramatic ethic in his appreciation of them.

'Je regarde ces deux grands hommes comme les seuls qui aient eu un pinceau correct, qui aient toujours employé des couleurs vives et copié fidèlement la nature.'

Correspondance (University of Toronto Press, 1969), p.173.

- 11 - This is eminently apparent in Stendhal's Racine et Shakespeare (Paris), where after an elucidation of the qualities necessary for the realization of the perfect dramatic moment, Stendhal goes on to state:

'... je dis que ces courts moments d'illusion parfaite se trouvent plus souvent dans les tragédies de Shakespeare que dans les tragédies de Racine.' p.21.

- 12 - H. Peyre in Qu'est-ce que le classicisme? (Paris 1942) gives a lucid analysis of the reasons which render the English unable to appreciate or to produce truly classical literature. He concludes on this idea: 'Le classicisme plaît parce qu'il a de moins rigoureusement classique, et parce qu'il dissimule discrètement en lui d'éléments romantiques plus proprement anglais.' p.163.

even in his only play based on a Greek legend, Troilus and Cressida, did not in any way follow the Aristotelian ethic.¹³ However, there are powerful elements of the Oedipus and Orestes myths which search to the very roots of the French classical tradition;¹⁴ thus the interest manifested by such as Ducis finds an explanation.

In contemporary France Shakespeare is totally accepted, and Hamlet especially so (though obviously the difficulties mentioned above still exist). In 1932, when an exhibition of the play was mounted at the Comédie-Française, this statement by Anatole France was prominently displayed:

Nous vivons ensemble, Prince Hamlet, et vous êtes ce que nous sommes: un homme au milieu du mal universel.¹⁵

Jean-Louis Barrault goes further into this examination of the need for Shakespeare;¹⁶ he lists his three essential works, '... the Bible (our source), Racine (beauty), Shakespeare (life).'¹⁷ In order to make Shakespeare more acceptable in France, he must be 'de-nationalized', for example by the use of costumes of no particular period,¹⁸ and there must be an emphasis on the abstract and universal aspects in his plays. It is appreciated now that Shakespeare must not be regarded

13 - cf. Madame de Staël, 'Des tragédies de Shakespeare', in De la littérature (Paris, no date), pp.178-190.

14 - For a detailed analysis of this concept, see Ernest Jones, Hamlet and Oedipus (Gollancz, 1949).

15 - Quoted by Gaston Goldschild in 'Hamlet à la Comédie-Française', Journal de Théâtre (July 15th, 1932), p.9.

16 - Barrault, Jean-Louis, 'Why the French need Shakespeare'.

17 - *ibid.* p.102.

18 - *ibid.* p.109. This is a view held also by Granval and Boll, as we shall see below.

as the destructive antagonist of the classical ethic. His all-embracing and extravagant imagination, his concern with every level of humanity and avoidance of political militancy or bias, his unique poetry, all these elements can only serve to complement those found in Racine. There is room and a necessity for both in the French theatre;¹⁹ in 1942 and 1943 there would be a need to consecrate tradition with Phèdre, but also to maintain artistic diversity with Hamlet.

What question of more pointed relevance to the French in 1942 and 1943 could there be than this?

To be, or not to be, that is the question.
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them.²⁰

Humiliated by a disgracefully swift defeat, the French had individually to decide whether to act or to submit. The atmosphere of treachery and death fostered by the growth of a corrupt society, demands in the play a complete revaluation of the accepted social structure; it was a problem much akin to that faced by the French who had seen the failure of Léon Blum's socialist government just before the war²¹ and the total inadequacy of their new leaders²² to deal with the threat of

19 - Claudel in Conversation sur Racine (Paris, 1956), examines this duality:

'Shakespeare, c'est un spectacle qui se déroule, une histoire qu'on nous raconte. Nous ne sortons pas du fait, à nous de l'interpréter comme nous voudrions du domaine du fait divers. Racine c'est le domaine des causes, une présentation logique à l'intelligence.' p.23.

20 - Shakespeare, Hamlet (Cambridge, 1971), III i, 56-60.

21 - Léon Blum was the premier of the coalition government formed by the Left in 1936, the Popular Front. It was hoped that he would realize many essential social reforms. However Blum's government collapsed in June 1937, *although a number of reforms had been effected.*

22 - At the declaration of war on Germany in 1939, Daladier was at the head of the government. In 1940, just before the invasion of the Low Countries, he was succeeded by Paul Reynaud.

invasion. There was an obvious need for a vigorous new society to replace the old one. The dominant image in Hamlet is one of sickness and decay, which once it has attained the leader spreads its pervasive evil through the whole of the society. Rosencrantz explicitly examines this element of the cumulative destructive process initiated by the corruption of a King:

.... The cease of majesty
Dies not alone; but like a gulf doth draw
What's near with it. O, 'tis a massy wheel
Fixed on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortised and adjoined, which when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone
Did the King sigh, but with a general groan.²³

Nature, so often the emblem of regeneration and order in Shakespeare,²⁴ is here a symbol of gross degeneration. Hamlet employs this imagery to warn his mother of the dangers of corruption:

.... Confess yourself to Heaven,
Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,
And do not spread the compost on the weeds
To make them ranker....²⁵

23 - Hamlet, III iii 15-23.

24 - Time and Nature, symbolized by the growth of Perdita in the Shepherd's cottage, are the two main regenerative agents in The Winter's Tale (London, 1961). In Hamlet Ophelia's bestowal of flowers on the other protagonists (IV vi 179-188) presages her death, and she is garlanded with flowers and weeds in her suicide. Perdita distributes flowers as a mark of respect, and they herald the coming scenes of reconciliation and restoration:
'... Here's flowers for you:
Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram;
The marigold, that goes to bed wi' th'sun,
And with him rises weeping; these are flow'rs
Of middle summer, and I think they are given
To men of middle age. Y'are very welcome.
(IV iv 103-108).

25 - Hamlet, III iv 149-152.

This is an enclosed, self-sufficient, narcissistic society in the thrall of corruption, where the over-abundant revels of the court are in stark contrast to Hamlet's obsessive melancholy:

This heavy-headed revel east and west
Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations.
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition, and indeed it takes
From our achievements...²⁶

The evil must be exorcized for a new society to grow, and Hamlet is the agent, not the instigator, of this exorcism.²⁷ Yet he is more than an individual faced with a personal dilemma, and more than simply a Renaissance hero of doubt and lofty hesitation²⁸ for he is confronted ultimately with the tragic and insoluble mystery common to all mankind, that of Death.

From the very beginning the presence of the ghost emphasizes the importance of the powers of darkness in the play, and death will dominate the action throughout. And it is the reductive imagination of the First Clown which displays the vanity of all the glitter and intemperance of the court. The only truth even they can be certain of is death:

What is he that builds stronger than either the
mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter? ... 'a
grave-maker'. The houses he makes last till
doomsday.²⁹

26 - *ibid.* I iv 17-21.

27 - *ibid.* 'The time is out of joint, O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right.'
(I v 188-189)

28 - Barrault does however see Hamlet as the pure and chaste embodiment of the 'hero of lofty hesitation', *op.cit.* p.108. The fundamental duality of man's spirit as examined in Pope's *Essay on Man*, Ep.II (London, 1958) is perhaps nearer the root of this doubt.

'Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confused;
Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd;
Created half to rise, and half to fall.' (13-15)

29 - *Hamlet*, V i 40-60.

The spiritual decay of the court has already announced its physical death. A startlingly harsh yet comic incarnation of this immutable fate is Yorick's skull; the Fool here is dead³⁰ and the rest of the court too one day will be merely a butt for the jests of a gravedigger. However, parallel to this concern is a unique atmosphere of treachery and suspicion. Everything and everybody must be disbelieved, questioned, as hypocrisy is the rule. As Parolles³¹ was the mouthpiece of a court sophisticated to a Machiavellian level, so here Polonius is the epitome of a court where appearances hold sway, where sophistry replaces reason. To him words are more important than meanings:

Hamlet - Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

Polonius - By th'mass and 'tis, like a camel indeed.

Hamlet - Methinks it is like a weasel.

Polonius - It is backed like a weasel.

Hamlet - Or like a whale.

Polonius - Very like a whale.³²

Deception and duplicity are apparent in every spiritual and emotional sphere, and in every situation; we have the physical manifestation of deceit with Polonius hiding behind the arras to listen to Hamlet's words. Furthermore, Polonius is not prepared to trust his own son, Laertes, on his trip to England,

30 - This is ^{an} important dramatic device in this play, since normally in Shakespeare the Fool has a rôle which could be compared to that of the Chorus in Greek tragedy. In King Lear for example, he provides a bitter commentary on the action; Touchstone in As You Like It is not simply a buffoon but also provides a pitilessly lucid commentary on the extravagances of romance and the posturing of the court. In Hamlet the fact that the Fool is dead establishes definitively that death, not life, is dominant here.

31 - All's Well that Ends Well, (London, 1961), I i 117-125. 'Virginity being blown down, man will quicklier be blown up; marry, in blowing him down again, with the breach yourselves made, you lose your city. It is not politic in the commonwealth of nature to preserve virginity. Loss of virginity is rational increase; and there was never virgin got till virginity was first lost. That you were made of is metal to make virgins. Virginity by being once lost may be ten times found; by being ever kept, it is ever lost. 'Tis too cold a companion; away with't.'

32 - ibid. III ii 378-384.

but sends Reynaldo to spy on him.³³ So Hamlet moves in a world dominated by death,³⁴ and by treachery,³⁵ and as such must be assailed by uncertainty. To the French people at the mercy of instant and often unjustified betrayal to the occupying forces by collaborators, oppressed by threats of immediate and arbitrary death in manifold forms, this play had a vital significance, and the cathartic effect would be particularly apt. The rhythm of the play is dominated by the halting tempo of a powerful yet indecisive intellect, by a tortured doubt, which could only be felt as deeply relevant to the French. To come to terms with a court where 'seeming' is all important,³⁶ Hamlet finally assumes the mask of insanity, so that with the artifice of lunacy he can confront the artifice of life in this court where appearance and not meaning holds sway.

33 - Hamlet, II i 3-5.

'You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him, to make inquire
Of his behaviour.'

34 - Hamlet's link with death is emphasized throughout the play by his traditional costume of black.

35 - The dominating motif of treachery reaches its ultimate statement in the themes of fratricide (the murder of the King by Claudius) and of incest (a man sleeping with his brother's wife, even if his brother was dead, was considered in Shakespeare's time to be committing incest).

36 - Already in I ii 76-86, Hamlet explicitly states his attitude to the attitudinizing of the court:

'Seems, madam! nay it is, I know not 'seems'.
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected behaviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, modes, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly. These indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play,
But I have that within which passes show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.'

The physical aspect and Hamlet's abhorrence of it, are of prime importance in the play. In this confrontation between the contemplative and imaginative (only Hamlet can see the ghost) and the basely realistic (as witnessed by the already-mentioned corruption of the court), the flesh becomes a symbol of the world of malevolent action. And for Hamlet this physical corruption is violently imaged in the sexual relationship between Claudius and Gertrude;³⁷ he berates his mother for the rapidity with which she was willing to exchange the bed of her husband for the bed of his brother, and concludes on a virulent image of sexual infidelity.

Nay, but to live,
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed
Stewed in corruption, honeying, and making love
Over the nasty sty.³⁸

This leitmotif of physical decay, of disease, and its contraposition to fantasy comes to a climax in the scene with Yorick's skull.³⁹ Hamlet, faced by the brute reality of a skull defiled by lying in the earth, lets his imagination trace a bitter path through the conceivable historical metamorphoses of Alexander:

Hamlet - To what base uses we may return Horatio!
Why may not the imagination trace the
noble dust of Alexander, till a'find it
stopping a bung-hole?
Horatio - 'Twere to consider him too curiously, to
consider so.
Hamlet - No, faith, not a jot, but to follow him
thither with modesty enough, and likelihood
to lead it; as thus - Alexander died,
Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to
dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make
loam, and why of that loam whereto he was
converted might they not stop a beer-barrel?⁴⁰

37 - Note: this is a theme which will be emphasized both in the 'mise en scène' and in the décor.

38 - Hamlet, III iv 91-94.

39 - *ibid.* V i.

40 - Hamlet, V i 196-206.

The whole movement of the play originates from and is dominated by an act that took place before the opening of the play itself⁴¹ and the moment of absolution will occur only once this original sin is expiated by an equally violent act of retributive⁴², if suicidal, justice.

The fundamental pertinence of this play to the French in 1942 and 1943, is now apparent. The dominant motif of physical and spiritual decay with the consequent decomposition of the traditional social system into self-destructive chaos; the emphatic leitmotif of doubt, of the debate between action and reflection; the lucid and pitiless concentration on the essential form of death, in a particularly heightened atmosphere of treachery and intrigue - all these factors were applicable to this tragic time for the French. That the French felt a strong sympathy for this play during the Occupation, we shall see proved by the attendance figures as recorded in the 'registres' for 1942 and 1943.

Obviously in the performance of a foreign work of art, the choice of translation is all-important. The translation used in the 1932 production,⁴³ that of Eugène Morand and Marcel Schwob, was a generally excellent, if occasionally prosaic, one, although in 1942 a different one was used. The original translation, and in effect the one used by Sarah Bernhardt in her controversial interpretation of Hamlet in 1899, was by Eugène Morand and Marcel Schwob. However to the occupying forces

41 - The act of fratricide.

42 - Claudius unwittingly condemns himself to a violent end in an explicit reference to this concept of 'lex talionis':

'... Diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved
Or not at all.'

(IV iii 9-11.)

This aspect is also emphasized in the 'mise en scène' by the use of the décor. See below.

43 - The same 'mise en scène' was used in 1932 and 1942.

the Jewish ancestry of the latter was unacceptable,⁴⁴ and this was an obvious reason for the change. The translation chosen in 1942 was by a Swiss writer, Guy de Pourtalès, and had already been made use of by Pitoëff in his performance of Hamlet in Geneva in 1920.⁴⁵ Apart from the obligations imposed by circumstances, another cause of this change was that the original creator of the 'mise en scène', Charles Gribouval 'dit' Granval,⁴⁶ died during the 1942-1943 season, and the direction of the production was entrusted to Jean-Louis Barrault. His evident preference for a more literary translation than that of Morand and Schwob would become even clearer in 1946 when he asked André Gide to write one for him. However, before we examine the translation by Guy de Pourtalès and its differences from that of Eugène Morand and Marcel Schwob, it is necessary first to analyze Pourtalès' attitude to art and literature in general, and to Shakespeare in particular.

Above all in his artistic concerns Pourtalès was influenced by the splendours of Romantic Europe and a desire to impart an appreciation of this period to his contemporaries engendered his particular vocation for the writing of the biographies of the great Romantic composers, Liszt, Chopin and Wagner.⁴⁷ His reactions were always expressed in an essentially literary manner, and this factor would be pertinent in his translation of Hamlet. As we shall see, the emphasis would be on a refined poetic quality, and there would also be an obvious lack of awareness of the basic qualities necessary for the successful realization of dramatic art. It was a translation to be read rather than heard. Guy de Pourtalès had certain reservations about the play; the final cataclysmic scene of destruction and carnage was to him merely an unsatisfactory

44 - For corroboration of this point see Jean Valmy-Basse, Naissance et vie de la Comédie-Française (Paris, 1945), p.464.

'... on déclarait indésirable la traduction d'Hamlet par Eugène Morand et Marcel Schwob, en raison de ce dernier nom!'

45 - The translation was actually published in 1923.

46 - It is a tradition at the Comédie-Française to give a new artist a cognomen.

47 - Apart from these biographies, Pourtalès wrote mainly novels centered on his birthplace, Geneva, such as Marins d'eau douce, and La Pêche miraculeuse.

device allowing Shakespeare to extricate himself from a tricky dramatic situation.⁴⁸ He considered the main purpose of the play to be the delineation of the attempt to control the intangible, the vital relationship between the finite and the infinite by thought process:

Shakespeare nous fait toucher dès son début le fond même du drame, ses origines, qui ne sont autre que le besoin de connaître (dans la réflexion) puis de contrôler (par les faits), enfin d'exprimer (parole ou geste), afin de laisser le moins possible à l'obscurité.⁴⁹

He believed that here, as in all his plays, Shakespeare was concerned with the spiritual debate within man.⁵⁰ Thus the poetic style demanded was one of an elegance and restraint, with little emphasis on the physical or the sensual.

I intend here to analyze Pourtalès' translation, not only in relation to the English text, but also in contrast to the 1932 translation of Morand and Schwob.⁵¹ We shall see how, despite the intrinsic quality of some of his verse, Pourtalès' work is nevertheless an unhappy union of Classical refinement (imposed by the intellectual emphasis he placed on

48 - Pourtalès, Guy de, 'Postface à une traduction nouvelle de Hamlet', De Hamlet à Swann (Paris 1924), pp.47-50.
(p.48)

'(Shakespeare) ne trouve d'autre ressource pour résoudre son problème que la mort de ses personnages.'

49 - *ibid.*, p.51.

50 - *ibid.*, p.49.

'Avec le 'que sais-je' de Montaigne (précisément de même date), il est le premier doute moderne quant à la valeur du bien et du mal, du concerté et du fatal, du pratique et de l'art.'

51 - I shall also make a comparison with a more recent translation by Yves Bonnefoy, which on many points was a more valid work.

the play) and of Romantic excess.⁵² One of the speeches which, because of its elemental violence, has always been a problem for translation into French is that of Hamlet in Act I:

O, that this too too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God, God,
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely....⁵³

As mentioned above,⁵⁴ Nature in this play has become a symbol of decay and corruption. In translation the results have varied from the absurd and fanciful,

Oh, si mes chairs pouvaient pantelantes d'horreur
Se dissoudre en poussière ou se fondre en vapeur,⁵⁵

to the banal and almost crude,

Oh, que cette trop, trop solide chair pût fondre,
se vaporiser et se résoudre en rosée.⁵⁶

Pourtales sought to solve the problem of eliminating the feeling of rankness, by adorning Hamlet's meditation on the banality and corruption of the world with a refined alliterative language:

52 - See page 89.

53 - Hamlet, I ii 129-137.

54 - See pp. 77-78

55 - Cayrou, Chefs-d'oeuvres de Shakespeare (Paris, 1876), 1, Hamlet, I ii, p.130.

56 - Rosny, J.H., Oeuvres de Shakespeare (Paris, 1909), Hamlet, I ii, p.14.

Oh! que cette trop, trop solide chair voulût se fondre, se dissoudre, se résoudre en rosée! Oh! que l'Eternel n'eût pas dressé sa loi contre le suicide! O Dieu! O Dieu! que lassantes, rances, plates et vaines m'apparaissent toutes les habitudes de ce monde! Fi de lui! Oh! Fi! C'est un jardin non sarclé où l'ivraie pousse à graine; seules les choses basses et grossières le possèdent tout à fait.⁵⁷

The soft rhythm and pleasant alliteration of 'se fondre, se dissoudre, se résoudre en rosée!' diverts attention from Shakespeare's concentration on the essential concept of man returning to his pristine elemental form. So too, 'basses' is an inadequate equivalent to the more pungent English word, 'rank'; the expression 'self-slaughter' with the emphasis on 'self' is weakened in the French to 'suicide'. These faults, which could be attributed to a strict classical heritage, do not, however, stand alone. The word 'Fi!', unacceptable in French and thus inimical to any French actor, testifies to a liking of Romantic extravagance. Yves Bonnefoy produced a more severely classical version, but one which had at least the merit of consistency.

C'est un jardin
D'herbes folles montées en graine, et que d'affreuses choses
Envahissent et couvrent....⁵⁸

Pourtalès failed to realize either the Classical or the Romantic ethic. Nevertheless, he was certainly able to provide an artistic parallel to Shakespeare in some sections of his

57 - Pourtalès, Guy de, Hamlet, (Paris 1923), p.15.
Clearly Pourtalès was using an English version where 'sullied' had been replaced by 'solid'.

58 - Bonnefoy, Yves, Hamlet et Jules César (Paris 1959), p.12.

translation; the absurdly pedantic word-play of Polonius in:

...the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause:⁵⁹

is extremely well evoked in the rhythm and diction of the French:

...la cause de ce méfait, car cet effet est
le méfait d'une cause.⁶⁰

Yet the over-riding impression created by this translation is of an unnecessary elegance with intermittent lapses into over-robust verse. The primary image of pervasive corruption in:

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven,
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
A brother's murder! Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will,
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect? What if this curséd hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow?⁶¹

is negated by the restrained diction and rhythm of:

Oh! L'odeur forte de mon crime monte jusqu'au ciel!
Il porte l'antique, l'originelle malédiction: le
meurtre d'un frère! Prier, je ne peux pas, bien que
mon désir ait l'aigu du vouloir. Ma faute plus forte
triomphe de ma forte intention; et, comme un homme
obligé à deux tâches, je m'arrête, ne sachant pas
par laquelle commencer, et les néglige toutes deux.
Eh! Quand cette main maudite serait plus recouverte
du sang d'un frère que sa propre chair, n'y aurait-il
pas assez de pluie dans les deux cieux pour la
laver blanche comme la neige.⁶²

59 - Hamlet, II ii 101-103.

60 - Pourtalès, p.47.

61 - Hamlet, III iii 36-46.

62 - Pourtalès, pp.93-94.

Yet Morand and Schwob were able to render the sense of violent decay, but at the expense of poetic beauty and quality:

O quelle puanteur exhale ma faute! Son relent va jusqu'au ciel! Elle porte l'antique malédiction originelle, le meurtre d'un frère! Prier? Je ne peux pas, quoique mon désir ait l'acuité du vouloir: ma trop forte honte défait ma forte intention; et comme un homme obligé à une double affaire, je m'arrête, incertain par laquelle d'abord commencer, et je les néglige toutes deux. Quoi! Si cette maudite main portait toute son épaisseur du sang d'un frère, n'y a-t-il pas assez de pluie dans le doux ciel pour la laver blanche comme neige?⁶³

However, as we shall see, the power of the version by Morand and Schwob was more relevant to the 'mise en scène' by Charles Granval than the poetically elegant one by Pourtalès.

In 1942 Jean Cocteau compared Barrault's⁶⁴ Hamlet in this production to 'le petit Hamlet noir et animal' of Eugène Delacroix.⁶⁵ This statement was perhaps valid in terms of the 'mise en scène', but was certainly not in terms of the translation. The quality of the poetry alone, as we have seen, would render this statement equivocal; yet this point is made even more emphatically apparent by a comparison between Delacroix's series of lithographs and the illustrations of Ralph Druot for this edition of Pourtalès' translation. The oppressive tension and dramatic sweep of the lithographs find no echo in Druot's work, which recalls the work of 'le Douanier' Rousseau in its strange mixture of the naïvely lyrical and the

63 - Morand, Eugène, et Schwob, Marcel, Hamlet (Paris 1910), p.154.

64 - Jean Cocteau in Comoedia, (April 4th, 1942), 'Le véritable triomphe de Monsieur Jean-Louis Barrault restera donc d'avoir fait entendre le drame en ne le masquant plus, par une présence orageuse et d'avoir soulevé l'enthousiasme en substituant à l'Hamlet cariatide (l'Hamlet qui semble soutenir l'édifice) le petit Hamlet noir et animal de Eugène Delacroix.

65 - See Appendix.

starkly realistic. The woodcuts are extremely precise, of necessity since the medium requires great accuracy, and the gestures of the figures portrayed are highly stylized in the Romantic fashion, but without the vigour⁶⁶ of Delacroix. The illustration for the suicide of Ophelia in Act IV⁶⁶ represents a beneficent Nature in a lyrical setting which has no relevance to the intolerable reality of the action taking place. Without prior knowledge of the play, we could not possibly guess from this illustration what tragic event is occurring. The illustration to Act II⁶⁷ has the protagonists caught in gestures as Romantic in their stylization as Delacroix's; yet the formal and almost geometric quality of the room, the stiffness of the figures lends a peculiarly transfixed and motionless aspect to the picture. This unhappy alliance of Romantic emphasis and classical precision is the pictorial equivalent of Pourtalès' poetry.

The reactions of the critics to this translation in 1942 was ambivalent. They admired its obvious literary quality, yet could not but deplore the patent lack of awareness of theatrical exigencies:

La tragédie de Guy de Pourtalès, bien qu'entièrement en prose, est une traduction de poète.....⁶⁸

La traduction de Guy de Pourtalès est faite avec beaucoup de conscience, un respect déférent du texte originel, un souci littéraire évident. Ecrivain de race, Guy de Pourtalès n'a jamais abordé la scène. Dans la circonstance, il ne s'est pas soucié de l'optique théâtrale. L'audition amène à penser que sa traduction est peut-être mieux faite pour la lecture que pour la représentation.⁶⁹

66 - See Appendix, C1.

67 - See Appendix, C3.

68 - Rostand, Maurice, Paris-Midi (March 19th, 1942).

69 - Ricou, Georges, La France socialiste (March 23rd, 1942).

Obviously this could only have a detrimental effect on the final production itself, since both in intention and style the translation and the 'mise en scène' were at variance.

Charles Gribouval 'dit' Granval, before this particular one, had a long history of revolutionary⁷⁰ 'mises en scène'. To some extent he was considered to be one of the leading elements⁷¹ in the liberation of the Comédie-Française from the strictures of theatrical tradition. It was during the third centenary of Molière's baptism in 1922, that Granval created his remarkable production of Les Fourberies de Scapin.⁷² In an interview with Léopold-Lacour, Granval discussed his aims and achievements both in this work and in his later productions.⁷³ Above all, he was an artist with a conclusive belief in the imagination and particularly sensitive to the use and effect of colour,

J'ai cherché des effets de couleurs vives, de chaude lumière méditerranéenne.⁷⁴

He demonstrated a certain irreverence towards the hallowed symbols of Molière's theatre, and was frequently accused of sacrilege.⁷⁵ Though he attached great importance to the décor and costumes, his determinative ethic was of a total synthesis of all the elements of the 'mise en scène', be they visual or verbal:

70 - I do not attach any political or subversive implications to the meaning of 'revolutionary' here, but interpret it strictly to mean a strong movement against the accepted norms.

71 - See P. Blanchart, Histoire de la mise en scène (Paris, 1948), p.120.
'(Granval était) hors^m de tout esprit de système, avec un style étonn^mement souple, (ses créations) affirmèrent la maîtrise de celui que la Comédie-Française doit honorer comme le précurseur de son grand mouvement d'émancipation.'

72 - Still in use in 1946.

73 - Léopold-Lacour, 'La mise en scène en France', (série) VIII, Comoedia (August 12th, 1929).

74 - 'La Mise en Scène en France'.

75 - *ibid.*, with reference to his 'mise en scène' for On ne badine pas avec l'amour, Léopold-Lacour states 'Certains l'ont traité de sacrilège.'

L'accord intime qui doit exister entre l'oeuvre, le décor et le comédien, ne se limite pas à ces trois éléments. Il doit également régner sur le costume, car le vêtement doit apporter lui aussi sa part d'interprétation... Le décor et le costume jouent avec l'acteur et prennent part au drame. La relation des costumes avec les décors doit être complète, permanente et linéaire, autant que colorée, mêler avec lui ses tonalités, joindre ses lignes aux siennes En résumé; costumes, décors et attitudes doivent donner l'essentiel seul des formes; mais une synthèse où tous les détails se concentrent vivants. 76

Despite his great and avowed admiration for Bakst, due mainly to a similarity in artistic concept,⁷⁷ he nevertheless found that Bakst's concentration on a luxurious and compelling visual aspect destroyed the artistic balance vital to a theatre.⁷⁸ Once this intrinsic harmony is upset, a production degenerates into anarchy. This successful realization of harmony is the result of a conscious choice, of intelligent discernment.

La préparation de cette unité est faite de discernement.⁷⁹

Enfin trois mots résument toute ma pensée: unité, économie, choix.⁸⁰

Throughout his creative activity the 'metteur en scène' must use his sensitivity and intelligence; in 1929 Granval was the critical and openly antagonistic opponent of the contemporary theatrical fashion - the logical result of the movement

76 - Granval, Charles, 'D'Antoine à Bakst', in Bravo (November 29th, 1929).

77 - ibid., quotes Bakst:

'Je le conçois pour le décor, comme un tableau dont les personnages ne sont pas encore peints et non un paysage ou architecture.'

78 - 'D'Antoine à Bakst':

'Malgré ses dons d'artiste, Bakst était trop riche.'

79 - ibid.

80 - Léopold-Lacour, 'La Mise en scène en France'.

begun by Antoine in 1899 in his Théâtre Libre. The minutely realistic reconstruction of human life and of the material environment that conditions it was for Granval the death knell for the theatre:

Des projets d'avenir
 Le théâtre n'a pas d'avenir
 Le théâtre agonise, le théâtre va mourir,
 Le théâtre réaliste a tué le théâtre,
 Le THEATRE N'EST PAS LA VIE, pas plus que la peinture
 n'est la photo en couleurs
 Le réalisme, art facile des gens à courte vue, a tué
 le théâtre
 Laissez-moi porter mes regards et ma vie d'artiste....
 ailleurs.⁸¹

There is no doubt that he exerted an important influence on his contemporaries, and not least on Jean-Louis Barrault, who named him, along with Dullin and Artaud, as one of the people who had most inspired him.⁸² Yet all Granval's revolutionary idealism was tempered by the discretion born of a deeply cultured and discerning intellect. He did not exhibit the same sense of a relentless quest bordering on the fanatical, which animated Artaud, but allowed his ethic to be governed by a sensitive appreciation of artistic refinement. He was, to quote Barrault, 'un artiste à l'état pur'⁸³. Also,

81 - This is a direct quote cited from a letter written by Granval to André Boll, and which Roger Dardenne includes in his article on 'La Décoration théâtrale' in Le Figaro (June 28th, 1929).

82 - See Jean-Louis Barrault, Réflexions sur le théâtre (Paris 1949), pp.84-89.
 Dullin is 'LA TERRE - la naissance, le corps, la pureté, le pionnier', Artaud 'LE SOLEIL - l'épreuve du feu, l'Esprit, la vérité, le prophète', and Granval 'LA LUNE - le sentiment et l'âme, la vertu, l'artiste'. p.84.

83 - Réflexions sur le théâtre, p.89.

unlike Artaud,⁸⁴ he recognized the importance of the spoken word. He believed that the 'mise en scène' should serve the text, and not use it as a pretext for the creation of an innovatory, but irrelevant, 'mise en scène'.

When Charles Granval composed the 'mise en scène' for Hamlet in 1932, his avowed intention⁸⁵ was to formulate a work in contradiction with the theatrical precepts established by the extravagances of the Romantic tradition. Action and accessories were to be restricted to the limits imposed by the essential needs of the play. As mentioned above,⁸⁶ Hamlet had often undergone a radical metamorphosis in adaptation into French. Dumas in 1847 transformed the play into an archetypal Romantic adventure. Together with Paul Meurice, he prepared a translation which was first heard on the stage of the Théâtre Historique in 1847, and was used again by the Comédie-Française in 1886. In 1904, with Mounet-Sully as Hamlet, and Jean Sylvain as Claudius, the production, using this translation on the stage of the Comédie-Française, was perhaps the definitive Romantic version. The success was described by Henri de Lapommeraye:

... Il est la représentation vivante de l'Hamlet d'Eugène Delacroix, avec quelque chose de plus puissant encore.

M.Mounet-Sully est bien l'artiste romantique qu'il fallait pour cette oeuvre romantique.⁸⁷

84 - See Artaud, 'Lettres sur le langage', in Le Théâtre et son double (Paris, 1964), pp.159-184.

'Voici ce qui va en réalité se passer. Il ne s'agit de rien moins que de changer le point de départ de la création artistique, et de bouleverser les lois habituelles du théâtre. Il s'agit de substituer au langage articulé un langage différent de nature, dont les possibilités expressives équivaldront au langage des mots, mais dont la source sera prise à un point encore plus enfoui et plus reculé de la pensée.' p.167.

85 - This was explained to me by André Boll during an interview I had with him on March 15th, 1973.

86 - See pp.73-75.

87 - This commentary by Henri de Lapommeraye is contained in the 'mise en scène' of Hamlet, in the translation of Dumas and Meurice, which is to be found in the Library of the Association des Régisseurs de Théâtre in Paris.

Mallarmé also saw in Mounet-Sully's performance the realization of the aesthetic principles exemplified by the Romantic movement.⁸⁸ The emphasis throughout is on the conflict between hesitation and doubt, symbolized by Hamlet, and physical action, symbolized by Fortinbras. This tension is given a material image through violent physical gesture.⁸⁹ It is important that we should have this particular interpretation in mind when we come to consider Jean Jacquot's claim that Granval's 'mise en scène' owes an enormous debt to this Romantic tradition.

Unfortunately, the only 'mise en scène' still extant is the one copied out by the 'régisseur-souffleur', Dupuy, for the production in 1934. Although I obviously cannot vouch for the complete accuracy of Dupuy's work, it remains nevertheless extremely doubtful that, given his particular talents and functions in the Comédie-Française, he would have indulged in any but the most minor alterations. This point is reinforced by the fact that the performers were in the main the same in both productions. However, I feel that it is necessary, before I begin my analysis of this 'mise en scène', to note some discrepancies between the work I have studied and the notes quoted by Jean Jacquot.⁹⁰

The version which he actually studied, the 1932 one at the Association de Régisseurs de Théâtre, has been lost. He does claim in his bibliography that a parallel version exists in the private collection of the Comédie-Française. Yet the only one the 'bibliothécaire' could find for me is the one of

88 - Mallarmé, 'Hamlet', in Oeuvres Complètes (Paris 1945), p.302.

89 - For a detailed examination of the Romantic Hamlet, see Jean Jacquot, 'Mourir! Dormir!... Rêver peut-être!', Revue d'Histoire du théâtre, 16, no.4 (1964), pp.407-443.

90 - Jacquot, Jean, Shakespeare en France (Paris 1964).

Dupuy, which contains the variants noted below.⁹¹ Although I clearly cannot disagree with Jean Jacquot's conclusions, since they are based on a manuscript I have not had access to, nevertheless I feel that the Dupuy manuscript concurs more closely with the artistic ethic of Granval and with his intentions for this particular production. The discrepancies may perhaps find some explanation in the fact that the manuscript studied by Jacquot was the original 'mise en scène écrite', that is the detailed account of Granval's initial conception, and the version I studied was the 'livre de régie', that is the director's notebook. It is likely that Granval felt obliged to alter those aspects which appeared to be directly influenced by the Romantic heritage, and which are the main elements of discrepancy, once he saw the performance on stage.

- 91 - Jacquot's account of the various elements in the production which he feels most betray a Romantic influence, are either absent in the Dupuy version, for example the storm, or are included in a more restrained fashion, for example the use of projectors and coloured light during Hamlet's interview with the Ghost. I include here two vital examples which will, in the course of my analysis of the 'mise en scène', demonstrate a great discrepancy in intent and content:

'Quand il (the Ghost) disparaît avec l'aurore, un rayon rouge tombe sur le groupe que forment Hamlet et les témoins de cette rencontre, à qui le Prince demande de prêter serment. Enfin, chaque fois que le spectre dit 'Jurez' d'une voix sous-terraine, une flamme jaillit du sol. Un orage savamment orchestré unit la fin de la scène 2 de l'acte III, où le roi démasqué interrompt la représentation, la scène 3 où Hamlet renonce à tuer le roi en prière, et la violente scène 4 où son entrevue avec sa mère est ponctuée d'effroyables coups de tonnerre.' p.93.

The second example taken from Jacquot, comes from the end of the Player Scene:

'Hamlet... se précipite comme un fou vers le roi, l'attrape par le bras droit et court avec lui en le regardant fixement, jusqu'à l'extrémité de l'avant-scène en criant: 'Qu'est-ce qu'il arrive au roi? Protégez le roi.' p.93.

Hamlet's lines quoted here do not appear in the original Shakespeare text.

The 'mise en scène',⁹² in harmony with the décor, is austere and admits of no extraneous concerns - an intention apparent also in the cuts.⁹³ The predominant theme is a concentration on the relationship between Gertrude, Claudius, and Hamlet, and, by extension, on the fate of the court and the society they represent. Very little of the sub-plot involving Fortinbras is maintained; both the complete account by Voltimand and Cornelius of the events concerning Norway in Act II, ii, and the discussion between Marcellus and Horatio of the preparations for war in Act I, i, are elided. Much of the interplay between Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is cut, as is the whole of Act IV, vi, dealing with Hamlet's letter to Horatio recounting his experiences on the way to England. The rôle of Laertes has little significance, since most of his speeches in the play are reduced to the minimum.

There are only minor variations in the cuts between the 1934 and the 1942 versions.⁹⁴ These lines of Ophelia in Act IV, v, are cut only on the 1942 version :

Parsemé de douces fleurs
Fleurs humides mises en terre
Sous averses d'amour en pleur.⁹⁵

These lines of Claudius in Act IV, vii, are cut only in the 1934 version:

Il faut le suivre Gertrude. Ah! que j'ai eu à
faire pour calmer sa rage! J'ai peur que ceci ne
l'excite à nouveau. Viens donc, il faut le suivre.⁹⁶

Clearly, these kinds of variations do little to alter the thematic emphasis intended by the 'metteur en scène'. It would thus seem evident that there was no intention to change the particular

92 - Unless otherwise stated, the 'mise en scène' will refer to Dupuy's.

93 - See below.

94 - Although there is no version of the 'livre de régie' for the 1942 production available, I was able to find an edition of Pourtalès' translation containing the cuts for this production.

95 - 1934 'mise en scène', 11.37-39.

96 - 1934 'mise en scène', 11.37-39.

aspects of the play emphasized in Granval's original conception. This clearly implies that the 'mises en scène' are essentially the same, although, as we have seen, he may have considered it necessary to restructure certain scenes which were not in complete harmony with his original conception. This assumption is reinforced for the production of 1942, since, due to Granval's illness and subsequent death in 1943, Barrault had to assume the task of the director, and would obviously not have tampered to any great extent with the work of an 'homme de théâtre' he so respected.

The effect of paring to a minimum the scenes that do not have a direct link with the study of the relationships mentioned above, is to concentrate with great intensity the attention on the overwhelmingly claustrophobic quality of these relationships, a theme powerfully emphasized by the oppressive and enclosed décor. Any hint of external influence, whether it be the threat of Fortinbras, or the trip of Hamlet to England, which might allow the audience some respite from this enclosed atmosphere, is virtually eliminated. The only scene exterior to the court, the burial scene, paradoxically carries little hint of the outside world. The décor for this scene is solid, massive and oppressive.⁹⁷ The predominant visual image used by Granval to reinforce this concentration on the relationships is to place the thrones of Claudius and Gertrude in a central position, so that all the action revolves around them and between them.⁹⁸ The thrones remain together centre stage until the last scene. As Claudius reaches the ascendancy in his relationship with the Queen, he assumes the upper throne. If we study the 'maquette' for Act III, i and ii, we notice that one throne is set higher than the other, and is more obviously a throne. In Act I, tableau 2,⁹⁹ it is the Queen who presides; in the rest of the play it is Claudius. This is a deliberate visual symbol of the reason for his crime, the desire for power.

97 - The original 'maquettes' for the décor are contained in the Appendix, and are labelled according to their relevance to the 'mise en scène'.

98 - See 'maquettes'.

99 - This reference is to the divisions into separate tableaux made by Granval in his 'mise en scène'. A microfilm of the 'mise en scène' can be found in Southampton University Library.

Hamlet's desire to intercede and destroy the bond between his mother and his uncle is symbolized by his standing between the thrones on several occasions. As the Queen and Claudius hold hands, Hamlet stands between and behind them.

Le Roi tend la main à la Reine, qui lui donne la sienne. Hamlet regarde les mains unies.¹⁰⁰

In the Player scene, as the tension reaches its climax, Hamlet approaches the thrones, to confront the two lovers, and again he places himself between them, but this time in front.

Hamlet se lève et bondit au praticable où sont les trônes. Il s'assied sur le praticable entre les deux fauteuils.¹⁰¹

The final visual symbol of this bond, and its imminent destruction in the last scene, is the removal of the two thrones from their central position.¹⁰² Now they are placed at the lowest level at the front of the stage, and at its furthest limits to the right and left. Originally the thrones were together as the lovers felt secure in their relationship, and placed centrally on the highest platform, as they felt certain of their power. In this scene they lose that power and their relationship is destroyed. Their fate is enacted above them as Hamlet and Laertes duel on p¹⁰³ above them. Initially, in the preceding scenes, Claudius and Gertrude block the exit to the outside world; removed from this central position, they cannot prevent the intrusion of the outside world in the form of Fortinbras. The last time the complete court was assembled, to witness the performance of the Players, the setting was one of complacent certainty. In the middle, on the raised platform,

100 - 'Mise en scène relevée par Dupuy', p.21, Hamlet (Cambridge 1971), pp.14-15.

101 - See set layout in 'mise en scène' for Act V, tableau xvi.

102 - 'Mise en scène relevée par Dupuy', p.113, Hamlet (Cambridge 1971), p.71.

103 - Copies of some set designs from the 'mise en scène' are included in the Appendix, and labelled Illustrations 1 - 6. This is no.6.

preside the Queen and Claudius, the court radiated around and from them.¹⁰⁴ This tableau is the last scene where the court assumes the form desired by the King and Gertrude. The extreme contrast with the setting of the last scene, gives us immediate visual evidence of the impending disintegration of the new order.

As stated above, the 'mise en scène' is austere, and the accessories are reduced to a minimum. However, those that are used assume an importance beyond their mere physical presence. The thrones ('fauteuils') become the physical embodiment of the King and Queen to Hamlet. In their absence, he relates directly to these artefacts, and with them acts out his preoccupations:

- (a) Hamlet monte les marches D et va au fauteuil 2 avec lequel il jouera quand il parle à son père. Même jeu avec le fauteuil de sa mère.¹⁰⁵
- (b) Il bondit jusqu'au siège 1 en tirant son poignard et en le brandissant. Un temps. Il réfléchit, remet le poignard à sa ceinture.¹⁰⁶

They come to represent to Hamlet the corruption of the court and the act of fratricide which motivates the action.

The bed in the Queen's room exemplifies another theme emphasized in this production, the underlying current of sexual infidelity. The bed is predominantly red in colour and, in the colour scheme adopted in the rest of the set, becomes the immediate visual focal point.¹⁰⁷ Finally, the curtains are not merely decoration, but also assume an important symbolic function. They are the material image of the deceit and hypocrisy which dominate the court.¹⁰⁸ A unity of theme and purpose is thus strongly established between the protagonists and the physical environment in which they enact the tragedy.

104 - Illustration 2.

105 - Dupuy, p.20, Cambridge, pp.13-14.

106 - Dupuy, p.89, Cambridge, pp.56-57.

107 - See 'maquette' for Act III, tableau 4.

108 - See below for a more detailed examination of this theme.

The deliberate emphasis on the material side of the décor is a direct result of the main thematic influence in the action, the acts of fratricide and incest which, though unseen, dominate the production. The calm regality of the royal couple and the court retinue, with its strict observance of formal etiquette, seem to belie this second aspect.¹⁰⁹ Yet, wilfully and spontaneously, Hamlet reacts to this hypocrisy by his violent and overemphatic physical gestures. He strikes the first discordant note in the otherwise seemingly composed atmosphere:

La Reine a un geste de la main pour caresser la joue d'Hamlet. Celui-ci lui prend violemment le bras, la regarde, se calme, lui prend la main et la baise. Il ne parle qu'après.¹¹⁰

Yet physical warmth is not entirely absent, since Hamlet's greeting of Horatio in the same scene demonstrates an instinctive physical approach.

Hamlet se tourne vers Horatio qui lui prend la main et s'incline profondément. Quand il se redresse, Hamlet l'attire à lui et l'embrasse.¹¹¹

A third element of this motif is Hamlet's deliberately ironic use of physical action. In separate scenes, Hamlet embraces the King, his mother, and Polonius, and in each case this follows a violent physical action; thus, the embrace is a designedly ironic gesture.¹¹²

Hamlet feels repulsion for the physical contact between his parents, and this feeling, already noted above in Act I, i, is echoed again in Hamlet's attitude to Ophelia. He cannot now divorce the romantic from the vulgar. As they watch the play, Hamlet sits at Ophelia's feet.

109 - See Dupuy, p.16.

110 - Dupuy, p.19, Cambridge, p.13.

111 - Dupuy, p.27, Cambridge, p.18.

112 - See Dupuy, pp.20, 82 and 152.

Hamlet soulève la robe d'Ophélie. Elle le repousse.¹¹³

This act, symbolic of sexual abandon, is echoed by Ophelia in her insanity:

Elle a un rire de folle avec un geste comme pour relever sa robe.¹¹⁴

Thus, in a social situation where physical contact has become merely the visual manifestation of murder and illicit love, the court strives to hide this truth in polite formality. Physical action and contact is minimal; Hamlet's reactions are violent, but spasmodic and transitory. Finally, as the tragedy is resolved, the final scene is one of prolonged ceremonial, where the physical will no longer be used simply as the agent in criminal activity.¹¹⁵

Throughout the play there is an atmosphere of hypocrisy and deceit which recalls that surrounding Ferrante in La Reine Morte. As mentioned above, the curtains become the material symbol of this element. In Act III, i, as Hamlet talks to Ophelia, it is made abundantly clear that Polonius is listening to the conversation:

Pendant cette scène on voit Polonius soulever le rideau de la baie U et écouter.¹¹⁶

Later Hamlet will also make use of this technique of deceit:

Derrière le rideau 3 on voit par transparence Hamlet qui vient de S arriver lentement au milieu.¹¹⁷

The use of the projector here to reveal Hamlet's presence is a deliberate echo of the first appearance of the Ghost.¹¹⁸ In the following scene, the presence of the Ghost is made known in the same way.

113 - Dupuy, p.111, Cambridge, p.70.

114 - Dupuy, p.168, Cambridge, p.105.

115 - See Dupuy, pp.225-226.

116 - Dupuy, p.97, Cambridge, p.61.

117 - Dupuy, p.129, Cambridge, p.81.

118 - See Dupuy, Act I, tableau 4.

Allied to the use of curtains and shadows is the emphatic absence of bright light. Apart from torches fitted into the walls, the only other light comes from below, not above as would normally be expected. This is achieved by the projection of light through strategically placed transparent green plates. Obviously this has an abnormal and disquieting visual effect. This technique is used with particular impact during Hamlet's first confrontation with the Ghost.¹¹⁹ Each time Hamlet asks his comrades to swear secrecy, his face is lit up by this unnatural light. During the Player scene, the light is provided by torches held by the valets.¹²⁰ As the scene ends in anarchic disorder, all the valets leave; only one torch remains, snatched by Hamlet who needs to have direct light on Claudius' face in order to see his guilt. Finally, he extinguishes this one too, and restores the darkness.

Le Roi descend les marches du praticable. Tout le monde commence à sortir en désordre. Hamlet se lève et vivement va à droite prendre un flambeau des mains d'un valet. Le Roi descend les marches D et sort par C. Hamlet sur le praticable lui éclaire le visage quand il passe devant lui...
Hamlet bondit sur le praticable où sont les trônes et brandissant son flambeau déclame.
Il tourne son flambeau vers la terre et l'éteint en l'appuyant sur le praticable.¹²¹

This predominance of grey indistinct light heightens the feeling of spying and deceit so vital to the atmosphere of this 'mise en scène'.

One significant change Granval made from the original English work was to rewrite the Dumb Show. The action in Granval's version has a violent rapidity absent from Shakespeare's work.

119 - See Dupuy, Act I, tableau 5.

120 - See Dupuy, Act III, tableau 9.

121 - Dupuy, pp.117-118, Cambridge, pp.74-75.

The duplicity and complicity of the Player Queen is implied, if not stated. In the English version, the Queen is made to lament the loss, and initially she resists the attentions of the Poisoner:

... the Queen finds the King dead, and makes passionate action... the poisoner woos the Queen with gifts; she seems harsh awhile, but in the end accepts his love.¹²²

Granval does not allow her these emotions.

Lucianus entre... par C, vient milieu, et se penche vers le Roi Comédien: il fait le geste avec une petite fiole de lui verser du poison dans l'oreille, puis il court à la Reine Comédienne, lui prend la main, et l'entraîne en courant par C.¹²³

Furthermore there is no romantic interplay between the Player King and the Player Queen. The action within this Dumb Show is severely reduced in order to allow a full concentration on the act of fratricide, and the immediate union between Lucianus and the bereaved Queen. It is clear that, in Granval's conception, Gertrude is a party to, and perhaps even instigator of, the deed. She belongs as surely to the corrupt court as does her new consort. This of course increases the ironic impact of her falling victim in the final scene to the trap laid by Claudius and intended, not for her, but for Hamlet. They both fall victim to the system of guile and imposture they have created.

The 'décorateur' for this production of Hamlet was André Boll. As we shall see, the partnership between him and Granval was valid in artistic terms, for they had a close affinity in their views on the qualities intrinsic to theatrical performance. Boll, like Charles Granval, believed implicitly in the dominant value of absolute harmony between the décor and the 'mise en scène'.

¹²² - Cambridge, pp.69-70.

¹²³ - Dupuy, p.110.

Aujourd'hui le décor dépend directement de la mise en scène, c'est elle qui non seulement dicte le dispositif scénique: plantation du décor; mais c'est elle également qui en définit le style: style réaliste ou fantastique, symbolique ou synthétique.¹²⁴

His artistic style is governed by a tendency to strict simplicity through a deliberate attempt to resort to the minimum amount of scenery which will still allow the onlooker to concentrate on the essential thematic emphasis.¹²⁵ One of Boll's most notable and most admired creations was the décor for Troilus and Cressida, also in 1932; here the principal aim was to emphasize the physical presence of the décor, to emphasize the massive interrelation between space and volume. This self-imposed discipline brings to Boll a suspicion of stage machinery and of any self-indulgent scenic innovations.¹²⁶ Also, like Granval, Boll denigrated the contemporary obsession with the fastidious reproduction of the material minutiae of human existence; he believes that each work demanded its own particular and often unique stylization:

Le théâtre, comme toute oeuvre d'art, est une stylisation; il ne doit pas chercher à imiter la vie... il appartient par sa nature même, au domaine du merveilleux et de la fiction.¹²⁷

124 - Boll, André, 'Le Problème de la mise en scène', in Beaux Arts (July 15th, 1938).

125 - Much of the basic information, both on Boll's productions and his general outlook on art, I obtained in the interview I had with him.

126 - See André Boll 'Le Problème de la mise en scène'. It is interesting to note here that Charles Granval is credited with the invention of the revolving stage, in France anyway.

127 - Boll, André, 'Peintres et décorateurs', Comoedia (July 18th, 1924).

... chaque forme de spectacle appelle une mise en scène particulière, une conception spéciale du décor.¹²⁸

This desire for the elimination of extraneous detail and gratuitous embellishment derives from one of Boll's fundamental concepts, that the décor should be initially striking, but discreet once the play begins, without, however, losing any of its effectiveness:

Le décor idéal est celui qui situe et qui crée l'ambiance immédiatement et seulement pendant les premières minutes d'un acte et qui, par la suite, s'y incorpore au point de perdre toute existence propre.¹²⁹

Though in all cases Boll believes that he should first listen to the directives of the 'metteur en scène' before commencing his sketches, nevertheless, once his work is completed, Boll holds it as a basic premise that the designer's creation should reach the stage with minimal changes. He maintains that only too often the original design is subject to the egotistical whims of the star or to the autocratic interpretations of the producer or 'metteur en scène'.¹³⁰ In 1927 André Boll went to the lengths of taking the director of the Folies

128 - Boll, André, 'Le Rôle du décorateur', in Paris-Soir (January 21st, 1926).

Boll started off his career in the 'atelier Amable', where he was a 'tâcheron', and went on to attend a number of scenic design schools, culminating in a period of work under Simas. His dissatisfaction with each successive school came essentially from his search for and belief in stylization, and after the First World War he began to work independently so he could realize this concept.

129 - Boll, André, 'Le Décor moderne', Comoedia (January 4th, 1926).

130 - Boll, André, 'Comment on réalise un décor de théâtre', Paris-Soir (January 28th, 1927).

Bergère to court for, in his opinion, mutilating his original sketches.¹³¹ However by 1932 Boll had his own studio where, if need be, he was able to construct his own décor.

With this similarity in outlook, the natural consequence was a working relationship of mutual respect. The understanding between Boll and Granval was intimate, particularly as on a purely human level, Boll found him an extremely likeable and sensitive person. Yet this does not seem to have been quite the case with Jean-Louis Barrault in 1942. Charles Granval died during the 1942-1943 season, so Barrault was entrusted with the revival of the 1932 'mise en scène'; Barrault himself was ill at ease with this undertaking, as his conception of the play had to be subservient to another's interpretation of the text. It was obvious to most critics that Barrault needed to have complete control, both in the creation and in the realization of the 'mise en scène'. In 1932 Yonnel, who was in the tradition of Mounet-Sully in his combination of the sober and the expansive, had played the part of Hamlet; in 1942 it was Barrault with his much more restrained and intellectual style, a contrast particularly apparent in movement. It is ~~invariable~~ that virtually no 'mise en scène' can be equally suited to two such diverse and powerful talents. Thus the partnership between Barrault and Boll was not as harmonious as had been the one between Granval and Boll. One point of contention was that Barrault insisted on the observance of the contemporary theatrical practice that the lighting should not be entrusted to the 'décorateur', but to the 'metteur en scène'.

André Boll has a very lucid and definite system in his creative activity. He allows himself first of all, through several readings of the work, to absorb and appreciate the text itself:

131 - Antoine, 'Les Bonnes Coutumes perdues', Journal (May 21st, 1927).

Avant d'établir un décor de théâtre... d'abord je tiens à lire naturellement la pièce de bout en bout, je relis certains passages, et j'attends afin d'être bien 'pénétré' par mon sujet.¹³²

Then he concentrates on shaping the overall concept, having first consulted the 'metteur en scène'. In the creation of the décor for Hamlet, as for Troilus and Cressida, the inter-relationship of space and volume in comprehensively solid dimensions was his prime aim; however, here, unlike in Troilus and Cressida the proportions were emphatically vertical and thus created a disquieting feeling of vertigo. His use of colours was restricted mainly to the costumes, unlike his design for King Lear.¹³³ The décor was in its essential elements fixed,¹³⁴ with tapestries to permit the intermediary scenes.¹³⁵

Once he has established his overall concept, Boll works on the modifications for the individual scenes. It is strikingly evident in the six different sketches for the décor of Hamlet that there was no intention of including any but the most vital accessories, which of course corresponded to the desires of Granval. Boll intended to create a timeless décor without any historical terms of reference.¹³⁶ He eliminated any sense of

132 - Héraut, Henri, 'Artistes d'aujourd'hui: André Boll', in Sud (March 10th, 1935), p.16.

133 - The same consciousness of volume and space is apparent in this earlier production, but there is a much greater abundance of colour, both in the costumes and the décor itself.

134 - See Appendix for notes on the décor of Hamlet which André Boll sent to me on February 22nd, 1973.

135 - There were two main tapestries, one inspired by Paolo Uccello's painting, The Battle of San Romano, the other by the Bayeux Tapestry of Queen Mathilda. On the main stage curtain was reproduced the title page of the 1603 edition of Hamlet, intended to produce a feeling of continuity in the intervals.

136 - See p.93 of this chapter.
See also Boll's description of this décor in 'Pourquoi nous avons conçu une mise en scène constructiviste', Comoedia (May 1st, 1932).
'Un style décoratif qui ne situe pas le drame dans une période trop déterminée.'

'trompe-l'oeil' in order to create a solid and stylized three-dimensional décor¹³⁷ which would enhance the performances of the actors without distracting attention by any over-abundant or luxurious quality.¹³⁸ If we study each scene individually, we find that the concentration on cold, stark geometric forms in a forbiddingly sober setting, creates a pervasive atmosphere of mystery and suspicion, and above all of death.¹³⁹ This atmosphere is reinforced by the fact that every scene is enclosed, even the cemetery where a wall blocks out the horizon.¹⁴⁰ It is only in the final scene that there is an opening out and a very obvious and centrally-placed horizontal perspective in a thematically important linear contrast to the earlier scenes. The dominant and claustrophobically nightmarish vertical perspective of the early scenes is now destroyed, as is the corrupt court of which it was the material manifestation. In the Queen's bedchamber the bed itself assumes a dominant significance because of the long drape reaching down to it from the ceiling, this being the only decoration.¹⁴¹ Boll strove to achieve a unity in the colour scheme, restricting his

137 - This kind of 'trompe-l'oeil' décor was very popular at the time, especially in the theatres of the Boulevard and Boll was one of the leading artists in the reaction against it.

138 - See Boll, 'Pourquoi nous avons conçu une mise en scène constructiviste'.

139 - Despite the revelling of the King, for Boll the environment was essentially that of a 'fort sinistre' not of a 'lieu de plaisir'. For the importance of death in the play see pp.78-80 of this chapter.

140 - See the photograph of this set in the Appendix.

141 - See reproduction of sketch for this scene in Appendix A4. See also the importance of the concern with the flesh on pp.81-82 of this chapter.

palette to variations on two basic colours, grey and green. The only main contrasts¹⁴² in colour were provided by the costumes,¹⁴³ though in any case his choice of costume was to some extent restricted since purely practical considerations denied him the chance of creating original costumes, both in 1932 and in 1942. In both years the Comédie-Française was undergoing periods of financial difficulty, so Boll had to make use of what was already in the 'réserve'. However, he did modify the existing costumes he selected into the utmost simplicity. For Hamlet he kept the traditional 'velours-noirs'. The acute and disquieting contrast between the vivid colours of the court and the forbidding drabness of the surroundings provided an ideal environment for the illustration and development of the themes of suspicion, menace and death.

The artistic success of the union of the theatrical talents of Charles Granval and André Boll was made emphatically apparent by an almost unanimous approval on the part of the critics. Roland Purnal, one of the few detractors, did not appear to have understood the desire of Boll to create an essentially simple design with the decorative elements reduced to a minimum.¹⁴⁵ In 1932 Edmond Sée added to his unmitigated praise of the 'mise en scène' an unstinting admiration of the

142 - There is also a contrast in the colours of the throne, which is placed in the centre of the set. The combination of yellow and red is in discordance with the grey walls of the room.

143 - Claudius is dressed in purple and red and Gertrude in blue. The richness of the colour scheme of their costumes is in contrast to the soft hues of Hamlet's friends, who are in grey and beige. Thus not only by their attitudes and actions but also by the opulence of their costumes, the King and Queen seem out of place in this setting whose dominant motif is death.

145 - Apart from the analagous quality of their respective theatrical ethics, both artists with this play were concerned primarily with the elimination of the usual Romantic accoutrements in order to create an atmosphere of menace and imminent death. Artistic technique pushed to its purest and most emotive simplicity. That Granval was aware of the need for total harmony between décor and 'mise en scène' is inherent in the fact that at the start of his theatrical career he was essentially a 'décorateur'.

décor:

... ce fut une surprenante réalisation esthétique, nous suggérant le maximum d'émotion.¹⁴⁶

Although the other critics were not perhaps so extravagant in their praise, they did lay considerable stress on the visibly total cohesion between Granval and Boll.¹⁴⁷

It is important to note here that the 1942 production of Hamlet at the Comédie-Française, though essentially identical to the 1932 one, nevertheless did demonstrate some significant changes, notably in the choice of translation and in the substitution of Barrault for Yonnel.¹⁴⁸ In both years the reaction of the critics was ambivalent; in 1932 Gaston Goldschild could complain:

... la mise en scène est un peu encombrée, surtout dans la dernière scène, par un bruit d'armes et d'armures dont on se passerait fort bien...¹⁴⁹

yet Gabrielle Boissy in the same year found that the simplicity and sobriety of the production lacked a sense of vitality:

... l'ensemble manque de mouvement et d'élan. On approuve les idées sans en être ému.¹⁵⁰

In 1942 approval of Barrault's interpretation was by no means general; many found it too cerebral and to some extent self-

146 - Sée Edmond, 'Hamlet', Revue de France (July 15th, 1932), p.298.

147 - 'Les décors d'André Boll, technicien consommé, très sobres de forme et de couleur, stylisés comme on dit, fort éloignés du trompe l'oeil, aident par leur habile architecture scénique le groupement des acteurs et collaborent heureusement avec la mise en scène proprement dite.'

See Appendix/8 for reference

148 - Despite fundamental differences in their basic styles of acting, (see p.40), both actors had this common point of integration with the 'mise en scène'; both avoided any Romantic excess. See Edmond Sée, Gaston Goldschild and Roland Purnal.

149 - Goldschild, 'Hamlet à la Comédie-Française', p.10.

150 - Boissy, Gabrielle, 'Une nouvelle réalisation d'Hamlet avec M. Yonnel', Comoedia (May 5th, 1932).

indulgent,¹⁵¹ while others, such as Maurice Rostand,¹⁵² found him totally committed to the rôle. Nevertheless, the general opinion was that his approach was too intellectual and unsuitable to the 'mise en scène'.¹⁵³ Perhaps the main difference in 1942 in the reactions of the critics was their concentration on the actor rather than on the 'mise en scène' itself; as stated above,¹⁵⁴ it was obvious that Barrault felt unhappy interpreting someone else's 'mise en scène'. He needed to be in absolute authority over the production.¹⁵⁵

Hamlet is the longest of all of Shakespeare's plays, and in its entirety would take six hours to perform. Thus it is inevitably subject to often drastic cuts; these cuts, together with the 'mise en scène', determine which of the Hamlets potentially contained in the complete work is performed. It is not possible, without the use of the total version, to fully represent all the concerns embodied in the text.¹⁵⁶ The

151 - Silvain, Jean, L'Appel (March 26th, 1942).

'...M. Jean-Louis Barrault semble souvent s'imiter, se caricaturer. On dirait à ce moment, qu'il joue devant une glace et qu'il s'y contemple avec une félicité intérieure.'

152 - Rostand, Maurice, Paris-Midi (March 3rd, 1942).

'...Hamlet c'est Jean-Louis Barrault, angoissé, bouleversant, vivant le drame immortel comme si ce fût le sien!'

153 - See Alain Laubreaux, 'Hamlet à la Comédie-Française', Le Petit Parisien (March 18th, 1942).

154 - See p.106 of this chapter.

155 - Even Jean Cocteau who, in Comoedia (April 4th, 1942) had given Barrault almost unreserved praise made it clear that in his opinion Barrault could not be happy with the rôle of an actor.

156 - For a more detailed elaboration of this point, see Jan Kott, 'Hamlet of the mid-century', in Shakespeare our contemporary, translated by Boleslaw Taborski (London, 1967), pp.47-60.

dominant motifs in Granval's production are deception, hypocrisy, and social decay, all of which are pervaded by the omnipresent evidence of death. Both the 'mise en scène' and the décor, since they are in complete harmony, strive successfully to realize these motifs. Although neither was specifically created as an answer to the situation during the 1942-43 season, nevertheless, historical circumstance bestowed on them an immediate social relevance. There can be no doubt that the public attending a performance of this production was offered a singularly apt catharsis; furthermore, once the particular emotions dominating their lives had been purged, the release of the final scene as the enclosed décor is suddenly flooded with daylight, answered the desire for hope and escape. They were the witnesses of the continued evolution of a play of established cultural significance; the production allowed Hamlet to achieve a vital contemporary relevance in Occupied France.

- 5) The Comédie-Française as a theatre:
Phèdre

Whether as a theatrical activity, a literary study, or as a cultural symbol, Racine's Phèdre has a vital rôle to play in France; in such an apparently hopeless period as that of the Occupation, it was only natural for one of the most venerated symbols of the continuity and depth of national culture, the Comédie-Française, to stage this particular play from its extensive classical repertoire.

From the very beginning, Racine's work has given rise to philosophical and literary criticism and controversy in France, which persist to the present day. Through this constant revaluation, Racine's work has remained vitally relevant to French culture. Nevertheless, there exists the danger that a theatre will be content to surrender to facility by merely resurrecting a 'mise en scène' of one of Racine's plays, based on the theatrical reflexes and traditions handed down through the centuries in the classical repertoire. It is a danger which Roland Barthes studies in his discussion of Jean Vilar's production of Phèdre at the Théâtre National Populaire.

.... il existe un vieux fonds folklorique racinien...
et c'est là que chaque acteur, s'il est laissé à lui-même, va tout naturellement puiser....¹

As we shall see below, Barrault will try to reconcile the proper regard he feels should be given to what, in his opinion, are the constants in the performance of Racine's work, and personal innovation. The survival of the play, and the high esteem in which it is held, do not stem only from its intrinsic literary worth or its position of prominence in French culture, but also from the fact that to perform the rôle of Phèdre, or to direct the play itself, is regarded in France as the climax of a theatrical career.

Le rôle de Phèdre est le couronnement d'une carrière.
Et il ne fait pas de doute que monter Phèdre est
l'épreuve suprême.²

1 - Barthes, Roland, Sur Racine (Paris, 1963), p.143.

2 - Descotes, Maurice, Les Grands Rôles du théâtre de Racine (Paris, 1957), p.147.

The accusation has often been levelled by critics that Racine had no real awareness of the precise needs of theatrical performance, and that his plays, by their reliance on the quality of the poetry tend to be parochial. It would seem relevant here briefly to see why Racine's work is so highly valued in France, and how, to a great extent, it epitomizes French cultural aspirations.

Primarily, it is obvious that the very form of his plays, and their subject matter, answer the particular emphasis which has always been placed on the learning and appreciation of ancient Greek and Roman myths and literature. Racine's own interpretation of tragedy, based on the precepts established by Greek writers, and notably Aristotle, realizes the basic ideals of French classical schooling. He successfully imposes the law of logic and order on the essentially savage and anarchic situations predominant in such legends as that of Phèdre. However, we must differentiate between the pure demands of French logic, and a separate, though intimately linked, concern with learning. The myths and legends which were a commonly held heritage in the audience of ancient Greece and Rome, were also accepted spiritually as the sincere and legitimate manifestations of their religious preoccupations. In the monotheistic society of seventeenth century France, these myths and legends were not spiritual truths but literary illustrations of the condition of man's existence, which could be interpreted and appreciated by reason. Given that Racine wrote basically for a sophisticated social elite, he could assume that their education had imparted to them a sure knowledge of the classics; thus, he, and his audience, could concentrate on the poetic delineation of man and not burden themselves with the complexities involved in the creation and understanding of a new plot.

The eclectic quality of Racine's use of classical sources is well known. His intention was to use only the elements of these precedents immediately pertinent to his vision of the Phèdre legend. Racine has, in this play, been able to reconcile

and represent the two essential characteristics of traditional French scholarship, by the dominance of reason and order over the pristine forces of evil symbolized by Phèdre, and by his subtly discriminative use of classical sources. Nevertheless, this play, in order to achieve the position of prominence it has in French culture, has demonstrated that it is not merely a product of the French intellectual ethic, but has given evidence of its own singular quality; thus, not only is this play seen to be the creation of French cultural 'patterns', but also, because of its individual worth, has become a 'conditioning element' in this same culture. The power and the originality of Phèdre come, not from the 'action', but, as Jean-Louis Barrault strove to elucidate in his 'mise en scène', from the luminous clarity of the poetry, and the intrinsic quality of the poetic realism which creates the universe of Phèdre. The audience, secure in its knowledge of classical precedent, can allow its attention to focus on the poetry itself and through it on the intense analysis of man's condition. As the success of the play is so dependent on the poetry,³ the play has unfortunately been a failure when translated into foreign languages, since no language can fully reproduce the excellence of the poetry of another language.

There can be no doubt that to the French in 1942 and 1943 the possibility of communing with one of the most cherished and essentially French works of art in the history of literature, helped to salve the mortification of defeat and to assure them of the continuity of their culture. We must examine how Jean-Louis Barrault set about answering these needs while still maintaining his own artistic independence.

3 - See below for the emphasis that Barrault places on the importance of a correct appreciation of the poetry, particularly by those who must speak it, the actors.

Immediately we are confronted with a paradox. Paul Claudel could say of Barrault's 'mise en scène': 'Jean-Louis Barrault a réentoilé ce chef-d'oeuvre, comme on a fait de certains Rembrandt....'⁴, yet its reception in the 1942-1943 season was not universally appreciative.⁵ The success of the 'mise en scène' has perhaps been greater as a literary venture than as a theatrical endeavour, for several important reasons which I shall discuss below.⁶

Jean-Louis Barrault's emphasis in the re-interpretation of Racine's Phèdre can already be sensed in an article written in 1936.⁷ Barrault maintained in this work that romanticism had declined, and with it the decadence of exotic sophistication; but, as yet, tragedy and the sense of the tragic had not replaced it. This could only come with 'l'époque collective', when a whole civilization would be stirred to corporate action, and literature in its multiple forms would become the responsibility of a common aesthetic spirit, and no longer the prerogative of presumptuous individuals. Furthermore, this evolution of a sense of the tragic relevant to contemporary society must also be paralleled in the art of the theatre.

.... la forme nouvelle de la tragédie n'apparaît que lorsque les acteurs auront tous compris ce que représente la vie collective d'une troupe et l'énorme travail sur soi-même qu'il faut faire pour acquérir le véritable métier de comédien.⁸

- 4 - Claudel, Paul, Conversations sur Racine (Paris, 1956), p.42.
- 5 - See below for my examination of the critical reception.
- 6 - A new series of books based on the 'mises en scène' of notable French directors was started in 1946 under the direction of Pierre-Aimé Touchard, and included this work.
- 7 - Barrault, Jean-Louis, 'La Tragédie doit renaître', Humanité (August 2nd, 1936).
- 8 - *ibid.*

The vital word here is 'collective', and this tendency to concerted action will be the dominant element in the 'mise en scène' of Phèdre. A deliberate and lucid attempt will be made to compose it as a symphony, where each part is integrated totally into a harmonious whole with the rest.

Phèdre n'est pas un concerto pour femme; c'est une symphonie pour orchestre d'acteurs.⁹

The rôle of Phèdre will not be allowed to overshadow the play:

.... il faudra veiller à ce que Phèdre, comme les autres, serve un tout. Mettre en valeur une oeuvre d'art et non une reine 'incandescente'. Faire jouer avec la précision d'un mouvement d'horlogerie une troupe, et non pas donner la réplique à une célèbre tragédienne.¹⁰

The danger of the play becoming the vehicle for a technical display of acting virtuosity by one actress had always been prevalent:

Il n'y a qu'un rôle qui absorbe tous les autres.... L'auteur fait le tour d'une passion... et la pièce est fini quand l'exploration est terminée. Il suit que Phèdre ne comporte qu'un rôle et c'est celui de Phèdre!¹¹

Such renowned actresses as Rachel and Sarah Bernhardt had found resounding success in the rôle of Phèdre, though to some, and particularly to Barrault, there had always been a tendency for the leading actress to reserve her energies for the scene of the declaration in Act II and for the scene of despair in Act IV.

9 - Mise en scène de Phèdre, p.17.

10 - ibid. p.16.

11 - Sarcey, in Le Temps (September 1873), quoted by M. Descotes, in Les Grands Rôles du théâtre de Racine (Paris, 1957).

On allait, paraît-il, voir Sarah Bernhardt dans Phèdre, non plus pour voir jouer la pièce, même pas voir Sarah Bernhardt jouer le rôle en entier, mais pour lui voir jouer les deux scènes dans lesquelles elle triomphait: la déclaration du 'II', et le désespoir du 'IV'. Par ailleurs, elle 'lâchait' le rôle afin de ménager ses forces et son art pour ces deux 'numéros'.¹²

However it had already been proved by Mounet-Sully in the rôle of Hippolyte, and Sarah Bernhardt herself in the rôle of Aricie,¹³ that there were much greater possibilities in the other rôles than was generally presumed.

That the 'mise en scène' of the play has always been especially subject to the vicissitudes of theatrical fashion and often widely disparate interpretation is due to the negligible stage directions.¹⁴ If we take one example among the great number of interpretations of this play in the twentieth century, that of Gaston Baty, in order to illustrate this point in contrast to the 'mise en scène' of Barrault, we can see immediately an intrinsic difference in the fundamental vision of the work. Barrault sought to create the atmosphere of claustrophobia, of the suffocating torpor which precedes an impending storm:

... aujourd'hui il règne sur Trézène une atmosphère lourdement insolite. Les bois, la mer, la grève, tout est silencieux. Le SILENCE pèse sur Trézène... Dans cet air généralement pur et serein, on suffoque. On étouffe à Trézène.¹⁵

Baty, on the other hand, strove simply to evoke a classical setting within no limited historical perspective.

12 - Barrault, Mise en scène de Phèdre, p.16. See also Descotes, p.162, again quoting Sarcey, to whom Bernhardt's interpretation was perfection itself. 'C'est d'une beauté achevée. C'est l'idéal dans la perfection'.

13 - Descotes, pp.150-152.

14 - Racine gives only one stage direction, 'Elle s'assoit', in Act I, Scene III, l.157. Apart from this, Barrault maintains that much can be gleaned from the text itself.

15 - Barrault, Mise en Scène de Phèdre (Paris, 1972), p.30.

Nous nous sommes décidés à évoquer plutôt une imprécise antiquité, telle que l'imaginait le dix-huitième siècle, telle que la suggèrent Poussin ou Claude Lorrain. Nous n'emmenons le spectateur ni dans le Péloponèse, ni à Versailles, ni à Port-Royal, mais dans un lieu théâtral qui les concilierait tous trois, et qui nous paraît être le seul où Phèdre puisse vivre totalement.¹⁶

Already we have seen how Jean Vilar approached the play,¹⁷ again from a totally different viewpoint. Thus one of the most ancient symbols of French culture has always been open to multifarious theatrical interpretations.

There is one point of significant accord in the separate visions of Barrault and Baty, an emphasis on the religious aspect. According to Baty, Phèdre is Racine's third Christian play, through the silence of God.¹⁸ He is just as terrible under his Greek pseudonym. For Barrault, Racine's principal design in this work was to impart moral education to the audience.¹⁹ His desire was to present to ecclesiastical circles the unquestionable proof of the value of the theatre to mankind.

Racine, n'écrit-il pas principalement ses tragédies dans le but de démontrer à ces saintes personnes que le théâtre est une oeuvre utile? Qu'il est utile d'étaler devant les hommes leurs propres faiblesses et de leur montrer jusqu'à quelles sinistres conséquences ces faiblesses les entraînent?

N'est-ce pas dans un but avoué de réconciliation que Racine écrivit Phèdre? 'Un bon poète, disait-il, peut faire excuser les plus grands crimes et même inspirer de la compassion pour les criminels.' Pour inspirer cette pitié, il ne faut que de la 'fécondité, de la délicatesse et de la justesse d'esprit.'²⁰

16 - Baty quoted by Descotes, p.147-148.

17 - See p.113.

18 - Baty quoted by Descotes, p.165.

19 - See Preface to Bérénice, p.483.

20 - Barrault, Jean-Louis, avant-propos à G.le Roy, Réflexions sur la tragédie (Paris, 1950), pp.4-5.

As we can see, Barrault maintains that the desire for a reconciliation with the Christian ethic of Port-Royal was deliberate and a creative force in the conception of the play. Barrault will emphasize this aspect in his 'mise en scène'; the purpose of the lighting in Act I, for example, will be to create 'une atmosphère de confessional',²¹ and in the final act, 'Hippolyte psalmodie ces derniers vers comme des litanies'.²²

When Jean Louis-Barrault first composed his 'mise en scène' for Phèdre in 1942, he had only recently entered the Comédie-Française. His first appearance on the stage of the 'illustre théâtre' was as the chief protagonist in Corneille's Le Cid. It seemed inevitable that his particular theatrical creativity and originality²³ would be both stifled and frustrated by the conservative, and often doctrinaire, traditions extant in this national institution. At the time Jean Cocteau held the opposite to be true : that the evolution of Barrault as an artist would not stagnate, but find a new freedom of expression within the particular discipline of the Comédie-Française.²⁴ Certainly Barrault was very soon made 'sociétaire';²⁵ nevertheless, by 1946 he had decided to leave in order to form his own company. The reasons for his departure are stated with unequivocal directness:

... la véritable raison de notre départ, c'est que nous sommes tous atteints maintenant de claustrophobie.²⁶

21 - Mise en scène, p.67.

22 - ibid. p.175.

23 - We have merely to realize the close affinity between Barrault and Artaud to understand why the former could not find the correct artistic stimulus within the confines of the Comédie-Française. See Artaud, Le Théâtre et son double (Paris, 1964), p.213, talking about Barrault's mime-drama, Autour d'une mère:

'Il y a dans le spectacle de Jean-Louis Barrault une sorte de merveilleux cheval-centaure, et notre émotion devant lui a été grande comme si avec son entrée de cheval-centaure Jean-Louis Barrault nous avait ramené la magie.'

24 - Cocteau, Jean, 'Monsieur Jean-Louis Barrault', Comoedia (January 9th, 1943).

25 - The hierarchical structure of the Comédie-Française will be examined in the next chapter.

26 - Paul Bodin quoting Barrault in his article concerning the departure of eight members of the company, in Combat (May 5th, 1946).

Throughout his artistic career, his love of the theatre has betrayed an impassioned spiritual commitment, much influenced, as we have seen above,²⁷ by the vision and writings of Antonin Artaud.

Si je parlais de ce métier du théâtre - du Théâtre - je ne dirais même plus que c'est un art, mais un sacerdoce, mais une religion... Aussi me contenté-je de la pratiquer avec fureur. Et je tire ma joie directement.²⁸

The emphatically spiritual quality of this commitment would be translated into scenic terms in the 'mise en scène' of Phèdre. Nevertheless, his incorporation into the company of the Comédie-Française and his consequent reappraisal of Phèdre, reassured the French public of the viability and continuing creativity of their national theatre, at a time when it could easily have been destroyed by the inevitable internal tensions provoked by the Occupation, at a time when alien domination threatened a radical metamorphosis of indigenous French culture.

We have seen two of Barrault's main preoccupations in the writing of this 'mise en scène' - a concentration on the collective aspect both in the acting and the overall interpretation, and an emphasis on the hieratical element. A third vital preoccupation was an intense concern with the quality and value of the language, with a precise realization of the metrical accent. Roland Barthes has cogently examined the predominant influence of the language in Racine.

Ces problèmes de diction sont très importants parce que dans un langage aussi 'distant' que celui de la tragédie classique, le choix de la diction domine de très haut le choix de l'interprétation.²⁹

27 - See note 23.

28 - Barrault, Jean-Louis, 'Amour du métier', Gerbe (July 7th, 1941).

29 - Barthes, Roland, Sur Racine (Paris, Seuil, 1963), p.139.

Barrault devoted much of his introduction to an extremely detailed analysis of the poetic idiom of the play, with two main objectives; first of all that the 'verbe' should be in symphonic harmony with the other components of the production, and that the actual diction should achieve a just balance between the lyric and prose.

Monter Phèdre comme une symphonie, en respectant la valeur de chaque personnage, obtenir une diction à la fois noble et naturelle, qui soit aussi éloignée de la prose que du chant; avoir le souci simultané de la composition, de l'intrigue, des thèmes, et de l'orchestration (syntaxe, harmonie, pensées, en somme: poésie).³⁰

In so doing, Barrault believed that he was being faithful to Racine's own artistic tenets in the composition and realization of his plays; the sonic quality of the poetry was of such great importance to Racine that he often composed his work out loud.

On connaît l'anecdote qui décrit Racine arpentant les jardins des Tuileries tout en composant à haute voix, tournant autour des bassins, se tordant les mains, se lamentant si bien que les jardiniers attirés par tant de détresse, crurent qu'ils avaient devant eux un désespéré qui voulait se jeter dans le bassin.³¹

Two of these aspects, the collective and the verbal are preponderant in his overall vision and there is an intimate conjunction between them. To a large extent Barrault composed his work in musical terms,³² where the symphonic quality is derived, not only from a just balance in sound, but also from a euphonic symmetry in the thematic content and interaction of the protagonists.

30 - Barrault, Mise en scène, p.24.

31 - *ibid.* p.20.

32 - The title of the final chapter is, 'Les mouvements symphoniques de Phèdre', p.202.

His first analysis of the characters exemplified this unity by being embodied in a partition of their rôles according to the musical tonality epitomized by their function in the play.

Thésée, baryton (ou basse chantante?) grand premier rôle.
 Phèdre, mezzo-soprane dramatique, premier rôle tragique.
 Hippolyte, ténor, jeune premier tragique.
 Aricie, soprane, jeune première tragique.
 Œnone, contralto, mère tragique.
 Thérémène, basse, père noble tragique.
 Ismène, soprane, confidente tragique.
 Panope, mezzo-soprane, confidente tragique.³³

His final chapter crystallizes this concern. There are four movements.

Symphoniquement les cinq actes de Phèdre peuvent se diviser en quatre mouvements.

Premier mouvement	:	Acte I
Deuxième mouvement	:	Acte II
Troisième mouvement	:	Actes III et IV
Quatrième mouvement	:	Acte V. ³⁴

Each one is dominated by one particular theme: Act I, 'mystère'; Act II, 'désir'; Acts III and IV, 'délire, extra-lucidité'; Act V, 'combustion'.³⁵ Yet, as in all music, there must be a sense of harmony between each movement, and Barrault has assured this harmony.

... chaque mouvement se termine par un rythme qui annonce le rythme du mouvement suivant.³⁶

33 - P.28.

34 - P.202.

35 - P.203.

36 - P.211.

From the very beginning he deemed it necessary to visualize the evolution of the play in precise musical parallels:

De même que dans un concert le chef d'orchestre qui vient de prendre place à son pupitre se met en position d'attaque, les deux bras écartés, et reste ainsi tant que le silence n'a pas pris possession complète de la salle, il importe qu'Hippolyte n'attaque que lorsque le théâtre est dominé par le silence. Il est donc recommandé de laisser un grand temps entre les trois coups et l'attaque si importante d'Hippolyte.³⁷

Throughout there will be constant reference to musical terminology: 'un troisième point d'orgue',³⁸ 'l'allegro est terminé',³⁹ 'Immobilité générale du théâtre, des personnages: bref de tout l'orchestre. Les instrumentistes restent suspendus dans la position d'attente'.⁴⁰ Every shift in the interplay of personality, every change in the atmosphere, every re-orientation of the action, is echoed by a modification in the musical 'score'. The abrupt revelation of Thésée's imminent arrival after Phèdre has already surrendered herself to her illicit passion, demands a sudden and complete alteration, from the torrid declaration of love by Phèdre which culminated Act II.⁴¹ There is an imperative contrast between the debilitating nature of Phèdre's impotence to counter the unwelcome occurrence, and the triumphal approach of the legendary figure.

Le rythme change alors avec la rentrée d'Oenone. Il devient fébrile et rapide. Comme un remous de poissons qui se débattent à l'intérieure du filet qu'on retire. Incessant, ce rythme court jusqu'à l'approche de Thésée:

'Dans le trouble où je suis, je ne puis rien pour moi'

Après ce remous, éclatent 'trompettes' et 'cors' qui marquent le retour triomphal de Thésée. Hélas! 'cors', 'trompettes' et Thésée sont rapidement arrêtés, un pied en l'air. Il ne reste plus que les lamentations à peine perceptibles du violon épuisé de Phèdre qui meurent progressivement avec la sortie de celle-ci.⁴²

37 - P.204.

38 - P.205.

39 - P.207.

40 - P.207.

41 - 11.670-711.

42 - P.213.

All the actors must work towards a successful integration into this concept of total harmony; should one rôle pre-dominate, then the only possible result is cacophony.

For Jean-Louis Barrault perhaps the most essential method of realizing this aim is through the correct appreciation and application of the particular mechanics of Racine's poetry. During the actual process of creation, Racine would concentrate on the words.

Racine avait un grand talent pour la déclamation, et il notait musicalement les rôles, mot par mot.⁴³

This necessitates an equal concern for the language on the part of the performer. With this in mind, Barrault devotes a large part of his introduction to an extensive and meticulous examination of the Alexandrine, and the establishing of certain rules for its declamation.⁴⁴ Rules which, however, are not inviolate and must be left to the poetic interpretation of the artist.

Ces quelques remarques ont cela de merveilleux qu'elles ne peuvent devenir des règles. Ce que nous^{nous} sommes permis d'énoncer schématiquement reste à la disposition du bon goût de l'artiste.⁴⁵

Yet there can be no doubt that Barrault attaches great importance to these ideas, and it is only for lack of space that he does not elucidate further.⁴⁶ Barrault pursues his analysis beyond a purely syntactical elaboration of the Alexandrine to discuss the clearly defined structure which governs the overall rhythm and movement of groups of Alexandrines - the recitative.

43 - P.18.

44 - cf. pp.42-54. A glance at the individual titles for the separate sections of the chapter emphasize the importance of this analysis: for example, 'L'Hiatus et les liaisons', 'Valeur plastique des voyelles et des consonnes', 'Différents aspects de l'alexendrin', etc.

45 - P.58.

46 - cf. Note 1 on p.58.

'Nous sommes cependant persuadés qu'elles pourraient servir de base à l'établissement d'un véritable solfège de diction dont l'utilité serait indiscutable.'

There is an extremely precise preparation for and evolution of the recitative:

1. Crise agitée de mouvement.
2. Un palier étrange fait d'indécision, de rupture brusque du rythme : moment assez court pendant lequel le personnage cherche son nouveau rythme.
3. L'envolée proprement dite du récitatif, sa courbe et sa retombée.
4. Enfin, un retour subit du mouvement agitée.⁴⁷

He gives us the example of the avowal of Phèdre to Oenone in order to illustrate his concept.⁴⁸ Thus he demonstrates that each word, each line, each group of lines, exists in total inter-dependance, and upon them rests the unity of the play.

However, given that the theatre is a visual as well as an auditive art, and thus for its successful realization depends on the quality of the actors, Barrault presents us with certain recommendations applicable to the function of the actor. He maintains that there are two main sources of creation in the actor, which find their manifestation in the spoken word and in movement:

L'acteur, artiste de la volonté, dispose de deux sources d'expression qui frémissent au rythme permanent de la pulsation. Ces deux sources d'expression sont:

La respiration d'une part.

La colonne vertébrale d'autre part.

Autrement dit : un soufflet et un fouet.⁴⁹

Thus the art of the actor has a basic physical origin, and his body must be trained to a due appreciation of these vital elements. Fundamentally Barrault sees a need for the re-training of the actor: too often the performer does not have a clear enough appreciation of the value of vocal intonation and thus should be subject to as rigorous and exacting a musical training as any opera singer.

47 - P.56. He goes on to enlarge the musical analogy by discussing a parallel with the performers of Wagner's work.

48 - Pp. 56-57.

49 - P. 41.

Il y a des passages, dans Phèdre, qu'il faut 'couler' comme un legato; d'autres qu'il faut, au contraire, syl-la-bi-ser; il y a des pertes progressives de souffle qui rappellent le diminuendo ou le 'fading' en T.S.F..... Pour obtenir un bon legato, il faut en avoir rabâché beaucoup; pour atteindre un subtil diminuendo, il faut rudement être maître de son souffle.⁵⁰

In addition, he must be made aware of the intrinsic importance of respiration, since only the physical ability to breathe correctly will render him capable of reproducing the rhythms vital to the Alexandrine.

Tout ce que nous avons dit au sujet de l'alexandrin ne peut être exécuté 'artistement', c'est-à-dire comme par enchantement, que par ceux qui savent respirer, et l'art de la respiration est un art très compliqué que nous, occidentaux, nous négligeons beaucoup trop.⁵¹

So too, the actor's expression must be educated to be in accordance with the exigencies of the spoken word. Frequently in the contemporary theatre there had been a tendency to naturalism in 'le geste', bordering on the vulgar, and therefore necessarily inadequate to the demands of Racine's poetry. The actor must be trained to understand and produce only the most directly relevant physical expression of the verbal rhythms.

Pour acquérir la science du geste; pour savoir calculer, choisir et rythmer un langage de gestes qui pourra se 'concerter' avec le langage vocal que l'auteur a composé, l'acteur doit donc se plier à un entraînement qui l'assouplit et l'éduque.⁵²

Both poles of theatrical endeavour have the same poetic rhythm.

Tout comme le souffle et la voix, le geste a son langage. Tout comme le coeur bat l'iambe (systole-diastole), tout comme le souffle respire l'iambe (inspiration, expiration), le geste se rythme sur l'iambe (contraction-détente).⁵³

50 - P.60.

51 - P.61.

52 - P.62.

53 - Pp.62-63.

They must be in unqualified harmony with one another.

Bref, il doit y avoir une similitude absolue entre ce geste réglé, choisi et rythmé et la forme vocale choisie, réglée et rythmée par l'auteur.⁵⁴

There is no doubt in Jean-Louis Barrault's mind that Phèdre represents the apotheosis of French classical literature. Its formal structure is governed by the postulates imposed by a correct and rigid adherence to the norm of classical symmetry.

Racine, en composant Phèdre, a obéi aux exigences du Nombre et de la pure géométrie. Les vertus essentielles d'une oeuvre classique sont la Mesure et le Dessin.⁵⁵

This provides a definite reversal for the Romantic ethic.

En chacun de nous il y a deux personnages. Le premier est tout passion; il veut s'exprimer d'une façon débridée, il se révolte contre la moindre contrainte extérieure : c'est notre personnage romantique. Et le second plus humble est doué du sens critique. Il juge et accepte d'obéir. Il est modeste... Avec Phèdre, chef d'oeuvre classique, nous assistons et il faut en définitive que nous assistions au triomphe de l'ordre et de la mesure sur ce romantisme intérieure. Cette sorte de corsetage (le classique)... loin de supprimer l'individualité du poète, la précise et l'intensifie.⁵⁶

54 - P.63. This provides an interesting comparison to ancient Greek dramatic performance, where the physical action is both instigated and given its particular rhythm by the words. We find this too in much mediaeval drama, where the lines contain within them the motivating force of the action.

55 - P.61. cf. also pp.127, 79, 177.

56 - Pp. 195-196.

Finally, above all, it is one of the purest and most representative creations of the French artistic mind.

Le lustre d'un théâtre referme.... les cinq qualités principales que doit posséder un chef d'oeuvre.

Un bel objet lumineux,
cristallin,
compliqué,
circulaire et
symétrique...

Dans le temple de l'art dramatique, c'est Phèdre qui tient la place du lustre.⁵⁷

We have seen Jean-Louis Barrault's general designs in his composition of the 'mise en scène', and we must now examine how he applied them to the play in detail. One aspect which is immediately noticeable is the unusual importance attached to the rôle of Oenone.⁵⁸ She is no longer the colourless matron of tradition, but the most mysterious and threatening protagonist in the play. Throughout the play she emanates a sense of supernatural influence and of death; her ability to fulfil her function of safeguarding the life of her mistress borders on the skill of the necromancer; and we are deliberately incited to wonder whether she is human or not.

Oenone est le mauvais génie de Phèdre; c'est son démon; sa valeur noire. Oenone est son destin néfaste. C'est le corbeau de son malheur.⁵⁹

The elemental power⁶⁰ which motivates Phèdre is predominantly physical in its manifestation; her mind, when not weakened to irrationality by her desire, lucidly rejects this passion.

57 - P.218.

58 - Roland Barthes, in Sur Racine, also concentrates on the importance of the rôle of Oenone, describing her as an 'accoucheuse' of the terrible secret. (p.118). Lucien Goldmann also deals with the emphatic rôle played by Oenone; in Le Dieu caché, he maintains that Phèdre lives mainly through Oenone. (p.429).

59 - Mise en scène de Phèdre, p.81.

60 - See below for an analysis of this power.

Oenone does not carry out simply a protective rôle towards Phèdre, but she is also her evil surrogate.

Oenone, nous l'avons dit, est moins la confidente de Phèdre, que son 'double' (le double de ses forces noires).⁶¹

She represents the tragic destiny of Phèdre and will allow her no deviation from the course of her fate; she is the omnipresent and intrusive reminder of the evil forces within Phèdre.

Oenone, c'est le destin de Phèdre; la détestable Oenone a conduit tout le reste. Oenone est le meneur du jeu..... Phèdre ira s'écraser contre cet écueil et sera précipitée dans la mort.⁶²

When they are on stage together, the rhythm of the scene recalls by its primitive emotional interplay a pagan ritual. Barrault creates a symbolic parallel to Oenone with a traditional emblem of the forces of darkness, the crow. He uses the image freely in reference to Oenone.

C'est à Oenone maintenant de se lamenter....Il souffle sur scène une espèce de vent d'Orient. Le corbeau affolé vole de tous côtés, se heurte à la cloison et vient retomber, flétri....⁶³

Mais Oenone.... apparaît au même instant. Ses voiles, comme un oiseau qui bat des ailes, se cognent à droite et à gauche contre les cloisons du couloir lointain.⁶⁴

Towards the end of the tragedy, Oenone's character, expressed through her mode of speech, is pared of virtually all human analogy.

61 - P.85.

62 - P.81.

63 - P.91.

64 - P.79. Barrault also carries this bird analogy to Phèdre herself, thereby enhancing the almost mystic content of the emotional and physical bond between the 'confidente' and her mistress.
'Phèdre est repartie affolée, comme un oiseau qui va se cogner contre les barreaux d'une cage.' P.135.

La voix d'Oenone, monocorde, soutenue, étrange et spectrale, s'élève lentement; sa bouche à l'oreille droite de Phèdre. Oenone semble parler à la place des Dieux... Jamais Oenone ne fait autant penser au Destin ou à une sorte d'envoyée des Dieux qu'à ce moment mystérieux. Sa voix est comme une voix d'outre-tombe. L'effet impressionniste de cette période est hallucinante.⁶⁵

Undoubtedly her rôle has a pristine violence not usually associated with it and thus assumes an unusually important place in the play - perhaps in terms of Jean-Louis Barrault's general concept of concerted playing, too important.

The emphasis in Barrault's delineation of Phèdre's character is generally directly physical and sensual.

Phèdre est à la 'canicule' de sa vie. Elle est éclosée. Elle est mûre pour la moisson. C'est un fruit odorant et chaud qui craquelle de partout dans sa poussée juteuse. Elle est couverte d'une moiteur qui poisse.... Phèdre a atteint sa sensualité la plus dense.⁶⁶

Racine establishes the five principal aspects of her dramatic personality immediately - her imminent death, her femininity, her heavenly parentage, the passionate lover, and finally the sincere desire to preserve her virtue.⁶⁷ After the presumed death of Thésée, her sensuality, the pure eroticism exuded by her physical presence, reaches its most potent stage.

L'air est embaumé de son odeur; on perçoit presque le 'goût' qu'elle a. Elle vient de 'secréter toute sa réserve de séduction'.⁶⁸

65 - P.167.

66 - P.81.

67 - P.81.

68 - P.119.

In her confrontation with Hippolyte, Phèdre displays an almost demented physical violence as she allows her obsessive passion free rein.

Phèdre apparaît dans toute la splendeur de la femme épanouie. Jeune, belle, pleine, elle est splendidement désirable.

Enfin elle court se plaquer franchement contre lui. Cette fois : ventre en avant.⁶⁹

Once she has surrendered to her illicit love, then she is fully absorbed into the necromantic world of Oenone; in a speech of incantatory resonance, she calls upon Venus to be her aid in the successful seduction of the morally constrained Hippolyte.

Oenone a disparu comme par enchantement. Phèdre, subitement seule, retourne se blottir dans son coin favori. Le coin d'Hippolyte.

Mais cette fois c'est vers le haut qu'elle regarde...

C'est le moment des incantations de Phèdre à Vénus.

A Vénus dont elle était la victime - jusqu'alors l'innocente victime. A Vénus dont elle fait maintenant sa complice et avec qui elle consent à s'associer pour commettre le crime, pour 'faire le coup'.⁷⁰

There is no doubt that Barrault sees the monster that causes the death of Hippolyte as the material representation of the lascivious passion of Phèdre; throughout his notes to the play her love is described as 'une bête',⁷¹ and the severe concentration on the physical horror of the monster⁷² becomes the unquestionable image of the obsessive sensuality which Barrault deliberately emphasizes in his interpretation of Phèdre's character.

Initially, Barrault's treatment of Hippolyte appears to answer the traditional notion of this protagonist.

Hippolyte est le plus bel éphèbe de Grèce. Hippolyte est le plus beau cheval de Trézène.⁷³

69 - P.123.

70 - P. 133, 11.813-824.

71 - For example on p.87, 'La bête au dedans veut sortir.'

72 - 11.1515 et seq.

73 - P.67.

Thus Hippolyte would seem, in his untainted virility, to present a deliberate contrast to the hint of pristine chaos embodied by Phèdre and Oenone. However, he too is prey to the laws of Venus.

Hippolyte a la 'bête au ventre'. La fièvre, le remords le dévorent. Une passion l'obsède. Les veilles l'ont épuisé. Sa mine est creuse, son oeil est fixe.⁷⁴

Barrault concentrates on the parallelism in the evolution of these two protagonists in the play, and maintains that the explicit realization of this deliberate correspondance comes with a careful examination of the symmetry inherent in their emotional conditions and physical actions.

Au premier acte, l'aveu d'Hippolyte balancé par l'aveu de Phèdre; au deuxième acte la déclaration d'Hippolyte encore balancée par la déclaration de Phèdre; au troisième, ils optent tous deux pour leur passion.⁷⁵

This harmony is maintained until Act V,⁷⁶ and is the solid basis upon which a successful realization of Barrault's concept of total theatre depends.

Yet within this harmony exists a necessary contrast, without which the play would merely become a study in mirror images. The contrast is clearly formulated by the obvious differences between the two 'confidants'. Oenone, as we have seen, is the image, and perhaps the instrument of evil and destiny.⁷⁷ Thérémène represents the pure ideal of the sacred

74 - P.69. The violence of the passion here, described in terms analagous to those used in relation to Phèdre, would seem to have little justification within the poetic rhythm and content of the speeches by Hippolyte.

75 - P.16.

76 - P. 17. 'Ce n'est qu'après le 'IV' qu'ils divergent, comme deux tiges, qui s'étant élevées parallèlement, se séparent l'une de l'autre, entraînées par le poids de leur fleur au moment de l'éclatement.'

77 - There is also the vital difference that at one particular moment in the tragedy, Hippolyte does have a glimpse of pure happiness, cf.p113: 'Nous sommes au point le plus lumineux de la tragédie. Nous vivons les quelques secondes où le bonheur pouvait être possible'.

unity propounded by Greek philosophy, and he is able to remind Hippolyte of his social duty and to remind us of the essential quality of nobility prefigured by Hippolyte.

Grâce à Théràmène, Hippolyte-amoureux reste bien un Hippolyte grec.⁷⁸

Yet there is an element of Oenone in Hippolyte, and an element of Théràmène in Phèdre.⁷⁹ This demonstrates clearly how Barrault envisaged the thematic harmony through the protagonists. None exists in complete autonomy from the rest, but acts in reaction to, and is influenced by, the others.⁸⁰

We are presented with the microcosm of a society where each person is heavily reliant on the other members, and where the transgression of one from the accepted moral and spiritual order has a direct and cumulative effect on the whole social structure. It is here that I feel that perhaps Barrault's concept of an all-embracing symphonic harmony obviates the implementation of his thematic interpretation. It would seem to me that this harmony can only exist in terms of the retention of a harmonious social pattern; Phèdre's digression from the norm at those moments when, in complete surrender to her passion, her previous sense of self-recrimination vanishes, should sound a cacophonous note in the 'mise en scène'. Her rôle should not predominate, but it should

78 - P.69.

79 - As we have already seen, Hippolyte bears the physical evidence of an illicit passion, of the kind of guilt imaged by Oenone; Phèdre retains some of her noble heritage in her sincere desire to resist her passion.

80 - Barrault again delineates this inter-relation in his analysis of the rôles of Aricie and Ismène.

'Aricie, c'est la traduction féminine d'Hippolyte... Ismène, c'est Aricie sans le malheur au bout. C'est le double ensoleillé d'Aricie.' pp.99-101.

So too, Panope is an integral part of this whole.

'C'est le 'pendant' homothétique d'Oenone; sa 'correspondance' favorable. C'est Oenone sans la mission funeste que celle-ci doit remplir.' p.95.

be clearly felt that her action would tend to disrupt the established harmony. If Phèdre is integrated totally into the order, then she no longer becomes a threat, and is therefore committing no sin. There should be a tension between her admission of sinful intent and the order inherent in this Greek universe. If this tension does not exist, and primarily through the language, then the extreme emphasis placed on her sensuality, the extreme emphasis placed on Thérémène's nobility, cannot be successfully encompassed within the play.⁸¹ Barrault, as we have seen, is especially concerned with expressing the action through the language and through the apposite management of the musical tonality, where no discordant note should be struck. This intent is at odds with the vision he has of the emotional environment and conflict, which is based on a contrast between order and chaos. Our first awareness of deviation from the norm⁸² is Phèdre's admission of the love she feels; however, instead of creating a cacophonous opposition to the general sense of euphonic balance, Barrault insists that the actress maintain throughout a constant sense of harmony.

Phèdre s'est agitée comme un malade qui, sous l'effet d'une crise, se retourne dans son lit. Dans cette crise, ne pas oublier toutefois la musicalité des vers.⁸³

Les vers qui se terminent par des points d'exclamation ne doivent pas être 'lancés', au contraire: ce sont des points d'appui intérieur, pendant lesquels Phèdre respire et reprend de l'élan... Dans la diction de tout récit qui retrace le passé, les contours sont arrondis. Le récitatif n'en est que plus harmonieux.⁸⁴

81 - It could perhaps be argued that these two extremes represent opposite poles and thus are in aesthetic balance. However, I feel that the sheer violence of Phèdre, coupled with the evil intent latent to Oenone, create a far more powerful force within the structure of the play.

82 - See below for how this is translated into scenic terms in the décor itself.

83 - P.89.

84 - P.91.

That Barrault intended to present Phèdre's state as a violation of the accepted moral strictures, is made evident in his precise delineation of the 'physical environment. The dominant motif in the scenery is a contrast between light and dark.

Deux éléments contrastants doivent donc former le décor :

- d'une part : la lumière, le soleil, l'air marin;
- d'autre part : des coins sombres donnés par les murs et les voûtes.⁸⁵

In normal times Trézène is a place of repose and peace; a place of refuge where past sins can be expiated through undisturbed reflection. However, a paradox now reigns, since in this land of sun, people now flee the light.

Dans ce pays de lumière, on cherche l'ombre; on s'y cache... Il y a du cauchemar à Trézène.⁸⁶

There is thus a certain element of discordance vital to Barrault's interpretation of the play, which I feel is to some extent negated by the concern with musical harmony. Phèdre's behaviour, as understood by Barrault, is, by its very extreme nature, abnormal within the confines of the particular social system of the Trézène depicted here; as the action is created through the language, this discordance should find an expression through the rhythms and tonalities of the spoken word.

Barrault does not examine in exhaustive detail the musical quality of each line in the play,⁸⁷ but basically devotes his intention to pointing out the main changes in quality of tone. Nevertheless, at no moment does he lose

85 - P.30.

86 - P.30.

87 - This is a deliberate intention. See p.71.

'Il serait déplacé de continuer une telle comparaison pendant les 1654 vers de la tragédie....'

sight of his original concept;⁸⁸ as late as Act V, scene VI, he is prepared to concentrate his notes on a detailed musical annotation of Thérèse's account of Hippolyte's death.

Oraison funèbre de la mort d'Hippolyte

7. Commence le récitatif de l'oraison funèbre d'Hippolyte.
8. Pose du poème. Thérèse impose au théâtre son rythme personnel.
9. La marche d'Hippolyte.
10. Secousse intérieure, changement de timbre. Economiser l'intensité vocale. Le cri est effroyable mais éloigné. Il n'y a pas encore d'apparition.
11. Frémissement général.
12. Quart de temps. Ce qu'on a entendu, maintenant on va le voir. Départ lent. Large et crescendo jusqu'à la fin du vers 1516.
13. Rapide, anxieux, sonore et précipité.
14. Diminuendo rapide du souffle général de l'orchestre. L'orchestre, comme les flots, s'est résorbé d'épouvante.
15. Court point d'orgue.⁸⁹

He therefore demonstrates extremely clearly his evaluation that the successful interpretation of Racine depends on a proper understanding of the inter-play of language within his poetry. Since he can find no adequate theatrical equivalent to the method of scoring used in music, he naturally relies on the terminology of the other art for his treatment of the poetic 'score' in Phèdre. His study, with the dual emphasis on the syntactical and musical, analyzed both in his general introduction and in the play itself, is of undoubted value to any artist wishing to accomplish a valid interpretation of Racine, since it restores to the poetry the preponderant rôle it should have.

88 - cf. p.89, note 37; p.123, note 47; p.151, note 4; p.101, note 6, etc.

89 - I have not given all the notes here since he continues this detailed analysis with sixteen more notes. The speech and notes are on pp.180-185.

Barrault's 'mise en scène' is designed to proclaim the triumph of reason over passion, of calm lucidity over a world threatened with disintegration into the chaos of unbridled eroticism, and the triumph in art of symmetry and collective performance over excessive individualism. As I have stated above, the achievement of the the latter precludes to some extent the successful realization of the former. Barrault does in many instances allow the poetic rhythm to control the physical actions, and in so doing, looks back to the theatre of Ancient Greece and liturgical drama of the Middle Ages.

5. Ex.de précision : le premier vers peut rythmer la marche d'Hippolyte, qui doit être placé au mot 'Théramène'. Le deuxième vers est un legato qui est soutenue par un tour lent de la tête d'Hippolyte vers la face.⁹⁰

It would seem that, given this facet of his interpretation, he could almost have adopted the Greek convention of the mask in his 'mise en scène', since his vision, in its contrast of elemental violence and heroic nobility,⁹¹ its use of rhythms bordering on the ritual, the hieratical emphasis demand the use of costumes stylized to the utmost simplicity, as in the theatre of Ancient Greece. It is significant that he describes Oenone as a 'véritable pleureuse antique',⁹² and that he maintains the décor should be virtually invisible, given that both metaphysically and materially, Oenone, Thésée, and Théramène, form the environment around which the play evolves.

Thésée, Théramène, Oenone : voilà le véritable décor, la 'couleur locale'. Sur eux jouent alternativement les ombres et les lumières. Contre eux viennent, ou s'abriter comme dans une crique, ou échouer contre un

90 - p.71.

91 - In Barrault's interpretation, Thésée is the epitome of nobility and heroism.

'De tous les personnages de la tragédie, Thésée est le seul qui arrive avec un esprit clair et direct ... Il revient donc de ses mâles aventures, la conscience nette, l'oeil franc, uniquement préoccupé de sa famille et de l'amour absolu qu'il ressent pour sa jeune reine : Phèdre.... Il représente ce qu'il y a de beau dans l'âge adulte.' P.141.

écueil, les futures victimes qui bientôt seront précipitées dans la mort.⁹³

The protagonists interact therefore not only on a spiritual level, but through an almost organic unity with the poetry itself and its very texture.⁹⁴ I do not believe that the intended power of Barrault's vision is translated into adequate theatrical practice on the stage.

One unfortunate aspect of the printed 'mise en scène' is Barrault's tendency to indulge in generalizations on the art of the theatre and more especially of the actor. Of necessity, since his prime aim must be the interpretation of Racine's Phèdre, his observations on theatrical technique have to be limited in their scope, and thus tend to the simplistic. When he examines the evolution of the actor through the process of rehearsal to the actual performance, he comes to a conclusion which, in theatrical terms, had long before become a truism.⁹⁵

L'art de l'acteur est composé à la fois de l'art du geste et de l'art du verbe, appelés communément : la mimique et la diction. La mimique s'adresse à la vue et la diction, à l'ouïe. L'acteur dans son jeu, doit arriver à la synthèse du geste et du verbe, de même que le phénomène théâtral doit arriver à la synthèse des sensations visuelles et auditives.⁹⁶

93 - P.32.

94 - Barrault displays an extraordinary ability to relate poetry to material reality in his comparison of the form of the 'récitatif' and the action of a plane as it takes off. He has tried to reconcile two apparently opposing factors, the extreme of pragmatic materialism in its physical aspect, and the most refined and powerful classical poetry. In his 'mise en scène' I do not think he has realized this unity with the physical aspect he propounds in his image of the plane. See pp.55-56 for this image.

95 - Barrault does to some extent justify the re-stating of such truisms, as we shall see in my conclusion to this chapter.

96 - P.41.

When he describes the actor as an 'athlète affectif',⁹⁷ he is making an explicit avowal of his debt to Artaud,⁹⁸ yet does not sufficiently enlarge on his own evaluation of this term. To provide an intelligible explanation of his vision of the function and practice of the theatre, it would have been necessary to devote a separate work to the proper analysis of these ideas. Placed here in abrupt simplicity, they can only mar our judgement. By the end of his introduction, Barrault has in fact become aware of the deficiency.

Une étude plus approfondie de ces problèmes ferait le sujet d'un important ouvrage qu'il est impossible d'aborder ici.⁹⁹

However, despite the faults mentioned, this work has an unquestionable value in the correct appreciation and valid performance of Racine's plays. Barrault set out, not to impose a preconceived and consciously unique vision on the play, but to serve it, and thus to serve Racine.

En la circonstance, il ne s'agit plus de plaider pour la tragédie de Racine, il y a longtemps que sa cause est entendue; notre but, dans ce qui va suivre, sera donc uniquement de servir l'oeuvre avec respect, enthousiasme et amour.¹⁰⁰

All artists must become the total servant of the work, and interpret it from within.

... ceux qui sur une scène sont chargés de faire vivre la tragédie ne sont ni juges, ni témoins, ni critiques, mais serviteurs et, le cas échéant, avocats. Leur tâche est de servir et au besoin de plaider pour. Ils doivent pour cela s'incorporer à; ils doivent l'épouser.¹⁰¹

97 - P.36.

98 - cf. Le Théâtre et son double, pp.195-207.

99 - P.64.

100 - P.15.

101 - P.14.

Because of his emphasis on the collective, he restored¹⁰² the accurate balance between the characters, that balance which is essential to protect the play from becoming a vehicle for the performance of one actress. Because of his concentration on the verse, he managed to elucidate and illustrate the vital force of Racine's plays. Furthermore, he was thus able to present to the public in the 1942/43 season, not a purely traditional 'mise en scène' which, while it would solace them with a feeling of the constancy of French culture, could not embolden them with a sense of the continuing renewal of this same culture, but one where the aspects of tradition and artistic progress were in complete harmony.¹⁰³

The main reason for the lack of artistic success of the production in 1942 was a salient and, at first view, incomprehensible disparity between Jean-Louis Barrault's intentions and the actual décor. In effect, the causes of this discordance were to be found not in a lack of aesthetic sophistication on the part of the 'décorateur', Jean Hugo, as was believed at the time by many critics, but in the contingencies of historical circumstance.

Jean Hugo is primarily a painter,¹⁰⁴ and this trait permeates every aspect of his work. '....quelle que soit la discipline adoptée, il se montre toujours profondément peintre.'¹⁰⁵

102 - This aspect is given added depth by Barrault extending it to a concept of duality, inherent to the relationships in the play (cf. above) and within the characters themselves (cf. Mise en scène, p.73, footnote 1).

103 - In the original edition of 1946, Barrault included in the 'mise en scène' a section devoted to a brief survey of the traditional attitudes adopted by critics, from the polemic between the Jansenists who supported the play and the Jesuits who did not, to the theory that the play was only written as the result of a 'gageure'. The five pages devoted to this examination are omitted in the edition published in the Collection Points series. Quite possibly Barrault realized that this part too was guilty of an extreme sense of generalization.

104 - This is in direct contrast to Boll, who of course was intensely interested in the actual physical proportions and interrelationships on the stage.

105 - Lévêque, Jean-Jacques, 'Jean Hugo', L'Information

In his artistic ethic there is a two-fold concern; a desire for a harmonious interplay of shapes and colours, and a meticulous simplicity in delineation. We find these elements exemplified in his paintings:

... on retrouve dans ses nouveaux paysages sa minutie sans sécheresse, sa volonté d'écriture précise et propre, le sens presque musical qu'il a des rapports du ciel avec les murs, et surtout le registre harmonieux décalé vers les gris, les bleus lavande, les roses.¹⁰⁶

and in his treatment of theatrical design.

Le talent de Jean Hugo est volontairement schématique; aucune recherche du réalisme: il veut et réussit à suggérer par quelques indications sommaires, naïves, souvent grossières, le lieu où se déroule l'action. Ses discours ont un style bien à lui et son harmonie préférée est faite d'une rose tendre, d'un bleu clair, d'un jaune safrané, que viennent fréquemment rehausser des noires intenses.¹⁰⁷

These dominating interests tend to create an art which has little affinity with reality.

His first venture into the realm of the theatre was in 1921, when he designed the costumes and masks for Jean Cocteau's Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, and throughout his career as a 'décorateur' he would attempt to translate into scenic terminology his talent as a painter. He has now virtually forsaken the theatre in order to concentrate on the successful transposition onto canvas of the Mediterranean beauty of the Languedoc.¹⁰⁸ However in 1942, he was still very interested in the theatre, and willing to devote his attention to Jean-Louis Barrault's production of Phèdre.

106 - De Colombier, Pierre, 'Jean Hugo', Beaux Arts (January 1941).

107 - Boll, André, 'Un décorateur; Jean Hugo', Paris-Soir (May 13th, 1927). The reason for the obvious lack of sympathy here is evident from my description of Boll's work above.

108 - Hugo continues to paint, and frequently has exhibitions of his work, especially in the Musée Fabre of Montpellier.

In the introductory section of his 'mise en scène' Barrault is extremely precise in his recommendations for the décor which would be in accord with his interpretation of the text. As is the case for the actual staging of the play, the indications given for the creation of the décor by Racine are negligible. Apart from this, 'la scène est à Trézène, ville du Péloponnèse',¹⁰⁹ the only hints have to be gleaned from the poetry; Barrault enumerates a number of these:

Du reste du texte nous remarquons des vers, ou des tronçons de vers, tels que :

Le séjour de l'aimable Trézène.

De ces paisibles lieux, si chers à votre enfance
Les forêts de nos cris moins souvent retentissent.
Tantôt faire voler un char sur le rivage
Ah! que ne suis-je assise à l'ombre des forêts.
Quand pourrai-je, au travers d'une noble poussière
Suivre de l'oeil un char fuyant dans la carrière.

et encore

Il me semble déjà que ces murs, que ces voûtes

et par contre

Mes yeux sont éblouis du jour que je revois
Entrer. C'est trop garder un doute qui m'accable, etc.¹¹⁰

It is from these few elements that Barrault through the bias of his own interpretation of the play, bases his evaluation of the physical environment on the essential contrast vital to the work.

La tâche du décorateur réside donc dans une savante répartition des ombres et des lumières.¹¹¹

In a city where the sun, the sea, the forests, provide the ideal material environment for tranquil meditation, there is an oppressive and stifling silence. Thus the preponderant

109 - Phèdre (Nouveaux Classiques Larousse) , p.34.

110 - 'Mise en scène', p.29.

111 - *ibid.* p.30.

concern of the 'décorateur' in his composition must be a deliberate attempt to make manifest the contrast between sun and shadow.

Deux éléments contrastants doivent donc former le décor:

- d'une part : la lumière, le soleil, l'air marin;
- d'autre part : des coins sombres donnés par les murs et les voûtes.¹¹²

The presence of the sun must be felt throughout the action¹¹³ and the areas of shadow must not be a cool and restful refuge from the sun, but must emanate a sense of suffocating warmth.¹¹⁴ In order that the play should not betray a total concentration on despair, there must be a positive visual symbol of the possibility of escape from the impending tragedy.

Les personnages sont 'enfermés', psychologiquement enveloppés, envoûtés par leurs passions; il nous faut donc devant les yeux un point lointain mais lumineux d'une sortie possible.¹¹⁵

In addition, given the severely classical nature of Phèdre, there should be no scenic accessory which is not immediately relevant to the action.¹¹⁶ According to Barrault's vision, the real décor is constituted by Oenone, Thésée, and Théràmène.

Neptune qui exécute, c'est la chevelure ondulée de Thésée. Neptune est dans Thésée.

Les bois, les arcs, les javelots, le char, les préparatifs du voyage constamment remis : c'est Théràmène. Le vol néfaste des oiseaux, le Destin, les pleureuses antiques, le goût de l'huile, les parfums lourds qui annoncent l'Orient, les superstitions païennes, le corbeau du malheur enfin : c'est Oenone.

Thésée, Théràmène, Oenone : voilà le véritable décor, la 'couleur locale'.¹¹⁷

112 - P.30.

113 - 'On doit sentir constamment la présence du soleil Il suffit de fissures justement disposées dans les murs, et à travers lesquelles le soleil s'infiltrera, pour donner une impression de grande luminosité.' p.31.

114 - 'Les ombres, elles, doivent avoir des tonalités chaudes.' p.31.

115 - P.31.

116 - P.31.

117 - P.32.

In order that the attention of the audience should not be diverted from them, the actual inanimate material environment should, while subtly evoking the contrasts and atmosphere mentioned above, become inconspicuous.

Le reste doit être invisible. Là gît toute la difficulté pour le décorateur. Rendre le cadre invisible.¹¹⁸

Finally Barrault defines his vision of the geometric emplacement of the décor in terms of four 'chemins', each with a precise function.

Il y a le chemin d'Hippolyte, il y a le chemin d'Aricie, il y a le chemin de Phèdre, et enfin il y a le chemin de l'évasion; c'est par ce dernier qu'on aperçoit le coin lointain de ciel. Par ce chemin arrivera le roi qui provoquera la mort (Thésée). Par ce chemin on s'enfuit vers la mort (Oenone, Hippolyte). Par ce chemin reviendra l'homme qui racontera la mort (Théramène).¹¹⁹

Thus Barrault intends by this precise disposition of the décor, to provide the visual equivalent of the structural and poetic symmetry which in his view governs Racine's play.

It is clear that the artistic ethic of the 'décorateur', in order to realize the scenic ideals established by Jean-Louis Barrault, should be dominated by a consciousness of the relationship between volume and space, and light. Any overabundance of colour or decoration would detract from the original interpretation; the décor should be visualized as an architectonic structure whose presence is felt rather than consciously seen. That the décor of Jean Hugo was only partially in harmony with the ideas of his 'metteur en scène' is not due to any lack of mutual accord between the artists,¹²⁰ or any undue imposition by the designer of his personal vision, but, as mentioned above,

118 - P.32.

119 - PP.32-33.

120 - See below.

was due to the predicament of the contemporary situation. In 1938 the then 'administrateur général' of the Comédie-Française, Edouard Bourdet, had commissioned from Jean Hugo an all-purpose décor, which could serve for all the classical tragedies in the company's repertoire.¹²¹ Hugo's décor was constructed in 1939 and was thus already in the 'réserve' in 1942. We have seen earlier how material contingencies influenced the choice of the same 'mise en scène' and décor for Hamlet in 1932 and 1942, and here similar considerations prevailed: Hugo's conception was based on the theme of the labyrinth.

Il devait évoquer, dans mon idée, un piège où les personnages sont pris, un labyrinthe dont ils ne peuvent trouver l'issue.¹²²

Therefore, by its very form it corresponded to some extent to Barrault's theory. However, Barrault's four 'chemins' become five,¹²³ which of course contradicts the logic of his initial notion, since we now have two 'chemins sorties (Evasion)', whereas an exact adherence to the precepts of absolute symmetry would require only one.

The most pointedly evident discrepancy lies in the total absence of the 'coin de ciel';¹²⁴ certainly the presence of the sun can be emphasized by a skilful adjustment of the lighting,¹²⁵ but an essential element of Barrault's interpretation was negated by the absence of this permanent reminder of hope, of the normal quality of peace prevalent in Trézène.

121 - See the letter sent to me by Hugo, dated May 25th, 1974, p.1, reproduced as Appendix E2.

122 - *ibid.*, p.1.

123 - Compare the plan as sketched by Barrault for the edition of the 'mise en scène', the photo here, with his original intentions, *Appendices E5 and E6*.

124 - This is apparent from the photo.

125 - See below for his disagreement with Barrault.

Thus it can be seen that two of Barrault's main preoccupations have not been translated in their entirety into scenic terms, that of symmetry and that of contrast. It would seem also that the décor is too intrusive on the audience's concentration; its design is too apparent and too decorative adequately to fulfil Barrault's intention. Certainly Hugo has successfully realized his own original vision, as the set does evoke with power a maze without exit, but unfortunately and inevitably it is not in complete accordance with Barrault's ideas.

The need that Barrault felt for an architectonic emphasis is amply demonstrated by the disagreement between Hugo and himself over the lighting.¹²⁶ His definite aim was to use cross-lighting from behind the flats to produce a pronounced contrast of light and shade,¹²⁷ and to delineate clearly the contours of the set.

Jean-Louis Barrault, dans la tradition de Gordon Craig, voulait des lumières venant des côtés de la scène... un éclairage pour des décors faits par des sculpteurs ou des photographes, non par des peintres.¹²⁸

In contrast Hugo wanted to use only the footlights and floats, in order to create a subdued kind of light, where light and shadow would blend harmoniously. Of course he was thinking from the point of view of the painter, and indeed likens his desire to the achievement of Degas in painting:

Je n'aime... qu'un éclairage... de face, donnant la lumière qu'on voit dans les pastels de danseuses de Degas.¹²⁹

The effect would perhaps have been more pleasing to the eye, 'c'est vrai qu'avec la rampe, nous étions bien plus jolies!'¹³⁰

126 - This is a perennial argument on the stage, and we have already seen its effects in the relationship between André Boll and Barrault.

127 - A contrast vital to his vision as we have seen.

128 - Letter, p.2.

129 - *ibid.*

130 - Hugo quoting Madeleine Renaud in the same letter, when she joined in the debate.

but at odds with the intended interpretation.

Although the scenery itself had been imagined and constructed prior to Jean-Louis Barrault's arrival in the Comédie-Française, the costumes were especially designed for this production. Hugo was confronted with the usual but pertinent problem of how to translate onto the set the particular costumes of Ancient Greece or Rome, transmuted by the thematic content of Racinian tragedy. Originally the majority of plays in the French classical repertoire were intended to be played in costumes much akin to the sartorial fashions of the contemporary period, with no attempt to relate directly to the Greek and Roman heritage; this was an obvious development, since, although the actual story may have owed its existence to ancient Greek culture, the spiritual and emotional interplay and the social undertones were derived from seventeenth century French culture. There is an obvious danger of a blatant discord between the ideas expressed in the play and the costumes worn, if these have an exact resemblance to the classical original. Hugo strove to solve this difficulty by creating highly stylized costumes, which embodied the influences of Minoan dress and the fashions prevalent under Louis XIV.¹³¹ He was faced with a further problem since he conceived décor and costumes at different times.

Jean Hugo achieved his stylization through the use of painted costumes,¹³² according to André Boll his greatest innovation in the theatre.

¹³¹ - *ibid.*, p.1.

¹³² - Due to a perfect understanding with the dressmaker, there was no discrepancy between the design and the completed costume.

'Quant aux costumes ils furent exécutés à merveille par Mme Kazinska... qui savait interpréter exactement mes maquettes et obtenir le résultat que je voulais.'

ibid., p.1.

Là surtout, où il fait oeuvre de novateur, c'est dans cette merveilleuse utilisation du costume peint... il rehausse leur éclat par des indications peintes qui en exaltent la préciosité.¹³³

Naturally there is an immediate and unhappy contrast with the sculptural emphasis endowed on the scenery by the lighting. The 'maquettes' show this concern with stylization, since the figures are frozen in poses reminiscent of ancient Greek and Roman art. It does not seem to me that Hugo sufficiently observed Barrault's desire for the utmost simplicity and elimination of unnecessary adornment and ornamentation. In the 'mise en scène', Thérèse's costume is described as '... long, de couleur neutre, en tissu grossier, très grande simplicité',¹³⁴ yet the contrast of brown, black, light blue and white, the intricate design of the toga, do not really realize this concept. All Barrault desired in the costume of Phèdre was a predominance of red.

Pour son costume, que dire? sinon que sa couleur symbolique est le rouge.¹³⁵

The two final costumes worn by Marie Bell in the production present an unhappy mixture of intricate decoration and contrasts of colour, though red does in fact predominate. The elemental violence of the emotional interplay is not properly transcribed by these costumes.

Through force of historical circumstance (i.e. the obligation to use a ready-made décor rather than one especially conceived for this 'mise en scène'), Hugo found himself obliged to undertake a radical transformation of his pictorial style,

133 - Boll, André, 'Un décorateur; Jean Hugo', Paris-Soir (May 13th, 1927).

134 - 'Mise en scène', p.69.

135 - Ibid., p.89.

which patently was not analagous to the vision of Phèdre held by Barrault. In this case the union was doomed to artistic failure, though it is clear that Barrault appreciated that this was a result of circumstance, since in 1946 he again collaborated with Hugo in the creation of Shakespeare's Antoine et Cléopâtre.¹³⁶

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the reactions to the production were diverse. Although, in general terms, the 'mise en scène' itself was approved of, many critics had severe reservations about the décor. Prominent among these was Robert Kemp, who described décor and costumes in the following fashion:

... ostentatoires, prétentieusement archéologiques, ont violenté notre intérêt, indiscretement occupé nos regards, et tout faussé. Ces décors et ces costumes, inspirés des fouilles crétoises, notamment ce hammam-palace, pareil à un casino thermal déserté en fin de saison... Et ces costumes qu'Euripide lui-même, qui vivait mille ans après la destruction de Cnossos, n'a jamais pu se figurer, et encore moins Racine, pour qui tout la Grèce était celle du Vème siècle, celle de Phidias.

La Phèdre rêvée par Barrault avait été assassinée in ovo par M. Jean Hugo.¹³⁷

136 - First letter to me from Hugo, dated February 8th, 1974, p.1.

137 - Kemp, Robert, 'Sur une édition de Phèdre', Une semaine dans le monde (June 15th, 1946).

Yet Georges Pelerson in Révolution Nationale reacted with enthusiasm to this same décor, which, though he states that it does not correspond exactly with the precepts as explained in the 'mise en scène', nevertheless it was very pleasing to the eye.¹³⁸ He has no reservations about the costumes.

Les costumes, très crétois d'allure, sont par contre excellents... Et il faut savoir gré à Jean Hugo d'avoir donné aux couleurs leur signification et d'être allé au delà même de la pure joie des jeux...¹³⁹

Barrault's 'mise en scène' was seen as the justification of the description of genius, applied to him both by Claudel and by André Gide.¹⁴⁰ Cocteau would maintain that this new production had freed Phèdre of all the restrictive traditions which the Parisian public had come to associate with performances of works from the classical repertory of the Comédie-

138 - Pelerson, Georges, 'Fille de Minos et de Jean-Louis Barrault', Révolution Nationale (January 29th, 1944).

139 - ibid.

140 - Kemp, Robert, 'Sur une édition de Phèdre', Une semaine dans le monde (June 15th, 1946).

Française. Whatever the reaction of critic or public, nobody, according to André Thérive,¹⁴¹ left the Rue de Richelieu without being powerfully affected by Barrault's Phèdre:

La Phèdre en costumes de Cnossos, où le jeune Dacqmine était cloué comme une moustique sur un portant par la reine audacieuse, dans ce dédale de caissons florentins faits pour Eurydice et Lucrèce, a laissé une impression très forte à ceux-mêmes qui la discutaient.¹⁴²

Despite the anomalous elements in the décor, and the critical reaction, the particular union apparent in the 'mise en scène' between respect for tradition and innovation allowed the play considerable success with the contemporary public. Not only did they see exemplified the depth and strength of the cultural 'patterns' embodied in Phèdre, but they were assured of the continuing vitality of these 'patterns'. The reprinting of the 'mise en scène' since the war has permitted it to become a 'conditioning element' in itself. There can be no dispute about the cultural significance of Racine's play. Furthermore the French, in the humiliating and oppressive conditions of their daily life, were forced to be aware not simply of material discomfort, but of the precarious nature of their worldly existence; they were obliged to come to terms with the metaphysical problem of a reconciliation with the concept of imminent death. In Racine's play, where a rigorous application of the Classical ethic allows a full concentration on the essential conflict between man and the Infinite, the French could find a cathart^sis peculiarly relevant to their own immediate concerns.

141 - Kemp, Robert, *ibid.*

142 - Thérive, André, 'Le Plaisir du théâtre français', Panorama (November 4th, 1943).

6) The Comédie-Française as an institution

Whereas it would not be pertinent here to enter into a detailed elaboration of the history of the Comédie-Française from its foundation unto the present day, it is nevertheless germane to my study to devote some analysis to the historical aspect of this institution, in order to find its relevance in the cultural framework of Occupied France.

As a state theatre, its institutional and artistic importance as an artifact, as the symbol of French theatrical tradition, and as a vital element of French society, is paramount. Its very administration, as we shall see, provides us with a microcosmic representation of the bureaucratic bias of French society. The 'Illustre Théâtre' has existed since June 1643, when, under the inspiration of one of its youngest members, Baptiste Poquelin,¹ the members of Molière's troupe signed the 'acte de fondation'. However, during the reign of Louis XIV, two other troupes existed, the Théâtre du Marais, and the Hôtel de Bourgogne; the rivalry between the three was intense, and often bitter. After Molière's death, his troupe and that of the Marais joined together in the Hôtel Guénégaud. Later in his reign, in 1680, Louis XIV decided to join all three into one united troupe to be called the Comédiens du Roi, and to be in effect the only theatre in Paris.² The Société des Comédiens Français came into existence in 1681, although the actual word 'sociétaire' did not make its appearance until 1804 when the artistes signed a new contract.³ In 1685 the fundamental financial structure of the Comédie-Française was established, based on the concept of 23 parts divided into 276 'douzièmes'.⁴ It was not until

1 - Nepveu-Degas, Jean, 'L'Illustre Théâtre', Comoedia (June 26th, 1943).

2 - Carrière, Paul, 'Une société pas comme les autres', Comédie-Française, No.30 (June-July 1974), p.16.

3 - See below for the power of the Comédie-Française during the Occupation.

4 - See below for significance in 1943.

after the signing by Napoleon in 1812 of the Décret de Moscou,⁵ when the Comédie-Française found itself unable to maintain financial autonomy, that the theatre finally came under the power of the state.⁶ Since that time the structure of the Comédie-Française has remained in its essential form unchanged.

Les régimes successifs n'ont apporté que des changements mineurs au décret de Moscou, les retouches successives que celui-ci a subies n'ont fait que l'adapter à des nécessités modernes....⁷

Through its close affiliation to the state, and through its duty to create and maintain a repertoire of French theatre, its history has become intimately connected with, and almost inseparable from, that of France.

Already in 1879 the Comédie-Française had evolved far beyond the situation of a normal theatre, whose very existence is often rendered ephemeral by the vicissitudes of historical circumstance and social attitudes. Bentley quotes Francisque Sarcey's explanation of why Britain could not have a parallel institution:

Because when you transplant a tree you have to carry with it the soil the roots are sunk in; the roots of the Comédie-Française are in French history which cannot be lifted.⁸

Bentley further quotes Henry James' appreciation of the Comédie-Française, as it appeared in a New York weekly in 1879:

The Théâtre Français has had the good fortune to be able to allow its traditions to accumulate. They have been preserved, transmitted, respected, cherished,

5 - Carrière, P.16.

6 - *ibid.*

7 - *ibid.*

8 - Bentley, Eric, What is the Theatre (London, 1969), p.249.

until at last they form the very atmosphere, the vital air of the establishment... It has a peculiar perfection - something consecrated, historical, academic.⁹

Its vital source could be discerned as springing from French society, and thus it had become at once uniquely French and incapable of transplantation. Throughout the three hundred years of its existence until 1943, the Comédie-Française had continued in its purpose to preserve, protect, and represent French theatre. In 1814 and 1815, the theatre suspended its activities only when hostile forces were at the gates of Paris, and then briefly.

Relâche motivé sur ce que la Ville de Paris a été déclarée hier soir en état de siège, attendu que les armées des puissances coalisées commandées par le duc de Wellington et le Général Blücher ne sont qu'à trois ou quatre lieues de cette ville.¹⁰

The closure lasted only for a period of ten days. During the 1914-1918 war, the Comédie-Française pursued its duty with such vigour and tenacity that between December 6th, 1914, and November 10th, 1918, there were 1,443 performances on its stage.¹¹ During the Occupation, despite material discomfort and privation, despite frequent interruptions because of air-raids,¹² the Comédie-Française reopened swiftly, and maintained virtually normal activity.

Given the disintegration of the French political and governmental edifice, the erosion and mutation of social mores,¹³ the French people found within the Comédie-Française, both through its artistic activity and through the very environment

9 - Bentley, Eric, What is the Theatre (London, 1969), p.248.

10 - Mas, Emile, 'La Comédie-Française pendant les révolutions et les guerres', Le Petit Bleu (September 2nd, 1939).

11 - *ibid.*

12 - See below for details of these circumstances.

13 - See Chapter 2.

of the building, the continuing assurance of the permanence of French art, the relative autonomy of at least this element of their culture.¹⁴ The strength derived from its long traditions, its corporate structure, its generally conservative aspect,¹⁵ has assured its continued existence through all the political, sociological, and historical upheavals of French society since the seventeenth century. The French came to the Rue de Richelieu in 1943, not simply to indulge a need for escapism,¹⁶ not simply to effect a necessary catharsis, but came almost as they would to a religious ceremony, searching for reassurance of stability, for hope for the future. Had the Comédie-Française not been the state theatre, its function would have had no greater value than that of any other Parisian theatre. As a state institution, and a cultural museum, it transcended a purely theatrical rôle to attain a sociologically symbolic importance.

Although this dual aspect of theatre and state institution in these circumstances assumed particular importance, it paradoxically has been, and always will be, a frequent cause of dissension within and about the Comédie-Française. The survival of the theatre depends on the successful reconciliation of the artistic needs of a theatre, and the conservative, bureaucratic pressure of governmental policy. By extension, since their nomination to the 'sociétariat' must pass through the requisite minister, the 'sociétaires' become civil servants, and, as such, representatives of their nation. Their rôle becomes, not simply an artistic one, but, in a situation where the fabric of French society is threatened, a sociological one. Discussions, polemics, and analyses about the administrative structure of the Comédie-Française have constantly arisen during its history, no less so in the last war. Both Emile Mas and Georges Gabory published articles in this period examining this structure closely.

14 - See Chapter 2 for the limited amount of censure imposed on the theatre.

15 - Thus to the Germans, it did not present any danger as a possible source of revolutionary activity.

16 - See Chapter 2 for an examination of this need.

Le système du gouvernement de la Maison consiste dans l'accord ou l'opposition de deux principes. Principe républicain représenté par les Sociétaires et principe monarchique représenté depuis la Révolution de '48 par l'Administrateur Général.¹⁷

.... l'administration de la Comédie-Française repose sur une 'dualité' dont il est indispensable de conserver l'harmonie. D'une part, l'Association, la communauté; de l'autre, l'Etat.¹⁸

Before examining the course of the Comédie-Française during the 1942-43 season, it would be beneficial to elucidate briefly its exact administrative structure,¹⁹ as a proper understanding of much of its history depends on a lucid appreciation of these hierarchical details and procedural obligations.

Within the Comédie-Française the most powerful person is of course the Administrateur Général,²⁰ who is selected by the Minister, and is directly responsible to him. Decisions concerning the theatre, both administratively and artistically, are taken by the Comité d'Administration; this body is presided over by the Administrateur Général, and is composed of the senior 'sociétaire', called the 'Doyen',²¹ and seven other 'sociétaires'. A further body, the Assemblée Générale, is made up of all the 'sociétaires', and is also presided over by the Administrateur Général. Its basic

17 - Mas, Emile, 'La Constitution de la Comédie-Française', Comoedia (September 5th, 1942).

18 - Gabory, Georges, 'Le Problème de la Comédie-Française', Comoedia (July 26th, 1941).

19 - Although I use the present tense in my description of the functioning of the Comédie-Française, there have been some changes since the War. However the changes are only limited in scope and have in no way altered the basic structure of the theatre.

20 - At present this function is fulfilled by Pierre Dux, the 'metteur en scène' for La Reine Morte.

21 - There are no written texts to govern his duties; his fundamental function is to be the chief representative of the 'sociétaires'.

function is to elect representatives to the Comité d'Administration,²² to consider the latter's decisions, and to make felt to its representatives any anomalies or injustices. The Comité d'Administration meets at least once a month. However any major policy decision, and this includes recommendations for salary increases and promotion to the 'sociétariat', must be approved by the Minister. He has the power to veto any decision taken by the Comité. Obviously the whole atmosphere within the Comédie-Française depends to a great extent on the respective personalities and ideologies of the Minister and the Administrateur Général, and on the quality of the relationship between the two. It was this last element which most troubled Jean-Louis Barrault when offered the 'sociétariat', and which would ultimately cause him to leave the theatre when given the choice in the exceptional post-war circumstances.

Actuellement (et progressivement depuis 150 ans) l'Administrateur a acquis les pouvoirs, les droits comme aussi les responsabilités. Or, depuis deux ans que je sers la Comédie-Française, j'ai servi sous deux Administrateurs. En trois ans, il y en a eu trois. Pendant les cinq dernières années, il y en a eu quatre. Chaque fluctuation gouvernementale amène un nouvel Administrateur. A chaque Administrateur, l'esprit, l'esthétique même changent.²³

Barrault goes on to state unequivocally that he is prepared to work with the present 'sociétaires', and with Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, but that ultimately he cannot commit himself to a lifelong contract, when circumstances can be so radically altered by the advent of a new government. Should his

22 - Usually the Minister selects half the Comité.

23 - Minutes of the Comité d'Administration for the season 1942-1943, p.89. The excerpt is from Barrault's first letter to the Comité concerning his possible election to the 'sociétariat'. There will be a more detailed examination of this episode further on in the chapter.

personal aesthetic, to which he has committed himself for life, come into opposition with that of a new Administrateur Général, then he would find himself condemned to continual conflict. Thus, in Barrault's opinion, the only solution is to redefine the whole status and function of the Administrateur Général.

Ou bien l'Administrateur doit simplement redevenir délégué administratif du ministre, ou bien il doit être nommé à la vie, comme les sociétaires. Nous devons courir les mêmes risques.²⁴

His conclusion, in this letter, is therefore that he finds it impossible to accept the particular responsibilities entailed by the 'sociétariat'.

The third important administrative body, and the one most obviously concerned with the artistic side of the Comédie-Française, is the Comité de Lecture, which again is presided over by the Administrateur Général. Before a new play can be admitted to the repertoire, or a new translation or adaptation of a foreign work already in the repertoire can be accepted, they must be read by the Comité de Lecture, and approved by it. Once a new play, never before performed in any French theatre, has become part of the repertoire of the Comédie-Française, any other theatre wishing to put it on must apply to the state theatre for permission to do so. As we shall see from the minutes of the meetings of the Comité d'Administration in the 1942-1943 season, this is by no means a formality.

Amongst the performers there is a strict hierarchy. The maximum number of 'sociétaires' at any one time is thirty; their senior member becomes the 'Doyen', who in this particular season was Brunot.²⁵ Once a member has been elected to the 'sociétariat', and has accepted, he is, in theory at least, obliged to stay at the Comédie-Française for at least the next twenty years of his professional life.²⁶ Even after his retirement he must ask for permission from the Comité d'Administration and from the Minister to participate in an active fashion in any production on the Paris stage.²⁷ Any 'sociétaire' who wishes to indulge in any theatrical activity outside the 'Maison' must apply for permission to the same Comité. The status of the 'sociétaires' depends very much on the number of 'douzièmes' that they have.²⁸ On their admission to the 'sociétariat' they receive three 'douzièmes', and one and a half more are kept in reserve to be awarded during the course of the two years following their nomination. When a 'sociétaire' reaches the position of having twelve 'douzièmes', he is called 'sociétaire à part entière', and becomes one of the most influential members of the company. Below the 'sociétaires' in the hierarchy of this institution, come the 'pensionnaires', who are chosen for a year, and receive a salary. The situation of both categories comes under review towards the end of the calendar year in the 'Comités de fin d'année', often the scene of bitter disagreement, and the cause of violent reaction.²⁹ However, their respective positions differ pointedly; whereas the 'sociétaires' basically have only the

25 - At the time of writing, this position is held by Jacques Charon, who, in 1943, was merely a 'pensionnaire'. At the meeting of December 21st, 1942, he was described as a possible future candidate to the 'sociétariat'. However, even the position of the 'Doyen' comes under review, since in the same meeting it had to be decided whether to maintain Brunot in the troupe or not, since he had completed twenty years' service.

26 - This stipulation allied to the controversy over the cinema, would lead to the major problem in this season, Ledoux's desire to leave the Comédie-Française, and the attempts to prevent this.

27 - This principle had lapsed into misuse, and at a meeting on December 22nd, 1942, it was redefined. [as with an example of this]

28 - See p.153 of this chapter.

29 - In this particular season Mme Fontenay would provide.

size of the profit to worry about,³⁰ the 'pensionnaires' have much greater cause to be anxious, since their contract lasts only for a year, and the Comité can simply decide not to renew it.³¹ Of course it is from these that new 'sociétaires' are elected, when it is thought necessary, and when there is room.

One of the important aspects involved in becoming a 'sociétaire' is the element of social welfare this entails. A 'sociétaire' will not only receive a pension upon his retirement, but during his time at the Comédie-Française, he will be cared for financially in case of enforced absence through illness, or any other legitimate motive.³² This care extends not only to him, but to those members of his kin most directly dependant on him. Even after his death, the 'Maison' still feels responsibility for these relatives. In effect, the Comédie-Française is run as a commercial enterprise, and as such it must make profits, for upon these profits depend the earnings of the 'sociétaires', and the ability of the 'Illustre Théâtre' to fulfil its welfare obligations. State financial assistance is not enough to guarantee financial liquidity.

It is without doubt upon the corporative structure and the collective management that the existence of the theatre depends. The negation of this principle would certainly bring about its collapse as a theatrical institution, since the whole concept of the 'sociétaire' implies communal responsibility in the running of the theatre. This has assured the continued existence of the 'Maison' since 1680, and as Pierre Dux has stated, must remain the foundation of the administrative structure.

30 - There are, nevertheless, occasional 'mises à la retraite', but these are due to exceptional circumstances.

31 - A special principle was adopted in the 1942-1943 season relative to this point, as we shall see below.

32 - There are a multitude of examples of this welfare aspect in the 1942-1943 season, not only with reference to the 'sociétaires', but also with reference to the

.... ce comité est la base de la maison. C'est ce qui fait que la Comédie-Française est fondée sur une communauté. La première communauté théâtrale, puisqu'elle date de 1680. Il y a une direction collective, il faut l'accepter. Si elle n'existait pas, par quoi serait-elle remplacée? Par un directeur? Ce serait encore plus terrible. Je crois que si le principe de la cooptation était abandonné ce serait la fin de la Comédie-Française. Quoi qu'on ait pu en dire, ce principe a empêché, depuis une cinquantaine d'années, toute intervention ministérielle dans la nomination d'un sociétaire. Que la qualité de ce comité soit contesté sur le plan artistique ou moral, c'est une autre question, une question de personnes.'³³

During the Occupation, government had a limited and eventually transitory influence only within the confines of the Unoccupied Zone;³⁴ nevertheless, the social, administrative and artistic structures of the Comédie-Française were sufficiently strong for it to continue in its task as a cultural point of reference. Direct German influence was limited, and, although the problems concomitant to life in a conquered city during a war were certainly felt, they proved a negligible hindrance to the Comédie-Française in the pursuance of its duty.

Almost inevitably, in such a confined community, with so many personal financial situations and confirmed artistic credos dependent upon, and reacting with, each other, internal conflicts are frequent and often virulent. Jean-Louis Barrault did not enter the Comédie-Française unaware of this problem, although relative to the undoubted prestige and value of this theatre, it assumed secondary importance.

Les intrigues étaient célèbres. On avait coutume de dire que 'la société des Comédiens français était une grande famille comme les Atrides'.³⁵

33 - Dux, Pierre, in dialogue with Louis Dandrel, 'Un entretien avec M. Pierre Dux', Le Monde (October 5th, 1972). The Minister did, in 1942, have to approve the nomination of new 'sociétaires', as we shall see.

34 - The Unoccupied Zone was invaded by German forces on November 11th, 1942.

35 - Barrault, Jean-Louis, 'La Comédie-Française', in Souvenirs pour demain (Paris, 1972), p.148.

Many of the problems, in Barrault's opinion, stem from the growing influence of the state within the Comédie-Française. As mentioned above, the balance between the two poles of art and politics is a fine and precarious one.

Plus le Français avait besoin de l'état, plus les intrigues politiques s'infiltraient et détérioraient le système. C'est le drame de la Maison.³⁶

It is perhaps the unavoidable consequence of the gathering of so much individual talent that much dissension should arise. Perhaps, too, much of the vitality of the 'Maison' arises from the contrasting and conflicting talents of so many 'hommes de théâtre'.

A frequent source of disquiet and contention is the appointment of a new 'Administrateur Général'. Beatrix Dussane maintains that a new 'administrateur' must inevitably face hostility from some faction within the Comédie-Française.

Sauf chances exceptionnelles, un administrateur de la Comédie-Française est porté, est soutenu par l'espoir de ceux que mécontentait son prédécesseur, pendant les deux ou trois premières années de son administration. A partir de là, comme il lui est matériellement impossible d'administrer - mal ou bien - sans faire des mécontents à son tour, il commence à devoir compter avec cette coalition inévitable et qui va grossissant..³⁷

In the years leading up to the war there had been several changes of 'administrateur'. Emile Fabre, who had suffered strong criticism at the hands of the press, was replaced by

36 - Barrault, Jean-Louis, 'La Comédie-Française', in Souvenirs pour demain (Paris, 1972), p.148.

37 - Dussane, Béatrix, Notes de Théâtre (Lyon, 1951), pp.12/13. We have already seen what reservations this very problem evoked in Barrault's response to his possible nomination to the 'sociétariat'. Béatrix Dussane was obliged to leave the Comédie-Française in 1939 because of a decree published in January of that year by the Ministre de l'Education Nationale, Jean Zay. She was able to return to the Comédie-Française in February 1941, and take possession of her 'loge' which had been kept ready for her since 1939.

Edouard Bourdet, master of the 'Théâtre du Boulevard', and a noted theatrical technician with considerable personal prestige. He brought with him the three remaining members of the 'Cartel des Quatre',³⁸ with Jacques Copeau. Each of these major 'metteurs en scène' was supposed to contribute a certain number of productions to the Comédie-Française, while continuing to run his own theatre. Unfortunately, of the four, only Copeau went any distance in fulfilling his obligations. By 1939, Bourdet was suffering considerable disillusionment. At the outset of the war, Bourdet was seriously injured in an accident, and named Copeau as his interim successor. Upon his recovery, Bourdet returned to the Comédie-Française in order to resume his duties, only to find his resignation requested peremptorily by the Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux Arts, Ripert, and Copeau officially appointed as his successor. Baty, Dullin and Jouvet immediately resigned in support of Bourdet and sent a letter to Ripert openly dissociating themselves from Copeau:

Nommés metteurs en scène à la Comédie-Française en même temps qu'Edouard Bourdet en était nommé l'Administrateur, ayant été associés à son effort, nous nous devons de le suivre quand il en est écarté.³⁹

Internal dissension and discord increased in intensity and bitterness as the 'sociétaires' now split into two opposing factions; Dux and Ledoux resigned from the Comité de Lecture and from the Comité d'Administration in anger. However, 'le différend Copeau-Bourdet',⁴⁰ soon became meaningless, since the ascetic Copeau's intransigent and overt hostility towards the occupying forces brought about his enforced resignation. Jean-Louis Barrault describes the episode which finally incited the Germans to insist upon his removal from office.

38 - Pitoëff had died in 1936.

39 - This is an extract from the letter sent to Ripert, found in the periodical La France au travail (January 1st, 1941).

40 - This was the title commonly given in the newspapers of that period to this affair.

Copeau eut l'idée de fixer la première du Cid au 11 novembre, anniversaire de l'armistice de 1918. Pour les Allemands, ce n'était pas le bon. Avec la complicité des étudiants cela tourna en véritable manifestation patriotique. Copeau fut renvoyé dans ses foyers. Son courage était exemplaire.⁴¹

As soon as Copeau had been named titular head, the Germans had demanded his resignation within twenty-four hours. Bourdet refused to return, and it took Vichy two months to select a successor.

The man finally chosen was the 'Conservateur' of the Musée Carnavalet, Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, who had during Bourdet's time organized the 'matinées poétiques' at the Comédie-Française. It was he who faced the twofold difficulty posed by a theatrical company divided into two equally obdurate factions, and by a theatre suffering the privations of Occupation. It would not be without difficulty that he would reunite the 'sociétaires'.

The appointment of Jean-Louis Vaudoyer in 1941 as the 'Administrateur Général' of the Comédie-Française met with almost unanimous approval. Typical of the articles bordering on the eulogistic concerning his appointment is this one by Armory:

Jean-Louis Vaudoyer apportera chez Molière sa vive intelligence, son goût du beau et sa parfaite connaissance de notre patrimoine artistique.⁴²

The most common words used to describe him were: 'élégant', 'sensible', 'littéraire'. Without doubt he was a very refined and erudite man, since he had earned the Grand Prix de Littérature of the Académie Française in 1928. However he had little experience of the mechanics of running a theatre,

41 - Barrault, Souvenirs pour demain, p.149. Barrault's first rôle for the Comédie-Française was the lead in Le Cid.

One other possible reason for Copeau's swift removal from office might have been the fact that his son, Pascal, was broadcasting for De Gaulle from London on Free French Radio.

42 - Armory, 'M. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, administrateur général de la Comédie-Française', Les Nouveaux Temps (March 8th, 1941).

and even less experience in how to control the temperamental effusions of actors. Dussane recalls the difficulties he had in coping with these outbursts, frequently bordering on the histrionic.

Vaudoyer, fait pour vivre dans ces sociétés de bon ton où chacun possède l'art de maîtriser ses nerfs et de polir ses paroles, présidait en martyr ces hystriogonies⁴³

The meetings of the Comité d'Administration were often stormy, and occasionally violent.

Pourtant, si des événements récents était né un double courant qui divisait la maison, si les réunions du comité étaient parfois houleuses jusqu'à devenir sportivement pugilistiques, on continuait de travailler.⁴⁴

Yet Vaudoyer had not set about his task in ignorance of the difficulties, and he saw as his prime duty the need to restore unity to a theatre where discord divided its members.

J'ai trouvé une Comédie-Française en effervescence. Deux factions, également sincères, étaient aux prises. Mon but était avant tout de rétablir l'union.⁴⁵

By the 1942-1943 season he had brought about enough stability within the confines of the 'Maison' to allow him to contemplate a greater concentration on the artistic element of his task. Certainly his reign was not without incident, as can be testified by the 'affaire Ledoux',⁴⁶ and 'la burlesque affaire des poissons',⁴⁷ yet it was undoubtedly a fruitful and important one with the creation of La Reine Morte and Le Soulier de satin.

43 - Dussane, Notes de théâtre, p.38.

44 - Valmy-Basse, Jean, Naissance et vie de la Comédie-Française (Paris, 1945), p.459.

45 - Vaudoyer, Jean-Louis (interviewed by Louis Murat), 'Notre patrimoine dramatique et littéraire.', Toute la vie (September 25th, 1941).

46 - See below.

47 - In 1941, the canteen of the Comédie-Française purchased 50 kilos of fish, when they did not in fact possess an adequate refrigeration unit for this quantity. The fish began to rot and the whole episode had several unhappy consequences.

Throughout his time at the Rue de Richelieu, Jean-Louis Vaudoyer had a very clear idea of his duty and his purpose. His first season there, both for the reason mentioned above, and in order to provide an image of stability to the public, would be deliberately devoted to a presentation of those works already in the 'répertoire'.

Honorer, entretenir et enrichir ce répertoire, tel nous a semblé être, dans les circonstances actuelles, notre premier devoir.⁴⁸

Vaudoyer attached a primordial importance to this repertoire.

A l'heure actuelle, une seule chose restée intacte dans notre France meurtrie! notre répertoire, Il est notre vrai raison d'être. Notre classicisme est un confluent où nos chefs d'oeuvre se sont imbibés du théâtre classique étranger. Exemple: Le Cid. Le génie français est un filtre. Notre tâche est donc de représenter dans un éclairage français tous les chefs d'oeuvre que nous rencontrons, de Shakespeare à Goethe, de Lope de Vega à Schiller.⁴⁹

He believed it to be the Comédie-Française's duty to preserve and ensure its continued existence.

Dans les grands malheurs qui nous ont assaillis, la Comédie-Française a la chance qu'une de nos plus belles richesses spirituelles, notre répertoire, soit demeurée intacte, et que le moyen d'en exalter les beautés soit resté à notre portée. Ceci nous crée un grand devoir. La Comédie-Française saura n'y pas faillir.⁵⁰

The next season would see the creation of La Reine Morte as Vaudoyer began actively to encourage new works. Yet, both in his consideration of the works in the 'répertoire', and in his selection of new plays, Vaudoyer's ethic would be dominated by one particular aspect, an especial vision of poetry.

48 - Vaudoyer interviewed by Murat, Toute la vie (September 9th, 1941).

49 - ibid.

50 - Vaudoyer, Jean-Louis, interviewed by Yvon Novy, 'Quelques projets de M. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer pour la saison prochaine', Comoedia (August 9th, 1941).

Chose curieuse, alors que notre théâtre cherche à transposer dans un monde poétique la réalité quotidienne et à allier l'observation et la fantaisie, le cinéma se complaît à une représentation d'un naturalisme dénigrant de cette même réalité.⁵¹

This vision had always been the fundamental principle in his artistic ethic, and he did not intend to relinquish it in taking up his post with the Théâtre Français.

La haute, la véritable, la permanente mission du théâtre est une mission poétique. Cette mission est double: elle consiste d'une part à faire de la vie rêvée une vie réelle, et d'autre part à conférer à la réalité le prestige du songe. C'est donc en continuant à me confier à la poésie que je voudrais essayer de collaborer ici avec les artistes qui composent notre incomparable troupe du Théâtre Français.⁵²

There can be no doubt that his presence allowed the Comédie-Française to continue its work in the extreme difficulties of the Occupation with relative internal stability. As we shall see from the minutes of the meetings of the Comité d'Administration for the season 1942-1943,⁵³ his technique in dealing with the Germans was much more diplomatic than that of Copeau, and, in effect, to a large extent guaranteed the autonomy of the theatre. Almost inevitably, this sophistication in diplomatic dealings was seen in the post-war purges and witch-hunts as active collaboration. Jean-Louis Barrault describes the immediate post-war atmosphere of hysterical denunciation and persecution:

Mais avec la Libération apparurent les règlements de comptes. Ce fut un moment sordide. Jalousie, délation, arrivisme: c'était affreux, décourageant. Dans l'adversité tout le monde se regroupe, on s'aime, on se comprend, on s'entraide, on se nourrit de choses profondes. Une fois le danger disparu, on redevient tranchant, âpre, impitoyable, égoïste. Sans parler du ridicule des héros de la dernière heure.⁵⁴

51 - Vaudoier, Jean-Louis, Lettre de Paris (October 1938).

52 - Jean-Louis Vaudoier interviewed by Pierre Malo, 'La mission permanente du théâtre', Le Matin (March 28th, 1941).

53 - See below.

54 - Barrault, Souvenirs pour demain, p.170.

In 1946, when Vaudoyer applied for the seat at the Académie Française left vacant by the death of Octave Aubry, he was met by a violent reaction on the part of François Mauriac:

Jean-Louis Vaudoyer? Mais il me semblait que notre Académie avait décidé de n'accepter aucune candidature de 'collaborateur'.⁵⁵

This was not simply an isolated personal attack, but symptomatic of the general attitude of many to Vaudoyer. The latter decided to bring the matter to public adjudication by applying to the Société des Gens de Lettres to form a 'jury d'honneur' to give a ruling on his case.⁵⁶ The findings of this 'jury' were published in June 1946, in these terms:

M. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer ne peut pas être qualifié de 'collabo' puisqu'il est établi qu'il n'a jamais, sous une forme quelconque, participé à la collaboration avec l'ennemi ou favorisé cette collaboration.... M. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer n'a commis aucune faute contre l'honneur.⁵⁷

Vaudoyer's time at the Comédie-Française had come to an unhappy conclusion. At his instigation, Raimu had been admitted into the company to replace Ledoux.⁵⁸ His entrance was ill-fated, since the first production in which he took the leading rôle, Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, was a failure, and met with ridicule in the press. This prompted a telephone call from Abel Bonnard, the 'Ministre de l'Education', to Vaudoyer;⁵⁹ what was actually said is not certain, but it led to Vaudoyer's immediate resignation to date from January 1944.

55 - Anon. article in Paris-Matin (May 5th, 1946), reproducing Mauriac's reaction to Vaudoyer's letter of application.

56 - Anon., 'M. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer demande un jury d'honneur', Libération (May 24th, 1946).

57 - Charles Dauzats quoting the communiqué of the 'jury', Paris-Matin (June 21st, 1946).

58 - This possible nomination is proposed by Vaudoyer at the meeting of the Comité d'Administration of September 10th, 1943.

59 - This is recalled by Dussane, p.46, and by Valmy-Basse, p.467. The latter is more definite about the origin of the call.

We are witnesses here again to another example of the delicate balance between state and theatre; this heavy-handed intervention by a government representative brought to an end a period which had seen the takings of the Comédie-Française at a consistently high level, all the more significant when contrasted with the poor revenue under Emile Fabre.⁶⁰ This situation would eventually culminate in the crisis described by Jean-Louis Barrault:

La Comédie-Française a toujours reflété la France du moment. Chacun eut alors 'une certaine idée' de 'la Maison'. Pas la même. Tandis que la France cherchait sa nouvelle voie et que les Français, de tous côtés, tiraient la sonnette d'alarme, la Comédie-Française se mit à chercher la sienne et l'alarme également fut donnée. Ce qui devait aboutir à une grave crise.⁶¹

The new offer presented in 1946 was not accepted by many members of the company, and this led to several departures from the company.

It would seem that, while under the threat of loss of autonomy, and under the erudite and calming influence of Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, the Comédie-Française could maintain its work-pattern, as both circumstance and its 'Administrateur Général' imposed a sense of artistic and cultural duty. With the end of hostilities, and the departure of Vaudoyer, the incipient crisis materialized.

If we examine the direct influence exerted by the Germans during the Occupation, and particularly during the season under analysis here, if we further study the immediate effects of the Occupation with all its attendant sociological re-orientation, we discover that both elements acted more as unifying than disintegrative agents within the Comédie-Française. Obviously the 'Maison de Molière' had to obey any anti-Jewish

60 - The size of the takings is examined in detail below.

61 - op.cit. pp.170-171.

laws passed, such as the law of June 6th, 1942, 'réglementant, en ce qui concerne les Juifs, les professions d'artiste dramatique, cinématographique et lyrique':⁶² Any member of the company with Jewish ancestry had to leave. Prominent among these was Yonnell, who fortunately was later reinstated to play Antiochus in Bérénice,⁶³ and of course Ferrante in La Reine Morte. This policy of anti-semitism was applied, not only to the actual members of the troupe, but extended beyond to a censure of any element

62 - Article premier - Les Juifs ne peuvent tenir un emploi artistique dans les représentations théâtrales, dans les films cinématographiques ou dans des spectacles quelconques, ou donner des concerts vocaux ou instrumentaux ou y participer que s'ils satisfont à l'une des conditions prévues à l'article 3 de la loi du 2 juin 1941 ou s'ils ont été autorisés en raison de leurs mérites artistiques ou professionnels par un arrêté motivé du Secrétaire d'Etat intéressé, pris sur la proposition du Commissaire général aux questions juives et, en outre, dans le cas où le ministre secrétaire d'Etat à l'Education nationale n'est pas compétant pour donner lui-même l'autorisation d'exercer la profession, sur l'avis dudit secrétaire d'Etat.

Article deuxième - Les Juifs atteints par l'interdiction résultant de l'article précédent devront, dans le délai de deux mois, à partir de la publication du présent décret, cesser d'exercer la profession qui leur est interdite.

Une prolongation du délai peut être accordée par le secrétaire d'Etat intéressé, sur la proposition du commissaire général aux questions juives, en vue de permettre d'achever une série de représentations commencée avant la publication du présent décret (rectificatif au Journal Officiel du 13 juin) ou une oeuvre cinématographique entreprise avant la même publication.

Article troisième - Le présent décret n'est pas applicable à l'Algérie ni aux territoires relevant du secrétariat aux Colonies ou du secrétariat aux Affaires étrangères.

Article quatrième - Le Chef du Gouvernement et le ministre secrétaire d'Etat à l'Education nationale sont chargés, chacun en ce qui le concerne, de l'exécution du présent décret, qui sera publié au Journal Officiel de l'Etat Français.

Published in the Annuaire général du spectacle for 1942, p.334.

63 - Anon., 'La Rentrée de Yonnell au Français', Comoedia (October 4th, 1941).

with Jewish associations in the choice of texts for production. Since Benjamin Crémieux was a Jew, his adaptation of Pirandello's Chacun sa vérité could not be accepted.⁶⁴ We already know that the excellent translation of Eugène Morand and Marcel Schwob of Hamlet, and the one most relevant to the 'mise en scène' of Granval, had to be changed. Marcel Schwob's son protested to the Comité d'Administration, whose only recourse, as found in the minutes for the meeting of February 19th, 1942, was to express muted disapproval, since they could not go against the edicts of the occupying forces.

Les membres du Comité ne peuvent que constater que cette substitution d'une nouvelle version d'Hamlet à la précédente est le résultat d'un état de fait: l'impossibilité dans l'état actuel des lois et décrets concernant les auteurs non-aryans de représenter un ouvrage dont Marcel Schwob est l'un des auteurs.⁶⁵

Apart from the Schillertheater's productions, of Kabale und Liebe in 1941, Iphigenie auf Tauris in 1942, and El Alcalde de Zalamea in 1943, direct artistic intervention on stage was negligible. The Comédie-Française has never been a theatre of political unrest, and this is why the Germans failed to realize its insidious power. They did, however, frown on the work of Claudel, and the creation of Le Soulier de satin met with some resistance from the Occupying administration.

Les autorités allemandes ne voyaient pas d'un oeil indifférent l'importance de ces préparatifs au service d'un auteur qui leur demeurerait récalcitrant.⁶⁶

They even actively tried to discourage Jean-Louis Barrault from staging the play; his refusal to suspend the preparations nearly led to his deportation.⁶⁷ To Barrault the whole project began to assume a patriotic dimension.

64 - Cardinne-Petit, R., Les Secrets de la Comédie-Française 1936-1945 (Paris 1958), p.181.

65 - Procès verbaux des Comités d'Administration pour l'année 1942.

66 - Dussane, p.43.

67 - See Chapter 2, p.24.

Cela prenait des allures de bataille spirituelle, d'insurrection nationale. Tous étaient au courant des opinions Gaullistes de Claudel. Moi, je me bornais à défendre 'ma chose'.⁶⁸

Further, there is the notorious, if confused and obscure, tale of Edmond Rostand's L'Aiglon, prepared under the instigation of a German, then banned by the Propaganda - staffel after chaotic and almost farcical machinations. We can see that, although the Germans did exert some influence on the Comédie-Française, they did not pursue this task with any great determination.

When Vaudoyer readily gave his consent to the production of Iphigénie auf Tauris, he was not demonstrating the reaction of an active collaborator, but he was simply using his diplomatic skill to give at least a nominal appearance of subjugation.

Ainsi la Comédie-Française a-t-elle pu se conformer sur le plan spirituel, à la politique de collaboration préconisée par le Chef de l'Etat.⁶⁹

Vaudoyer and the other members of the Comité d'Administration wished above all to avoid any open hostility towards the Germans, in order that they might carry out in relative freedom their duty to protect and extend indigenous French culture. Thus, when students began to demonstrate vociferously against the Occupation during performances, the Comité was quick to show its disapproval. The first mention we find of this problem in the 1942-1943 season is in the note left by the 'semainier' ⁷⁰ in the 'Registre' ('Livre de bord') dated Monday, January 18th, 1943.

68 - Barrault, Souvenirs pour demain, p.164.

69 - Vaudoyer, 'Les Spectacles de la Comédie-Française en 1941-1942', Revue des Beaux Arts (1939-1944), p.40.

70 - His exact function is analyzed below.

Manifestations des étudiants pendant la représentation de Fantasio. Les lundis sont supprimés aux étudiants pendant 1 mois à dater du lundi 25 janvier.⁷¹

This was not a single occurrence, but found echoes in the reactions of the students on several Mondays. Vaudoier described the attitude of the students in these words:

.... l'attitude au cours des derniers spectacles du lundi a été particulièrement regrettable.⁷²

The Comité decided to impose immediate restrictions upon this element of their public, and thus it was able to forestall any intervention by the Germans. However, the Minister did feel obliged to intervene, and demanded that far more rigorous measures should be taken. The Comité had previously settled on these restrictions.

Ceux-ci ne seraient plus admis globalement à une soirée unique chaque semaine, mais un nombre limité de places (de 10 à 30) serait mis à leur disposition pour un certain nombre de soirées. Le nombre de ces places et les soirées pour lesquelles elles seraient réservées serait en liaison avec le Secrétaire.⁷³

The Minister's reaction was swift and more drastic.

En ce qui concerne la présence des étudiants aux spectacles de la Comédie-Française, l'Administrateur fait connaître au Comité le point de vue du Ministre. Celui-ci n'estime pas qu'il y ait lieu de rétablir actuellement en faveur des étudiants, le droit à des places réservées pour quelque représentation que ce soit.⁷⁴

Therefore, what could perhaps have been the excuse for the Germans to impose greater authority upon the administration of the Comédie-Française, was turned into a simple matter of internal policy.

71 - There were special prices for students on Mondays.

72 - Comité d'Administration, P.V., p.114.

73 - P.V., pp.114-115.

74 - P.V., p.119.

The Comédie-Française did not, however, escape so lightly from the side effects of the Occupation. Jean-Louis Barrault gives a graphic account of the extreme material and physical discomforts suffered by both actor and public.⁷⁵ Because of electricity rationing the private canteen of the theatre had to be closed down as a temporary measure.⁷⁶ Restrictions became so severe that at the meeting of the Comité d'Administration on April 15th, 1943,⁷⁷ it was decided that anyone who was borrowing the locale of the Comédie-Française for a gala must pay for all the electricity used at that particular performance.⁷⁸ Paper rationing too affected the Comédie-Française directly.

Il (l'Administrateur) annonce ensuite que les restrictions imposées par l'Office de Répartition vont obliger à une grande économie de papier.⁷⁹

An indirect consequence of petrol rationing was the need felt by the Comité to have a suitable installation for the public who attended performances to park their bicycles, which had by this time become the most common form of transport.

L'Administrateur fait également savoir qu'il a obtenu du Ministre l'autorisation d'aménager provisoirement un garage à bicyclette à l'usage des spectateurs de la Comédie-Française, entre le passage carrossable du péristyle Montpensier et l'entrée de l'Institut de Coopération Intellectuelle.⁸⁰

A further indirect effect of the Occupation, but one with more immediate relevance to the Comédie-Française, was the appearance of two decisions contrary to the normal practice of the state theatre. Firstly, during the 'Comités de fin

75 - See Chapter 2, p. 28.

76 - P.V., p. 70.

77 - *ibid*, pp. 120-123.

78 - *ibid*, p. 120.

79 - *ibid*, p. 70.

80 - *ibid*.

d'année' in the 1942-1943 season, when the contracts of the 'pensionnaires' came under their customary review, it was decided that, given the unusual circumstances, all the current members would be retained on principle.

L'on commence par prendre la décision de principe, en égard aux circonstances, de maintenir pour l'instant dans la troupe tous les artistes qui y figurent actuellement.⁸¹

Nevertheless, any 'pensionnaire' who was kept merely because of this principle would be made to understand that this was the case. Each artist must then draw his own conclusions. Secondly it was decided, again in opposition to tradition, that no auditions would be held this season.⁸² Jean-Louis Vaudoyer had already pointed out how straitened were the material circumstances of the Comédie-Française, even in normal times,⁸³ and this situation could only worsen in the unusual circumstances of the Occupation. However, one happy consequence, and an unexpected one, was the consistently high attendance figures.

Traditionally, students from the 'Conservatoire' were given seats as available, particularly for productions of the classics, but in the 1942-1943 season this arrangement had to come under radical review, since booking was so invariably heavy that it was no longer possible to grant them this privilege.⁸⁴ From the first of September 1942 to 31st June 1943, the Comédie-Française put on 356 performances, of which 237 were evening ones and 119 'matinées', plus 12 'matinées

81 - P.88, Monday, December 21st, 1942.

82 - P. 127, Thursday, June 24th, 1943.

83 - Vaudoyer, 'Les Spectacles de la Comédie-Française', p.43.

84 - P.V., p.78, Saturday, October 17th, 1942.

poétiques'. This undiminished activity was matched by a notable increase in the takings of the box office during this period. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer was able to announce that the takings for the 1940-1941 season had been exceeded by those for the 1941-1942 season by 2.224.000 F.;⁸⁵ in September 1943, he was able again to make known that takings had reached a very high level.⁸⁶ If we consider the takings for the three plays under consideration here during the season 1942-1943 for the month of January, we have an excellent image of the value attached by the public to their state theatre. Such consistently high figures could not merely be the result of the desire for escapism, particularly since this desire was well catered for elsewhere.⁸⁷

Friday, 1st January	<u>LRM</u>	31.403 F.
Saturday, 2nd	<u>Ph</u>	31.217 F.
Sunday, 3rd	<u>LRM</u>	31.527.50 F.
	<u>Ham</u>	31.542 F.
Thursday, 7th	<u>LRM</u>	30.696.50 F.
Friday, 8th	<u>Ph</u>	29.149.50 F.
Sunday, 10th	<u>LRM</u>	31.695 F.
	<u>Ham</u>	31.236 F.
Monday, 11th	<u>LRM</u>	29.091.50 F.
Thursday, 14th	<u>LRM</u>	30.969.59 F.
Saturday, 16th	<u>LRM</u>	31.243 F.
	<u>Ph</u>	31.114 F.
Sunday, 17th	<u>LRM</u>	31.505 F.
Thursday, 21st	<u>LRM</u>	31.463 F.
Friday, 22nd	<u>Ph</u>	30.688.50 F.
Saturday, 23rd	<u>LRM</u>	31.330 F.
Monday, 25th	<u>LRM</u>	29.195.50 F.
Thursday, 28th	<u>Ph</u>	30.716.50 F.
Friday, 29th	<u>LRM</u>	31.109.50 F.
Saturday, 30th	<u>Ph</u>	30.960 F.
Sunday, 31st	<u>LRM</u>	31.549 F.

88

85 - Vaudoyer quoted by Marc Blanquet, 'Ce qu'on jouera chez Molière la saison prochaine', Le Matin (September 10th, 1942).

86 - Vaudoyer, 'La Saison prochaine', Comoedia (September 25th, 1943). It is obviously difficult, given the unstable situation of the franc in this period to evaluate with exactitude a comparison with previous seasons. However, the progression is very clear in quality.

87 - See Chapter 2.

88 - These figures are all taken from the 'Registre' for the year 1943. For the sake of conciseness, I have used the following abbreviations; LRM for La Reine Morte, Ph for Phèdre, and Ham for Hamlet. The 'jours de relâche' were Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Phèdre was put on in conjunction with Le Cheval arabe. Although some other productions could achieve this average of 31.000 F. on a Sunday, their comparative takings in the week were considerably lower. For example, we can compare the takings of L'Article 330 put on with L'Ecole des femmes: Monday, 23rd November - 19.360.50 F, Friday, 4th December - 19.925.50 F, Sunday, 29th November - 29.963 F, Sunday, 6th December - 31.439 F.

This gives a total of 649.399.50 F. for the one month, an average of just over 31.000 F. for each performance. Given the number of seats available, the prices for the season, the special privileges given to certain members of the public, this means that the auditorium was virtually full for every performance.

As we can see from the foregoing, the problems posed by the occupying forces were relatively minor compared to the advantages which paradoxically accrued from the situation. Perhaps the most troubling and professionally annoying inconvenience, was the frequent interruption during performances due to air-raid warnings. Five members of the Comité d'Administration took it in turns to be the 'semainier', i.e. the person who signed the 'Livre de bord' ('Registre'), and noted down any untoward circumstances or occurrences. Should he be unable to perform this duty, the person named as his 'suppléant' would have to fulfil this function in his stead. Although, as we shall see below,⁸⁹ this task was not regularly and conscientiously accomplished, and often the comments are nearly illegible, we are still able to realize the frequency of these 'alertes', and the untypically phlegmatic reaction of the French public. An interrupted performance would re-commence once the all-clear was sounded; in some cases, if the performance was near completion, the actors would continue, heedless of the 'alerte'. I have noted here the entries from October 22nd, 1942 to July 16th, 1943, the period corresponding to the season under study.⁹⁰ Unfortunately some of the comments are virtually unintelligible; nevertheless, the potentially disruptive effect of these air-raid warnings is obvious.

(Thursday, 22nd October, 1942)

Alerte le soir. La représentation n'étant pas terminée a été reportée au mardi 27 octobre.
Les artistes touchent leur feu. (Hamlet)

89 - See p. 197.

90 - Although the season begins in September, there are no notes in the 'Registre' before this date.

(Friday, 23rd October 1942)

Alerte - le spectacle a pu être repris et (?)
termine à 10h.50. (L'Autre Danger)

(Monday, 18th January, 1943)

Manifestations des étudiants pendant la représentation de Fantasio. Les lundis sont supprimés aux étudiants pendant un mois à dater du lundi 25 janvier.

(Sunday, 4th April, 1943)

Alerte à 2h.15; M.Charon prie le public d'évacuer la salle. Fin de l'alerte à 3h.17 repasse en spectacle à 3h.25.

(Thursday, 13th May, 1943)

La matinée est troublée par une alerte vers 16h.30. Le spectacle étant très avancé, on le termine heureusement.

Signed by Pierre Bertin

(Sunday, 16th May, 1943)

La matinée commence avec 33^m de retard à cause d'une alerte.

(Sunday, 13th June, 1943)

Alerte de 1h.35 à 2h. le spectacle a commencé à 2h.50 il s'est terminé à 5h.30.

(Friday, 16th July, 1943)

La représentation de Feu la Mère de madame est annulée. M. Pierre Bertin fait une annonce au public, qui ne manifeste pas.

(This was due to another 'alerte')⁹¹

During the following season, these interruptions would become even more frequent, on September 11th, 17th, 25th, 27th; October 3rd (two 'alertes'), 24th; December 5th, 30th, etc. Yet it seems that both public and performers viewed these interruptions almost with indifference. Indeed, no mention of them can be found in the meetings of the Comité d'Administration for 1942-1943.

⁹¹ - All these notes are taken from the 'Registres' for 1942 and 1943. Apart from the one mentioned, they are all unsigned. It is probable that there were more 'alertes' and other events during this period, but, as stated above, the function of 'semainier' was not properly fulfilled for much of this season. The 'feu' is the basic sum received for each performance, a very small one normally.

Thus both direct intervention and indirect consequence achieved a negligible and transitory impairment of the administrative and artistic life of the Comédie-Française. The consistently high receipts, the productions of notable new works, the unification of a company divided before and after the period of the Occupation, provide us with ample evidence that, under the guidance of Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, in a position where the Comédie-Française was obliged to fulfil its culturally significant rôle, the Occupation provided a paradoxical revivification of the 'Illustre Théâtre'.

If we study the minutes of the meetings of the Comité d'Administration for the season 1942-1943, we find that the dominant motif for that period, and for much of the preceding season, was the Ledoux affair. In many ways this unfortunate polemic exemplifies the incipient disadvantages of the structure of the Comédie-Française, with its dual existence as a state institution and as a theatre. As this very same relationship bestowed upon the 'Maison de Molière' a particular duty during the Occupation, a duty it fulfilled with resolve and success, so too it was at the root of the Ledoux affair. Under Bourdet, Ledoux had reached a high level of artistic achievement, especially in the production of François Mauriac's Asmodée. Upon Bourdet's untimely departure, Ledoux became discontent^{ed} with the new situation and demanded his retirement in November 1941.⁹² This request was refused by the Comité d'Administration on December 6th, and by the Minister on February 25th, 1942.⁹³ Ledoux wished to pursue the far more lucrative employment of acting in the cinema, which he could only do with difficulty if he was still a 'sociétaire'.⁹⁴ Thus, he feigned, or really suffered, a nervous illness; given his undoubted talent as an actor, it was never definitively established whether this ailment which troubled him was medically justifiable, or merely the fruit of the professional ability of an experienced performer. Whatever the reason, the affair dragged on until,

92 - Much of the information on the development of the affair is taken from the letter sent by the 'Conseil Juridique' to the 'Comité' and copied into the 'Procès Verbal', pp.107-113.

93 - Letter, p.107.

94 - For the problem of the cinema see below.

at their meeting of Noevmeber 19th, 1942, the Comité found themselves with no other legal recourse but to grant Ledoux's request.

Ledoux took sick leave from the Comédie-Française on December 27th, 1941, and again on March 1st, 1942, and produced medical certificates to substantiate his claim.⁹⁵ On April 26th, Ledoux was given the lead in a play,

....et entre en scène en bégayant et en vacillant,⁹⁶

and the performance had to be suspended. On April 28th, Ledoux asked for sick leave, and even though it was not granted, he left Paris in order to complete a film.⁹⁷ It was at this stage that the advice of the 'Conseil Juridique' was sought; the 'Conseil' was composed of several prestigious members of the legal profession.⁹⁸ The fundamental element of contention was that, despite his claim that nervous illness prevented him from performing on stage at the Comédie-Française, Ledoux nevertheless saw fit to continue his activity in the cinema.

Il est inadmissible en effet que Monsieur Ledoux, sociétaire à part entière, continue à toucher ses tantiennes et son traitement, se fasse mettre en congé sous prétexte de maladie en apportant lui-même un démenti à ses propres allégations, se produise en même temps dans des studios.⁹⁹

95 - P.107.

96 - Ibid.

97 - Letter, p.108.

98 - Letter, p.113.

Roger Giry

Avoué près le Tribunal de la Seine, ancien Président de la Compagnie des Avoués près le Tribunal de la Seine.

L. Hardy

Agrée près la Tribunal de Commerce, ancien Président de la Compagnie des agréés près du Tribunal de la Seine.

Lesguillier

Notaire.

Masson

Avoué à la cour, Administrateur de l'Etude de Maître Barrier, Prisonnier.

Maurice Garçon

Avocat à la cour.

Dufommentalle

Avocat à la Cour de Cassation et au Conseil d'Etat.

However, it was here that the Comité found their sphere of reaction limited by the bureaucratic emphasis in their statutes; since these statutes did not deal specifically with the cinema, the Comité could not stipulate any sanction relative to Ledoux's remuneration in films. Following the advice of the 'Conseil Juridique',¹⁰⁰ the only logical course was to establish the precise nature of Ledoux's illness. Therefore, 'Monsieur le Président du Tribunal de la Seine' was asked to decide on the case by consulting the professional opinion of three of the medical experts on his list;¹⁰¹ their findings went contrary to the expectations of the Comité, since they concluded that, whereas the rigours of performing on the stage of the Comédie-Française would be detrimental to Ledoux's health, the relative moderation of film work would not seem incompatible. Naturally the 'Conseil Juridique' felt unable to accept the findings,¹⁰² especially since the doctors attached to the Comédie-Française itself had not been invited to attend. They decided to appeal to the Président. However, the conclusion reached after an audience of these doctors went even further against the wishes of the Comité.¹⁰³ In these circumstances, the Comité d'Administration found itself under the legal obligation to accede to Ledoux's request, since, according to the 'Conseil Juridique', there was no other possible recourse in law.¹⁰⁴

We find the first mention of this affair in the 1942-1943 season on the minutes for the meeting on September 16th, 1942, the first meeting of that season.¹⁰⁵ The mention is only brief, and concerns the study of the 'expertise médicale' of July 16th, 1942. The next meeting, at which the 'Conseil Juridique' was represented primarily by Maurice Garçon, took

100 - Ibid.

101 - P.109.

102 - PP.109-110.

103 - P.110.

104 - PP.111-112.

105 - P.V. for Wednesday, September 16th, 1942, p.69.

place on September 30th, 1942, and was entirely devoted to this question.¹⁰⁶ Two new elements were examined: firstly the findings of the independent medical commission, and secondly a medical certificate hitherto not produced. The latter document was completed by Dr. Martin, Ledoux's personal doctor, and found him to be 'inapte à toute activité'.¹⁰⁷ The Comité believed that this might provide some justification for a 'contre-expertise',¹⁰⁸ since it would seem to imply that any professional activity, including therefore filming, would be detrimental to Ledoux's health. Various solutions were discussed, but all came up against the main obstacle of the lack of any applicable ruling within the ordinances.¹⁰⁹ The only possible development was a 'contre-expertise'.

On s'arrête donc définitivement à la solution de demande de référé pure et simple pour obtenir une contre-expertise médicale concernant l'état de M.Ledoux.¹¹⁰

At the same time a period of sick leave was granted to Ledoux.¹¹¹ At the meeting of the Comité d'Administration of November 25th, 1942, Jean-Louis Vaudoyer read to the assembled Comité the letter he had sent to Ledoux granting

106 - P.V. for Wednesday, September 30th, 1942, pp.72-75.

107 - P.V., p.72.

108 - P.V., p.73.

109 - The proposed solutions varied from court action to the idea of preventing him from taking up any further employment as an actor.
P.V., pp.73-74.

110 - P.V., p.75.

111 - 'On arrive à conclure à l'octroi d'un congé sans conditions, en ménageant toutefois la possibilité de surveiller l'usage qu'en ferait M.Ledoux.' p.74. This 'congé' would begin only after the 'contre-expertise'. p.75.

his demand¹¹², and allowing him to take his retirement from November 12th. Nevertheless, this was not the end of the business, since the Comité d'Administration was deeply resentful of the outcome, which it considered a total defeat¹¹³ for the Comédie-Française. First of all, Clariond suggested that an 'amende forfaitaire'¹¹⁴ should be inflicted on Ledoux, but this idea was rejected by a vote of 4:3.¹¹⁵ The Comité decided that, since throughout it had allowed itself to be guided by the Conseil Juridique, and especially by Mr. Maurice Garçon, then this defeat was the result of the incompetence of their legal advisers.

Comme conclusion à ce vote, les membres du Comité constatent que la façon dont le cas de M.Ledoux se résout en dernier lieu marque un échec complet pour la Comédie.... il est juste de faire porter par M.Garçon la responsabilité de l'échec subi par la Comédie et du dommage moral et matériel encouru par elle dans la circonstance.¹¹⁶

112 - It would seem that the minutes of the meeting where the actual decision to release Ledoux from his contract was taken, have not been included in the extant version of the P.V. I have come to the conclusion that this meeting must have taken place on November 19th, 1942, from the following evidence. First of all, at the meeting of October 17th, 1942, we find this entry: 'Il est décidé que lorsque l'Administrateur aura communication du Rapport complémentaire des Experts, il convoquera à nouveau le Conseil Juridique concurremment avec la Comité d'Administration.' (P.V., p.76). The next mention of this is at the meeting of November 25th, when Vaudoyer reads the letter, which had been written 'conformément au vote du Comité d'Administration en date du 19 novembre.' (p.83).

113 - P.V. for Saturday, December 19th, 1942, p.84.

114 - Ibid.

115 - Ibid. M.D. d'Inès was absent from the meeting.

116 - Ibid.

They further decided to ask the Minister to obtain Mr. Garçon's resignation. However, at the meeting of December 21st, 1942,¹¹⁷ the Comité again found itself the victim of its own statutes, since Jean-Louis Vaudoyer received a letter from the Minister which he read to the Comité, stating that in fact Ledoux's retirement could not begin until January 1st, 1943.

Naturally, the decision taken by the Comité d'Administration relative to Mr. Garçon was not accepted without some reaction by the members of the 'Conseil Juridique'. A letter, signed by all the members of the 'Conseil' to demonstrate their solidarity with Mr. Garçon, was sent to the Comédie-Française. It examined and described in detail the evolution of the proceedings against Ledoux, and ended with the conclusion that the 'Conseil' had saved the theatre from embarrassing publicity by advising against immediate committal to the law courts;¹¹⁸ this recommendation had also allowed the case to remain merely an exceptional circumstance and thus no precedent had been established.¹¹⁹ Given the limitations imposed on the action of the Comité by the statutes of the Comédie-Française, and the findings of both medical reports, the 'Conseil', as well as the Comité, had to admit defeat.

Il ne s'agissait plus de faire trancher à son propos, la faire question de principe qui inquiétait si justement les sociétaires pour l'avenir.

On se trouvait en présence d'un neurasthénique, auquel les médecins prescrivaient pour régime précisément ce que l'on voulait empêcher.

La solution était fâcheuse, mais il fallait se féliciter qu'au lieu d'avoir adopté une résolution irréfléchie on ait pris la précaution de bien déterminer tout d'abord la situation.¹²⁰

117 - P.V., pp.84-85.

118 - P.V. for Thursday, January 21st, 1942.

119 - Letter, p.112, in P.V.

120 - Letter, pp.111-112.

The final act in this affair was the obligatory calculation of M.Ledoux's pension, which had to be worked out strictly according to established practice. This was completed at the meeting of January 31st, 1943, before the reading of the letter from the 'Conseil Juridique'.¹²¹ The discussion was swiftly terminated, and the procedure to be followed decided upon.

Le Comité autorise M. Pierre Lesguillier, Notaire de la Comédie-Française, à retirer de la Caisse du Crédit Municipale, la somme de 54.916,55 F... pour en opérer le versement entre les mains de M.Ledoux sur bonne et valable quittance.

Le Comité autorise en outre, dès maintenant, M. Lesguillier à remettre la somme de 143.455 F... en dépôt à la Caisse Nationale d'Assurance en cas de décès, formant le complément revenant à M.Ledoux, dans la masse des fonds sociaux.

Pour représenter la Société du Théâtre Français au versement des dites sommes entre les mains de M. Ledoux, le Comité désigne pour commissaires des Sociétaires en exercice: MM.Brunot et Denis d'Inès.¹²²

This unhappy episode exemplifies the dangers inherent to an artistic foundation governed by bureaucratic decrees drawn up by the state. It is extremely difficult to become a 'sociétaire', but once this has been accomplished, the new 'sociétaire' must be prepared to subject the whole of his professional life to the scrutiny and adjudication of the Comédie-Française, even after retirement. If a member strays from the common course, the others attempt with utmost vigour to bring him back into their unit; if this cannot be achieved,

121 - P.V., pp.104-107.

Ledoux had entered the Comédie-Française on December 21st, 1921, and thus had had 21 years, 25 days of service to be taken into account; by the decree of December 14th, 1938, he was entitled to 20.000 F. pension after 20 years of service, and 1,000 F. extra for every supplementary year, which gave a total of 21.068,50 F. In addition, sums were due to him from the Caisse du Crédit Municipale and the Caisse Nationale d'Assistance to the total of 198.371,55 F.

122 - PP.104-105.

then a suitable means of heavy sanction is sought with equal tenacity. Here, the inadmissibility of Ledoux's demand was compounded by three elements: firstly the extreme circumstances of Occupation; secondly, the fact that his work had not shown any signs of being affected by any nervous ailment during Bourdet's time;¹²³ finally the vexed question of participation in film work. This last element was the matter of considerable polemic during the period, not only in relation to this specific case, but to all the 'sociétaires' who indulged in this activity.¹²⁴

Throughout the Occupation, both the 'pensionnaires' and the 'sociétaires' began to devote increasing effort and attention to this new art, one which was far more remunerative than the theatre. Several articles concerning this problem appeared in the newspapers; in Comoedia of August 14th and August 21st, 1943, René Jeanne warned of this movement. In Comoedia of September 4th and 11th of the same year, Emile Mas took up the examination, quoting Pierre Dux's comment that the theatre and the cinema are two arts subject to widely different laws. In his autobiography, Souvenirs pour demain, Jean-Louis Barrault recalls how both he and Madeleine Renaud spent some considerable time filming:

Nous continuons à faire du cinéma. Madeleine tournait avec Grémillon. Cristian-Jaque m'avait engagé pour une vie de Berlioz, La Symphonie fantastique.¹²⁵

Jean Valmy-Basse, in his history of the Comédie-Française, Naissance et vie de la Comédie-Française,¹²⁶ classes the cinema together with all professional activities undertaken outside the 'Maison' as a positive threat to the hallowed traditions of the 'Illustre Théâtre'.

123 - This provides us with an example of the problems envisaged by Barrault with relation to changes in the 'Administrateur Général'. See above.

124 - There is in fact virtually no mention of the Ledoux affair in the papers, which demonstrates the validity of the conclusion of the 'Conseil Juridique'. Critics such as Laubreaux would have been pleased to 'expose' such an affair.

125 - Barrault, p.167.

126 - (in press)

Pourtant, ces succès collectifs et personnels, et l'afflux de papier-monnaie qu'ils amenaient dans la caisse entraînaient le théâtre dans l'oubli de ses traditions...¹²⁷

He maintains that, during this period, many artistes were suspected of devoting the greater part of their energy and talent to the cinema, and he quotes the vituperative attack on this phenomenon made by a theatre critic:

... un critique démontrait et bientôt, par des exemples, qu'une certaine extravagance dans la composition des programmes sembler indiquer qu'on se préoccupait moins de satisfaire la clientèle de la Maison que de 'faciliter les petites affaires des comédiens qui ne jouent rue Richelieu quelorsqu'ils n'ont rien de mieux à faire'.¹²⁸

In the test case of Ledoux, who was obviously devoting most of his time to performing in the cinema,¹²⁹ the Comédie-Française found itself powerless in its function as a state institution subject to definite reglementation.

During the 1942-1943 season, the Comité d'Administration met in session sixteen times, and at only five of these meetings was any mention made of the Ledoux affair,¹³⁰ although the one on September 30th, 1942, was concerned entirely with this problem. Apart from the few examples given above, the content of the minutes of the meetings testify to an existence almost totally independent of external pressure. The professional, social, and artistic problems which gave rise to discussion were those which might arise in any season.

127 - Ibid., p.464.

128 - P.466.

129 - At the meeting of September 30th, 1942, the Comité d'Administration examined a comparative table of Ledoux's work in the Comédie-Française and the cinema, from January 1st, 1942, till September. The conclusion drawn was that the services he had rendered to the theatre were negligible, whereas his earnings from it had been maintained.

130 - The meetings of September 16th, 1942, September 30th, November 25th, December 19th, January 21st, 1943. This list does not include the meeting which I have surmised took place on November 10th 1942.

The Comité d'Administration for the season was composed of Jean-Louis Vaudoyer presiding, Brunot as the 'Doyen', and seven other 'sociétaires', Bertin, Clariond, Debucourt, Denis d'Inès, Mme Renaud, Mme Bell, and Mme Marquet. As during any normal period, the agenda could include many and varied items. One of the predominant occupations as always was the welfare of the members of the 'Maison' and their immediate kin. Some of the long-serving personnel wished to retire, and their case came up for discussion.

First of all, one of the dressers, Mlle Augustine Lehay put in her request after 62 years and 9 months of work with the Comédie-Française.¹³¹ The Comité decided, not only to give her the statutory pension, but to demonstrate their gratitude for her long service by the bestowal of an extra sum of money and a souvenir. Further on in the season two sisters, Clotilde and Gladis Genevois, who had entered the Comédie-Française as 'lingères',¹³² requested their retirement, to date from April 1st, 1943. Clotilde Genevois had entered the theatre on August 19th, 1919, and thus had 23 years and 8 months of service to be considered. Her sister had entered on May 16th, 1920, and thus had 22 years and 10 months of service. Their respective pensions were calculated on the basis of 50% of their average earnings, worked out from the average of the three years leading up to their retirement, which was transposed into the average for the whole period of employment.¹³³ Both sisters ended up with a pension of 10,000F.

131 - P.V. for Wednesday, September 16th, 1942, p.71.

132 - P.V. for Wednesday, March 10th, 1943, p.117.

133 - P.V. for Thursday, April 15th, 1943, p.122.

For Clotilde Genevois:-

Earnings for preceding three years

1/4/40 - 31/12/40	16,000 F.
1/1/41 - 31/12/41	22,500 F.
1/1/42 - 31/12/42	26,760 F.
1/1/43 - 31/3/43	6,810 F.

Total	72,130 F.
+	3
=	24,043 F.

24,043 x 232/3
50

= 11,380 F.

This care extended to all members, especially those of long standing, and even to extras. When one of these fell ill and had to undergo an operation, the Comité decided to lend financial assistance.¹³⁴ Later on in the season it was decided to look into the case of Mlle Cristiane Rousseau Duval, daughter of the deceased Secrétaire des abonnements, who had died during the winter. She had been left without any relatives, or any means of support, and was also gravely ill.¹³⁵ When the 'archiviste-bibliothécaire' died on November 14th, 1942, to be succeeded on December 1st by Jean Nepveu-Degas, his pension was calculated in order that it might be paid to his wife.¹³⁶

134 - P.V. for Wednesday, September 16th, p.71.

'On accorde 1,000 francs à M.Roberge, figurant, pour maladie et opération, en considération de son ancienneté et des services rendus.'

135 - P.V. for Thursday, June 24th, 1943, p.128.

Jean-Louis Vaudoyer considered her to be a special case worthy of particular study, though no definite arrangement was arrived at during this meeting.

136 - The method of calculation was basically the same as that shown above, with the following conclusion:

'...ce qui donne pour la pension :

36,440 F. soit : 18,220 F.

2

ramenés au maximum de 10,000 F. pour 34 ans 4 mois 3 jours d'activité. A quoi s'ajoutent pour les années excédant 25 ans : 400 francs par an dont 10,000 francs plus 3,748 soit 13,748, dont la moitié pour la veuve, soit 13,748 francs soit : 6,874,

2

sans préjudice de la bonification de 50% accordée par la Comédie-Française.'

This pension would in fact prove inadequate, since at the meeting of the Comité on June 24th, 1943, it would be brought to its notice that family obligations were such that Monval's widow was forced to find another means of financial remuneration. She had decided to open a 'tabac' and had requested aid from the Comédie-Française. Until the case had been sorted out, Jean-Louis Vaudoyer decided, with the unanimous assent of the other members, that a sum of 12,000 francs should be given to her from the Caisse de Solidarité.

The Comité also concerned itself with any births to members of its staff, and awarded them allowances accordingly.¹³⁷ Thus we have the image of the Comédie-Française as an autonomous, self-supporting social entity, where the normal course of affairs carried on almost regardless of the Occupation.

Other matters which appear in these minutes, and increase the sense of 'normality' in their frequently mundane quality, varied from the occasional expression of dissatisfaction by a 'sociétaire', to salary adjustments, including of course the distribution of the 'douzièmes' in December. This last question did in fact give rise to one example of dissatisfaction from one of the 'sociétaires', Mme Fonteney, who felt that she had been unfairly treated since her number of 'douzièmes' had not been increased. Her reaction was to announce that in the future she would only play those rôles already in her personal repertoire, and she refused to prepare for the new rôle in Le Chevalier à la mode which had been assigned to her.¹³⁸ After consultation and discussion with Vaudoyer, she was persuaded to rescind her position.¹³⁹ Earlier in the season one of the members of the Comité d'Administration had felt himself obliged to express his personal discontent, since he felt that he had been badly treated with regard to the allocation of rôles. At the meeting of December 19th, 1942, the rest of the Comité, in the absence of the member concerned, Denis d'Inès, agreed to examine his case, while at the same time recalling the decree of November 13th, 1936.

... qui met entre les mains de l'Administrateur la distribution des rôles. C'est seulement pour refuser un rôle qu'ils estiment ne point leur convenir et non pour en réclamer un distribué à d'autres que les Sociétaires conservent le droit de recours au Comité.¹⁴⁰

137 - P.V. for Wednesday, September 16th, 1942, p.71.

'Et pour naissance au cours de l'année : à M. Simonet, régisseur, Mme Lepine et Jourdain, tapisseurs, 1,500 francs chacun pour leur premier enfant, à M. Burnet, machiniste, 3,000 francs pour son quatrième enfant.

138 - P.V. of Thursday, January 21st, 1943, p.106.

139 - P.V. of Monday, February 1st, 1943, p.115.

140 - P.V. of Saturday, December 19th, 1942, pp.84-85.

At the next meeting it was announced that Denis d'Inès had made it known that he had decided to retire;¹⁴¹ in order to maintain his valuable services, the Comité pronounced itself prepared to listen to any appeal by Denis d'Inès should he feel that he had been unfairly treated in the casting for any particular play.¹⁴² Both of these problems were easily solved, and in no way threatened the unity of the 'Maison' as had the Ledoux affair.

Many decisions were taken during the 1942-1943 season with relation to the financial situation of the administrative, artistic, technical and service staff of the Comédie-Française. The traditional review of those members who had accomplished 20 years of work with the Comédie-Française was undertaken on December 21st, 1942;¹⁴³ all, i.e. Brunot, Lafou,¹⁴⁴ Mmes Renaud, Bell, de Chauveron, Fonteney, were maintained in the company. The status of the 'pensionnaires' was also examined and the principle stated above adopted.¹⁴⁵ Those kept because of this principle were Deni^eux and Mlle Fromet.¹⁴⁶ Those kept, but who should not consider accession to the 'sociétariat', at that time, were de Rigoult, le Marchand, Valcourt, Mlle Clair, Mlle Marziano.¹⁴⁷ Only two members were elected to the position of 'sociétaire', Seignier and Barrault.¹⁴⁸ Later on in the season, on December 22nd, the 'pensionnaires' were given a basic rise of 10%; which was adjusted to their respective importance, as evaluated by the Comité, and according to any domestic obligations.¹⁴⁹ Two members directly

141 - P.V. of Monday, December 21st, 1942, p.86.

142 - P.86.

143 - P.V., pp.86-95.

144 - This name was only partly legible in the P.V.

145 - See above, pp 175-176.

146 - P.V. for December 21st, 1942, pp.89-92

147 - This comment is made about Mlle Marziano : 'Elle ne doit pas songer au Sociétariat; d'ailleurs elle est de nationalité étrangère.' p.92.

148 - P.92.

149 - P.V. for December 22nd, 1942, pp.95-96.

involved were Valcort and le Marchand.

M.le Marchand en plus de ses 10% verra porter de 1,200 francs à 1,800 francs son allocation annuelle globale pour charges de famille.

M.Valcort verra son traitement augmenté de 15%. De plus, sur la base adoptée pour M.le Marchand, il bénéficiera d'une allocation supplémentaire annuelle de 1,200 francs pour charges de famille.¹⁵⁰

Some members of the technical staff were also brought into consideration during this season. Those 'chefs de service' not already affected by the rise of 15% accorded to the technical staff in the preceding October, were duly given the requisite increase.¹⁵¹

150 - *ibid.*

- 151 - P.V. of Wednesday, December 23rd, 1942, p.98.
At this same meeting of December 23rd, 1942, the Administrateur Général brought to the notice of the Comité the situation of those employees of the Comédie-Française whose salary totalled less than 1,900 F., and especially the case of the dressers who desired 'un traitement net de 2,000 francs par mois toutes retenues opérées. Cependant le Comité ne peut que constater qu'il ne dépend pas de la Comédie d'accorder des augmentations supérieures aux 15% autorisé actuellement.'
Furthermore, they wished to benefit from the free seats bestowed to other technical staff by the authors of new plays produced by the Comédie-Française.

Also at this meeting the financial situations of the 'sociétaires' came under review. Out of the 264 possible 'douzièmes', only 245 had been allocated in 1941, which left 18 (one 'part' had to be kept in reserve), to which could be added the 12 held by Ledoux, which gave a final total of 30 to be allocated this season.¹⁵² At the end of the allocations, it would seem that only one of the 'sociétaires' considered herself to have been so badly treated that she needed to make her feelings felt in direct action.¹⁵³ At the next meeting, on December 22nd, the treasurer suggested that 'une somme qui se trouve actuellement en caisse à la Comédie'¹⁵⁴ to the total of 6,000 F.

152 - PP.93-95.

From this total, 6 had to be set aside for the statutory increase due to the new 'sociétaires', Louis Segnier and Jean-Louis Barrault, to be given them over the following two years, plus the normal 3 accorded to each of them upon their acceptance of the 'sociétariat'. From the 21 'douzièmes' now left, the 'sociétaires' appointed in the previous December had each to receive $1\frac{1}{2}$, 1 to be given this season, and the remainder next season; the members concerned were Balpetré, Bertheau, Meyer, Mmes Brilliant, Dalmès, and Faure. This removed a further 9 'douzièmes' from the total, which left 12 to be divided amongst the remaining 'sociétaires'; they were allocated in the following fashion :

<u>Name</u>	<u>Douzièmes 1941</u>	<u>Douzièmes 1942</u>
Bertin	11	12 (part entière)
Weber	$9\frac{1}{2}$	10
Dux	10	11
Escande	$10\frac{1}{2}$	12 (part entière)
Donneaud	7	8
Chambreuil	7	8
Martinelli	7	$7\frac{1}{2}$
Clariond	9	$10\frac{1}{2}$
Debucourt	9	10
Mme de Chauveron	10	$10\frac{1}{2}$
Mme Rouer	$7\frac{1}{2}$	$8\frac{1}{2}$
Mme Sully	$6\frac{1}{2}$	7
Mme Barreau	$6\frac{1}{2}$	7
Mme Casadesus	6	$6\frac{1}{2}$

153 - See above.

154 - P.V. for December 22nd, 1942, p.95.

should be divided amongst the 'sociétaires'; the proposition was unanimously adopted. It is clear from the ability of the administration of the Comédie-Française, not only to consider, but also to grant claims for wage rises, that the stringent circumstances of the Occupation had had almost as little financial effect as artistic and administrative influence.

However, Jean-Louis Vaudoyer was well aware of the dangers to tradition inherent in the situation, and wished to remedy any practices which had developed in apparent contradiction to the spirit and letter of the constitution of this theatre. He further desired to revive any traditions which would seem to have subsided into neglect. He particularly wished to clarify the position with respect to those 'sociétaires' who had taken their retirement, voluntarily or compulsorily. For some time there had been a progressive deterioration in the clear appreciation of the exact relationship which the ex-members were expected to maintain with the Comédie-Française. The following reglementation was decided upon to clarify the situation:

- I. Liquidation par autorisation collective donnée une fois pour toutes par le Ministre du cas de tous les Sociétaires retraités dans quelque condition que ce soit, antérieurement au 1er Janvier, 1943.
- II. A partir du 1er Janvier, 1943, d'une part tous les Sociétaires mis à la retraite d'office recevraient ipso facto - en même temps que la notification de l'arrêté les mettant à la retraite une lettre personnelle du Ministre lui accordant l'autorisation permanente de jouer désormais librement à Paris. D'autre part; tous les Sociétaires qui auraient obtenu leur mise à la retraite sur une initiative venant de leur propre chef - devraient solliciter une autorisation ministérielle pour pouvoir jouer à nouveau à Paris. Se conformant aux décrets le Ministre statuerait alors sur chaque cas individuel après avoir pris l'avis de l'Administration et du Comité.¹⁵⁵

Another aspect which troubled the Administrateur Général was the manner in which the decrees of November 11th 1924, and December 12th, 1936, relative to 'congés', had not been observed with any degree of exactitude since 1939.¹⁵⁶

Nevertheless, several members of the Comité d'Administration considered that a review of this particular aspect would not be appropriate in the situation of the Occupation, and thus the question was left for further study.¹⁵⁷

Although the details relevant to the general administration of the 'Maison' were such as might appear during any season, one problem, which had not existed in the recent past, was the overbooking of seats. This was a paradoxical result of the privations and lack of material resource prevalent during the Occupation. The influx of people into the auditorium of the Comédie-Française was so consistently high at this time, that several employees and 'sociétaires' of the Comédie-Française, had taken to booking seats in advance for their friends and relatives.

M. l'Administrateur signale ensuite les faits suivants. Au cours de ces derniers mois, devant l'afflux toujours croissant des demandes de places aux guichets de la location, l'habitude s'est créée et développée, à la Comédie, chez les artistes et les employés de tous services et de tout rang, de faire retenir des places à l'avance au bureau de location, pour des personnes de leur connaissance étrangères au Théâtre. Cet état de choses risquerait de provoquer de la part du public des réclamations justifiées.¹⁵⁸

Brunot submitted the following solution for consideration:

Le Doyen propose donc que seuls les Sociétaires aient le droit désormais de retenir des places en location. La question du contingentement de ce droit est soulevée,

¹⁵⁶ - P.V. for Thursday, June 24th, 1943, p.126.

¹⁵⁷ - P.127.

¹⁵⁸ - P.V. for Thursday, January 21st, 1943, pp.105-106.

mais on attendra de voir si cette mesure est rendue nécessaire avant de l'appliquer. Le Comité se rallie unanimement à la proposition du Doyen, qui prendra effet immédiatement.¹⁵⁹

In fact his proposition proved to be well founded, since at the meeting of February 1st, 1943,¹⁶⁰ Vaudoier was able to announce that at the last opening of the Bureau de Location, only about 30 seats had been reserved for 3 performances.¹⁶¹

A function, which, in Vaudoier's estimation was not being properly realized, was that of the 'semainier'. He and, in his absence, the 'suppléant' was chosen from the Comité d'Administration to sign the 'Livre de Bord' for a week and to note down any untoward circumstances. At the meeting of December 23rd,¹⁶² following Debucourt's request, a rise for those filling this post, from 300 F. to 700 F., was accorded; furthermore, the duties incumbent upon this function were restated.

Ils veilleront à la tenue du livre de bord quotidien qui est rédigé à la Régie, y déposeront chaque soir leur signature et y consigneront leurs observations, double formalité qui sera, à leur défaut, remplie par leur suppléant. Enfin, dans le cas d'un événement leur paraissant justifier cette mesure, ils feront parvenir sous enveloppe un rapport confidentiel à M. l'Administrateur.¹⁶³

The matter did not rest there, since at the meeting of March 10th, 1943, Jean-Louis Vaudoier felt himself obliged to express his dissatisfaction with the manner in which this duty was being accomplished. The negligent attitude adopted

159 - P.106.

160 - P.V., pp.113-114.

161 - P.114.

162 - P.V., pp.98-99.

163 - P.99.

towards this task was symptomatic of the incipient discord and dissatisfaction which would only become destructive when the war ended. The matter provoked some discussion between the 'semainiers' and himself:

D'un échange de vues entre l'Administrateur et les semainiers, il ressort que cette omission n'a été due qu'à un malentendu. Dorénavant le semainier ou son remplaçant signera donc quotidiennement le Livre de la Régie.¹⁶⁴

This problem again materialized on June 24th, when the five 'semainiers' stated that they were too few to accomplish the task properly. It had become evident that a detailed re-evaluation of the duties incumbent upon the 'semainier' needed to be undertaken, and it was decided that an intelligible and definitive list of these duties would be established in September of the following season.¹⁶⁵

Given the particular quality of the Comédie-Française as a profit-making state theatrical institution, the attribution of dressing-rooms is not simply a matter of arbitrary allocation, since once allocated, a 'loge' becomes the hallowed and inviolate enclave of the occupant. This tradition was maintained during the Occupation. The 'mouvement de loges' took place on October 17th, 1942,¹⁶⁶ with relative simplicity. Yet a problem relative to the 'loges' did appear later on in the season. Upon retirement a 'sociétaire' must relinquish his or her 'loge' and remove all possessions from the dressing-room. Berthe Bovy, who had retired, had been sent a letter in October, 1942, requesting her to complete this formality. By January 8th, 1943, no answer had been received and so further stronger action had been decided on.

164 - P.V., p.117.

165 - P.V. for Thursday, June 24th, 1943, pp.126-127.

166 - P.V. p.76.

Un nouveau délai d'un mois est accordé à Mme Bovy. Si à l'expiration de ce délai, soit le 15 février, elle n'a pris aucune décision, le Contrôleur Général fera procéder par un officier ministériel à un inventaire et à une estimation aux fins d'assurances des meubles et objets personnels contenus dans la loge de Mme Bovy. Auparavant celle-ci aura été invitée à produire un témoin pour inventaires et estimations contradictoires. Puis tous ses meubles et objets seront transportés dans un garde-meubles où ils seront conservés aux frais de l'intéressé. Le Contrôleur Général fera connaître à Mme Bovy, par lettre recommandée les termes de la résolution du Comité la concernant.¹⁶⁷

Again we see the weight of tradition and rules... and the often peculiarly formal relationship which the administrative burden imposes between 'sociétaires'. A decision relative to the function and practices of a 'sociétaire' which impinges upon or is subject to tradition or statute, must be the object of official action by the Comité d'Administration. This process was maintained here; the Comité did not seek, in the exceptional circumstances of the Occupation, to find an easier, less rigidly formal course, but relied on established practice. Berthe Bovy, in defence of her case, applied to the Minister, to allow her to keep her 'loge', until her 'représentation d'adieu'; both Vaudoier and Haute-cour dismissed this application as having no basis in tradition or precedence.¹⁶⁸ The affair came to a close when, on March 10th, 1943, Vaudoier announced that Berthe Bovy had relinquished her 'loge'. This affair did not simply remain an isolated and particular episode, but from it Vaudoier tried to draw a general principle, an attitude reinforced by the fact that another ex-member, Mme Ventura, had left her 'loge' '... dans un état extrême de délabrement.'¹⁶⁹ He proposed, to the unanimous approval of the Comité, that an inventory of a dressing-room should be made upon the departure of the occupant. This administrative innovation, surprisingly formalistic in a theatrical community, had been proved necessary by the course of past events, and by the institutional structure of the Comédie-Française.

167 - P.V., p.100.

168 - P.V. for Monday, February 1st, 1943, p.114.

169 - P.114.

One might be led to believe, from an analysis of the 'procès verbaux' up to this point, that the influence of the 'Illustre Théâtre', contrary to tradition, did not extend in this particular period beyond the confines of the Rue de Richelieu. In effect this was far from the truth; its power in theatrical affairs, particularly with respect to Paris, was as pervasive and forceful as ever, and there was a reciprocal interest and appreciation from the public, who not only regularly filled the auditorium, but also continued to bestow gifts and legacies on the Comédie-Française - eight in all during this season.¹⁷⁰ They varied from the presentation of the manuscripts of Paul Hervieu's L'Enigme and La Course du flambeau by Madame la Baronne de Pierrebourg,¹⁷¹ to the portrait of a 'sociétaire' from the 1840's, Delphine Fix; and a contemporary critic, M. de Pomeray, who was a friend of the actress,¹⁷² to money in the Cerny legacy.¹⁷³ The use to which this last amount should be put was clearly stated: '... doit récompenser un employé méritant dont la femme a mis au monde un enfant dans le courant de l'année.'¹⁷⁴ Gifts from four people were announced on April 15th, 1943, from M.Gouvert and Mlle Boitte. The latter provided another example of the close attachment between the Comédie-Française and Molière, and, at the same time, perhaps the strangest gift of the season:

(Mlle Boitte) a fait don d'une lentille de verre provenant de la collection de son aïeul, l'illustre archéologue Alexandre Lenoir; cet objet semble pouvoir être considéré comme produit authentique de la combustion des ossements de Molière, lors de l'exhumation de ses restes sous la Révolution.¹⁷⁵

170 - Not all came from the public, as will be seen below.

171 - P.V. for Wednesday, September 16th, 1942, p.70.

172 - P.V. for Saturday, October 17th, 1942, p.78.

173 - P.V. for Monday, December 21st, 1942, p.93.

174 - Ibid.

175 - P.V. for Thursday, April 15th, 1943, p.121.

The last gift to be donated to the Comédie-Française in this season was from Emile Fabre, who bestowed the manuscript of his work upon the Comédie-Française on the library of the theatre.¹⁷⁶ Even here, however, the 'Maison' was prone to administrative torpor, since, on January 8th, 1943, Bertin reminded the Comité that the theatre had, through administrative dilatoriness, seen itself deprived of the invaluable collection of documents concerning the Theatre which M. Rondel had offered to donate on September 18th, 1920. In 1925, the Ministre des Beaux-Arts, M. de Mouzie, had transferred the collection to the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal.¹⁷⁷ Despite this irreplaceable loss, the library of the Comédie-Française was and remains a precious source of documentation on the theatre, a point of reference. The gifts bestowed this season helped to assure the continuing quality of this library, and provided the example of a cultural museum unaffected by the rapaciousness of the occupying forces. The strength of the Comédie-Française derives not simply from its administrative structure, its repertory, its traditions, but also from the collection of priceless theatrical documentation contained in its library, a documentation which recalls and traces the history of French theatre, of course with special reference to the 'Maison'.

The Comédie-Française in 1942-1943 continued to exert a dominant influence in French theatre. As the principal theatre in France, the Comédie-Française regards any privilege denied to it should not be granted to another theatre. In this period the Minister had forbidden the staging of Henri Becque's La Parisienne on the stage of the Comédie-Française, 'qui est un théâtre d'état'.¹⁷⁸ However, it appeared that Becque's heir, Guy Robaglia, had made certain promises to

176 - P.V. for Thursday, June 10th, 1943, p.125.

177 - P.V. for Friday, January 8th, 1943, pp.102-103.

178 - P.V. for Wednesday, September 16th, 1942, pp.68-69.

Mlle Cocéa for the play to be staged at the Théâtre des Ambassadeurs. The Comité, unanimous in its condemnation of any permission being given to stage a play denied to the Comédie-Française, decided to make the following resolution known to the Minister:

Il estime que, du moment que M.le Ministre a jugé la représentation de la pièce inopportune sur la scène de la Comédie-Française, elle le serait également sur une autre scène.¹⁷⁹

Nevertheless the play was advertised, and Jean-Louis Vaudoyer announced at the meeting of October 17th, that he would take the matter as far as the head of the government.

...l'Administrateur informe les membres du Comité qu'il se propose d'agir soit auprès du cabinet du Maréchal, soit auprès du Préfet de la Seine, pour obtenir que soit pris en considération le vote émis par le Comité en date du 16 septembre estimant que si les représentations de La Parisienne sont inopportunes à la Comédie-Française, elles le sont également à l'extérieur.¹⁸⁰

Here we have another example of the intimate relationship between the state and the 'Illustre Théâtre', where the government is obliged to fulfil its obligations to the Comédie-Française by protecting its theatrical prerogative. Unfortunately for the Comédie-Française, the government in Vichy, divided by distance and the line of demarcation from Paris, could do little except express disapproval to Robaglia of his action. In effect the play was staged, from November 24th, 1942, under the title Clotilde de Mesnil, at the Théâtre des Ambassadeurs.¹⁸¹

179 - P.69.

180 - P.V. for Saturday, October 17th, 1942, p.77.

181 - P.V. for Wednesday, November 25th, 1942, pp.80-81.

In matters concerning its personal repertoire, the Comédie-Française' power could not be thwarted, even by a person of such stature as Paul Claudel. When he requested that L'Annonce faite à Marie, which had been accepted by the Comité de Lecture into the repertoire, but had not yet been staged, should be staged by Charles Dullin at the Théâtre de la Cité, without being withdrawn from the repertoire, the Comité's refusal was adamant and categorical.

Le Comité est unanime à refuser cette autorisation. L'exception faite l'année précédente - en faveur de la troupe du Rideau des Jeunes - ne devant pas faire règle. D'ailleurs le Comité est toujours très désireux de jouer la pièce de M.Claudel sans préjudice des représentations projetées du Soulier de satin du même auteur.¹⁸²

The Comité was more lenient when Mlle Jamois asked for permission to put on Ibsen's Hedda Gabler at her theatre, the Théâtre Montparnasse. Mme Marquet, 'titulaire du rôle d'Hedda',¹⁸³ was prepared to cede the rôle for the space of one year.

When it came to the borrowing of the premises of the Comédie-Française, or of any of its scenic material, the Comité again had absolute power of decision. The plays of Paul Raynal had originally been part of the repertoire of the Comédie-Française, but had later been withdrawn; since the sets for his play, A souffert sous Ponce-Pilate, were still preserved in the 'magasins', he requested the use of them for a performance of the same play outside the Rue de Richelieu.¹⁸⁴ The rejection of his plea was definitive.

Le Comité est unanime à considérer qu'il ne lui est pas possible d'accéder à cette demande de M.Paul Raynal.¹⁸⁵

182 - P.V. for Wednesday, December 23rd, 1942, p.98.

183 - P.V. for Thursday, April 15th, 1943, pp.120-121.

184 - P.V. for Friday, January 8th, 1943, p.102.

185 - P.102.

Of course any performer wishing to indulge in a professional activity outside the Comédie-Française, had to present his request to the Comité d'Administration, and had to be bound by its decision. There were several such requests during the season. The Comité agreed on October 17th, 1942, to allow Pierre Bertin and Jean Meyer to work outside, the former to prepare the 'mise en scène' for Lefranc's Les Inséparables at the Théâtre Saint-Georges, and the latter for two 'mises en scène', Boissy's Jean-Jacques, and an 'opéra-bouffe' by Constantinoff.¹⁸⁶ Bertheau, on November 25th, 1942, was given permission to direct Ibsen's Les Revenants at the Théâtre de l'Humour,¹⁸⁷ and on January 21st, 1943, to direct Denys Amiel's Mon Ami at the Théâtre Saint-Georges.¹⁸⁸ Two further applications were accepted, one by Denis d'Inès for a play at the Théâtre de l'Apollo,¹⁸⁹ and by Jean Meyer again to direct a play by Stève Passeur at the Théâtre de l'Avenue.¹⁹⁰ In this way the Comédie-Française was able to exert a more direct and positive artistic influence, rather than simply sitting in judgement on requests made from outside.

One consequence of the exceptional circumstances of the Occupation was the unusual willingness of the 'Maison' to lend its theatre for the performance of galas by outside organizations. At their meeting on March 10th, 1943, the Comité d'Administration studied the request by the Association des Anciens Elèves des Hautes Etudes Commerciales to use the stage for a gala to the benefit of those people from the Grandes Ecoles who were prisoners of the Germans, and also their direct kin, particularly their children.¹⁹¹ Their intention was to stage a work written by a prisoner, M. Peretti de la Rocca's La Légende du chevalier, to the accom-

186 - P.V. for Saturday, October 17th, 1942, p.77.

187 - P.V. for Wednesday, November 25th, 1942, p.81.

188 - P.V., p.106.

189 - P.V. for Thursday, April 15th, 1943, pp.122-123.

190 - P.V. for Thursday, May 31st, 1943, p.123.

191 - P.V. for Wednesday, March 10th, 1943, p.118.

paniment of music by Maurice Jaubert, and directed by Jean-Louis Barrault. Poems by an ex-prisoner, Patrice de la Tour de Pin, would also be read. The Comité agreed to the request, but also made it clear that their acquiescence in this case was due only to circumstances and should not be felt to establish a precedent in post-war years. The final date set for the performance of this production, after much discussion, was September 29th, 1943.¹⁹² The Comité maintained this attitude when, on November 25th, 1942, it acceded to the request from the Comité d'Entraide aux Prisonniers de Guerre du 1er Arrondissement,¹⁹³ for a gala. When the Secrétaire Général à la Jeunesse wished to make use of the stage of the Comédie-Française for a matinée on February 13th, 1943, in order to stage Gringoire and Le Barbier de Seville, his request was granted, and the fee to be charged immediately fixed.¹⁹⁴ However, it was with some trepidation and disfavour that the Comité viewed the desire of the Director of the Loterie Nationale to use their stage for a draw; nevertheless, they did not completely reject the idea, but merely postponed the decision.¹⁹⁵ It is apparent that the Comité was aware of its duty to lend at least moral support to the war effort; by tradition and of necessity, it could not manifest any anarchic revolutionary or intransigent spirit towards the new authorities. Its first duty was to preserve the theatrical, literary and aesthetic tradition of which it had become a vital protector. Yet, at the same time, it sought to make clear to the French people its concern for the course of the war. One obvious way was to break with tradition in order to allow these galas to take place.

The predominant impression one receives from a close study of the Comédie-Française during this season is an almost hieratical rigidity in the application and observance of tradition. Except for the few examples given above, the

192 - P.V. for Thursday, June 10th, 1943, p.124.

193 - P.V. for Wednesday, November 25th, 1942, p.81.

194 - P.V. for Thursday, January 21st, 1943, p.107.

'La Salle est louée pour le prix maximum, soit 3,000 francs.'

195 - P.V. for Thursday, April 15th, 1943, p.120.

'sociétaires' and the Administrateur Général strove to maintain an atmosphere of normality, and found the strength to do this essentially in the institutional and artistic traditions embodied in its function. If one considers the recorded minutes of the Comités de Lecture, again the prevailing impression is one of normality. On January 16th, 1942, the Comité de Lecture had brought to its consideration the new translation of Hamlet by Guy de Pourtalès, and on June 30th, 1942, Henri de Montherlant's La Reine Morte.

Hamlet - Comité de lecture du vendredi 16 janvier 1942, présidé par M. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, administrateur général:

'Lecture est faite par M. Dux, d'une traduction en prose d'Hamlet par M. Guy de Pourtalès. Après la lecture, les membres du Comité, à l'unanimité, ont voté pour la réception. Cet avis donné, M. l'Administrateur a déclaré la pièce admise à la représentation.'

La Reine Morte - Comité de lecture du mardi, 30 juin 1942, présidé par M. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, administrateur général:

'Lecture a été faite par M. Bertheau d'une pièce en 3 actes et 5 tableaux, en prose, de M. Henry de Montherlant intitulée La Reine Morte. Après la lecture, les membres du Comité ont donné, par scrutin secret, leur avis sur la pièce qu'ils ont reçue à l'unanimité. Cet avis donné, M. l'Administrateur a déclaré la pièce de M. de Montherlant admise à la représentation. 196

Either of these quotes could easily have appeared in any pre-war season, and there is no hint from them of any external problems. No mention is made of why a new translation of Hamlet had to be examined, when it would have seemed more logical to continue using the excellent one of Morand and Schwob, particularly as this one was in greater harmony with the 'mise en scène' of Granval, and had had much to do with the considerable success of the production in 1932. The reason, as we have seen above, was the Jewish heritage of the latter translator. We are witness again to the emphasis on discretion Vaudoyer maintained in his administration.

Financially, as we have seen, the 'Maison de Molière' reached levels unparalleled in immediate pre-war years. After the tour to Lyon to play Léopold le Bien-aimé,¹⁹⁷ Jean-Louis Vaudoyer was able to announce that after an expenditure of 96.707.50 F. and takings of 164.000 F., the Comédie-Française had made a profit of 67.292.50 F. Thus, despite the oppressive and potentially debilitating atmosphere engendered by the Occupation, despite internal conflicts, despite some direct intervention by the Germans, the institutional and artistic framework of the Comédie-Française allowed it to pursue its purpose in virtual autonomy. Although the link with the government, as was proved by the affair of La Parisienne, was to a great extent weakened, the theatre was able nevertheless to fulfil its cultural rôle; a rôle with increased significance given the radical transformation the majority of French institutions had had forced upon them. The mass of the population saw the normal codes of behaviour, the accepted structures of social intercourse, their daily existence undergo a dramatic disintegration; yet the Comédie-Française was able to maintain an almost normal course. Even though there might have been complaints about unseemly behaviour and disregard for tradition, these were but minor infractions.

Les membres du Comité sont ensuite unanimes à déplorer que trop de figurants, d'élèves, d'inconnus, envahissent les couloirs, les dégagement et les ascenseurs réservés aux artistes et s'y comportent en général sans la moindre discrétion. Le chef de la figuration rappellera impérativement aux intéressés les prescriptions déjà énoncées en ce domaine.

Certains Sociétaires désireraient également que la fréquentations de la Cantine du Théâtre soit réservée aux artistes et aux employés de la Maison, et permise aux seuls élèves faisant de la figuration.¹⁹⁸

197 - The tour was announced at the first meeting of the season, on September 16th, 1942. The profits were stated at the meeting of Wednesday, March 10th, 1943.

198 - P.V. for Thursday, April 15th, 1943, p.123.

There was nothing unusual or untoward about this behaviour, or about the complaints; they are a common matter for comment in the life of the Comédie-Française to this day. Pierre Dux, the present Administrateur Général, felt sufficiently troubled by this kind of problem in 1972 to make his concern known to the press:

Tout a changé dans cette maison. Autrefois il y avait une tenue dans les couloirs qui n'existe plus. Je le regrette un peu.¹⁹⁹

During the war some members of the press were only too willing to launch a vituperative attack on the very institution of the Comédie-Française, on its cooperative structure. Laubreaux attacked the 'virus démocratique' which he claimed was dragging the 'Maison' to decadence,²⁰⁰ while Georges Gabory in Comoedia concentrated his criticism upon 'les coups de téléphone mystérieux, les rendez-vous secrets, les propos clandestins'.²⁰¹ Yet these attempts at scandal-mongering were not what interested the majority of the French public in its attitude to their national theatre. This active policy of denigration was ignored as, consciously or subconsciously, the French saw in the Comédie-Française one of the few cultural institutions still virtually intact; within its enclave, not only could one find satisfied a desire for escapism, and a need for catharsis, but at the same time the dominant sense of normality in the functioning of the Comédie-Française presented them with an inviolate symbol of the perennial substance of French culture. The Comédie-Française even tried to extend its influence into the Unoccupied Zone, though this met with considerable problems. On March 22nd, 1942, Marshal Pétain and Admiral Darlan were among those present at the performance of the Comédie-Française

199 - Pierre Dux in conversation with Louis Dandrel, 'Un Entretien avec M. Pierre Dux', Le Monde (October 5th, 1972), p.18.

200 - Laubreaux, 'Décrétales du Français', Je suis partout (January 17th, 1942).

201 - 'Le Ménagement de Molière' (January 24th, 1942).

in the Casino of Vichy of Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard, and Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée.²⁰² Although the government may not have stated its appreciation of the absolute necessity for the 'Théâtre Français' to fulfil its duty, it is nonetheless apparent that this was so, since Georges Pioch could announce in L'Oeuvre of August 5th, 1942, that the state was considering an increase of five million francs in the subsidy given to the Comédie-Française.²⁰³

As we have seen, the Administrateur Général during the Occupation, Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, had a very precise idea of his duty and purpose. After the 1941-1942 season he would strive to bring new works into the repertory, to embolden the French with the realization that their national theatre did not wish to adopt a purely passive, conservationist rôle, but, within the limits of tradition, to bring new works into the theatre. Unhappily, the crisis which the diplomacy of Vaudoyer and the exceptional circumstances of the Occupation had apparently averted, would be realized as soon as the war was over; a crisis which would cost the Comédie-Française the talents of Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud.²⁰⁴

202 - 'La Comédie-Française à Vichy', L'Oeuvre (March 23rd, 1942)

203 - Pioch, Georges, 'Millions chez Molière', L'Oeuvre (August 5th, 1942).

204 - In 1946, the government would set up a commission to examine the situation of the Comédie-Française; the 'comédiens' were not allowed to elect their representatives to this commission themselves, a fact which led to considerable anger from the performers. The new system drawn up was to be accepted in its totality by a 'comédien' or he would have to leave.

7) Conclusion

The underlying consideration which unites the apparently disparate elements of my study up to this point is that of the Comédie-Française, both institutionally and artistically, being in a vital and intimate relationship with the indigenous culture of which it is a manifestation. Essentially, the theatre, if it is to have any immediate and permanent significance in a given cultural context, must exemplify to some extent the social rituals and assigned individual and collective rôles which designate the accepted cultural framework. In all societies there must be a specific code of social conventions, often tacit rather than consciously derived, which provides a readily decipherable means of establishing and maintaining cultural identity. The social norm thus established necessarily cannot remain static, since this would lead to stagnation and the ultimate collapse of the social order. In any particular extraordinary social situation, such as the Occupation, the society must evolve to survive, but this development must be guided by the confirmed specific code.

The Comédie-Française is in the unique position of being, not only a building for the presentation of dramatic performance, but also a cultural institution, with a sociologically symbolic rôle to fulfil;¹ its purpose in the Occupation became one of vital cultural importance. In its institutional organization and administrative existence, in the quality and thematic content of its productions, it had to embody the specific code of social convention and behaviour of French culture. The continuing presentation of the embodiment of accepted social rituals gave tacit evidence to the French of the strength of their indigenous culture. Any radically innovatory conception or action could easily, in this unusual social situation, have been a catalytic element

1 - See Chapter 6.

in social disharmony. Yet, within this code, there needed to be evidence of progress, of evolution; French culture had to be seen, not only to be strong in tradition, but also to have sufficient creative potential to continue evolving.²

There are three distinct facets to my examination of the Comédie-Française in the 1942-1943 season. First of all there is the delineation of the immediate effect of defeat and occupation on French culture; secondly, there is the study of the institutional life of the Comédie-Française itself; finally there is the detailed examination of three selected productions. Obviously, the dominant element here is the first aspect mentioned, since it is the motivating factor for the study of the other two. It is because of the particular quality of the cultural disintegration initiated by the sudden and authoritarian alien occupation that the Comédie-Française became so culturally significant. By logical inference, the productions in this period assumed an importance beyond the purely artistic level, and need to be studied with this concept in mind. Given the precise and vital inter-relationship between the three elements, it is impossible to obtain a valid image of the Comédie-Française in this period without analyzing each in some detail.

2 - We have already seen how fertile a period this was in terms of the production of new plays, not only in the Comédie-Française itself, but also in other theatres.

I have shown in Chapter 2 how the specific code and patterns of French Culture³ had been radically altered, both in physical and spiritual terms. The Nazi influence was extended into virtually every realm of daily existence and, concomitant to this, the inevitable hardships created by the Occupation, further caused a drastic reorientation and re-assessment of the explicit and implicit patterns of French Culture. That the Germans did not strive with any urgency to assert their dominance in the Comédie-Française was a fortuitous historical circumstance; had they decided to patronize more enthusiastically, and to impose their particular ethic, then, given the autocratic nature of their philosophy, it seems inevitable that the Comédie-Française would not have seen its cultural rôle assume such importance. The process of social disintegration which I have analyzed had the direct result of beginning the destruction of that specific code which regulated French culture. The French were the impotent witnesses of the gradual corrosion of their social norm, including the appearance of an unusual level of hypocrisy, deceit and betrayal.⁴ Yet within the enclaves of the Comédie-Française, the public was witness to the interpretation and fulfilment of the code which elsewhere seemed threatened by imminent destruction. Attendance became almost a matter of religious obeisance, as the officiating figures on stage offered clear evidence of the autonomy of French Culture. The public saw enacted what had become sacred rituals. The public was prepared to endure

3 - I think it would be valid here to quote again the definition of culture which I have adopted:

'Culture consists of patterns explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups; including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (that is, historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may on the one hand be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.'

See Ch. 2, p. 8 for my interpretation of this definition.

4 - See below for the relevance of this particular aspect to the productions under study.

almost without complaint such hardships and discomforts in the Rue de Richelieu as cold and frequent interruptions for air-raids, since here at least they could be certain that they were participating in a social gathering regulated by their indigenous code. The constraints imposed by tradition were not restrictive influences, but were the constituent elements of the code which the public recognized as representative of their culture. Once outside the theatre, away from the free enactment of this code, the public had again to face the continually visible and immediate threat to their society. However, they now had some proof that French Culture still maintained some autonomy, and was continuing to develop.⁵

It may seem that my chapter on the Comédie-Française places too much emphasis on an accumulation of details of its daily existence in this period. Yet, I would maintain that these details have a precise relevance to my main theme. In that chapter I examined the essentially dual rôle of the Comédie-Française as an artistic and as a social institution. The artistic aspect will be dealt with below, but the administrative and social life within the Comédie-Française has as vital an importance as the more immediately apparent relevance of the artistic productions. It is the overwhelmingly 'normal' quality of this daily life which I wish to emphasize. Within the administrative and technical workings of the Comédie-Française, the social relationships were still governed almost solely by the French cultural code. In fact, as we have seen, adherence to traditional precept verged sometimes on the rigidly autocratic. The unusual circumstances of the Occupation were, as far as possible, ignored and not allowed to intrude upon the essential preoccupations of a business enterprise, such as wage increases and retirement benefits. It would not have been sufficient for the Comédie-Française to concentrate only on maintaining its artistic rôle, to the

5 - The concept of development and evolution within the accepted structure will be dealt with below in more detail.

detriment of its institutional framework. Historical circumstance imposed upon it an unusually significant social purpose, which it could only realize by a strict determination to adhere to the specific code within its own social existence. There were some administrative innovations in this period, but none were so radical as to threaten the norm; nevertheless, they did demonstrate clearly that the process of evolution was being maintained. Thus, the Comédie-Française could be seen as the institutional embodiment of a sophisticated and independent culture system, and at the same time, the example of the assured progress of this same system, in contrast to external events. Had the Comédie-Française allowed its own social framework to be directly influenced by outside pressures, the inevitable result would have been a shift in its cultural rôle, as it would no longer have maintained within itself the tangible evidence of social co-existence regulated by the French culture code. It was particularly vital in this season, when virtually all other 'artifacts' were subject to pervasive and obtrusive Nazi influence. When the French came to the Rue de Richelieu, they entered what force of circumstance had turned into an 'oasis'⁶ of French culture. The unique situation of the Comédie-Française as a state institution, closely allied in its administrative structure to the national government, obliged it to undertake a rôle of direct social significance. The administrative, technical and artistic personnel had now unwittingly become virtually the only free representatives of French culture in Occupied France. There can be no doubt that it was this unexpected, but vitally important, duty which temporarily united the company; before the war the Comédie-Française seemed to be heading towards a constitutional crisis. The process was halted during the Occupation, but materialized again, with drastic results as soon as hostilities came to an end.

6 - Montherlant's description of the Comédie-Française, already quoted.

Within a society whose specific code had been forcibly and often radically altered by an alien culture, this 'artifact' of French culture, which is one of the main 'conditioning elements' of French cultural evolution, since it clearly represents a 'distinctive achievement', thrived in this especial situation.⁷ Nazi cultural philosophy could only regard French culture as the product of an inferior and deficient race,⁸ which thus needed to be destroyed in order to implant the perfection of Teutonic civilization. It was the very pervasiveness and deliberate violence of this conscious and purposeful metamorphosis attempted by the Nazis which created an equally intense reaction within the Comédie-Française. This reaction became a powerful unifying factor, to the extent that within the confines of the 'Maison', the social norm of French culture was strictly observed, in a positive concentration on maintaining a daily existence as representative of the normal social situation⁹ as possible. The Comédie-Française, which in its very function has become a microcosm of French culture, and thus always an institution where the specific code is closely adhered to, saw its cultural duty achieve an unprecedented significance.

There can be no doubt that this concern for the maintenance of the social norm could not but be reflected in the selection and presentation of plays in this season. It is impossible to divorce the artistic and the administrative in this institution, since they are vitally inter-dependent, and cannot exist in autonomy from each other.¹⁰ The Comédie-Française has always been an institution where tradition has had predominance over innovation. Had this emphasis been

7 - The significance of these words has been examined in Ch.2.

8 - One of the races classified by Houston Stewart Chamberlain as belonging to the 'Chaos of Races'.

9 - 'Normal' in the sense of not suffering the peculiar impositions of Occupation.

10 - The most obvious, and the most central link in this relationship, is the existence of the 'sociétaires'. Their functions and duties with reference to both aspects has been dealt with in some detail in the preceding chapters.

changed in any way, the public would have seen it as another betrayal of their culture, and the Comédie-Française would merely have become yet another factor to hasten the dissolution of their specific code. Yet, as stated above, there needed also to be some evidence of evolution, of creativity, to assure the public that their culture was still a vital force. The reconciliation of these two contrasting, but equally important, aspects was a delicate task, which the Comédie-Française accomplished with success.

We have seen in the Chapter on the administration of the Comédie-Française how Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, together with his concern for the preservation of the social norm, nevertheless sought to initiate some administrative changes. We have also seen his awareness of the need for the two aspects discussed above to be realized in the artistic programme. His first season was consecrated to tradition, and thus offered the public the theatrical realization of their social norm; his second season also had a strong bias to tradition, but in addition, he now strove to incorporate new works into the repertoire, such as La Reine Morte, and Cocteau's Renaud et Armide. With the heavy censure effected on all other realms of artistic activity, again we are confronted with the paradox that the period was a particularly fertile one at the Comédie-Française.¹¹ As I have discussed above, La Reine Morte is still one of the most popular plays in the repertory of the Comédie-Française; Barrault's 'mise en scène' for Phèdre was published in a new edition as recently as 1972. Thus we can see in what manner the external force applied by

11 - There were of course several notable productions outside the Comédie-Française, but they were not always met at the time with financial success, nor could they have the social significance of those works produced on the stage of the 'Maison de Molière'. Sartre recounts the fate of his Les Mouches, first produced by Dullin at the Théâtre de la Cité in 1943:

'... la pièce, éreintée par la critique, eut une cinquantaine de représentations devant des salles à demi vides.'

Un Théâtre de situations (Gallimard, 1973), p.226.

the Nazi Occupation engendered an opposing reaction in the institutional framework of the Comédie-Française; the strength derived from this reaction created a correspondingly high level of artistic effort in the 'Maison'.

There were three fundamental requisites which the public expected to find at the Comédie-Française. Escapism; catharsis; reassurance of cultural autonomy. Either of the first two aspects, or both, could perhaps be found elsewhere; but only in the Comédie-Française were all three in evidence. We must examine here how the productions under study realized these aims.

In this period where death was an imminent threat for every person, there was an obvious need for catharsis. Yet there also needed to be a particular emphasis in this catharsis, on betrayal, deceit, and hypocrisy, three characteristics of human nature which, in this period, received undue emphasis. The dominant motif in all three productions was death, and all three demonstrated an emphatic concentration on the characteristics mentioned above.¹² Thus the public could be purged not only of the oppressively intense meditation on death they confronted daily, but also of these elements which had assumed unusual importance in social behaviour, and which threatened to disrupt the specific code governing their social intercourse. The shifting, shadowy, whispering presences in La Reine Morte, the deliberate emphasis on subterfuge in Hamlet, the spontaneously Machiavellian reactions of Phèdre, all realize this necessary cathartic impact.

There is no hint of any possible avenue of escape in Hamlet until right at the end. The sudden release from dramatic tension created in the public a feeling of hope for ultimate freedom. The court of Elsinore too has to suffer betrayal, deceit, and murder, but hope comes from outside in the shape of

12 - See the relevant chapters in my thesis for a detailed analysis of these aspects.

Fortinbras, as later, Liberation would come as the Allies landed in Normandy. In La Reine Morte the need for escapism is realized essentially by a brilliant décor, and by historical and geographical displacement. Unfortunately the 'coin de ciel', which Barrault intended to include in his 'mise en scène' of Phèdre as the permanent hint of potential escape was left out of the décor. However, the importance of this production lies more clearly in the last of these three aspects. Thus, on the stage of the Comédie-Française, the public were able first to purge their fear of betrayal and death, then to indulge the need for escapism.

The final aspect and the one most closely linked to the institutional framework, and the one which gave to the Comédie-Française during the Occupation its particular significance, is that of the reassurance of the public that their code here at least remained intact. It is for this reason that I have, in such exhaustive detail, attempted to place each of the three works under examination in its historical and aesthetic perspective in French culture. Each one becomes relevant to my study only if it can be seen to be in a vital link with the specific code and to contain within itself the potential force to provide creative energy for the further evolution of this code. I believe that the unique position held by Hamlet and Phèdre in the French cultural heritage has been amply explained in the pertinent chapters. Furthermore, the affinity between La Reine Morte and the French classical ethic has been clearly demonstrated. With regard to the latter production, it was necessary to study the artistic ethos of the writer, and the creative process which gave rise to the play, in order to illustrate the essentially French quality of his work, and also to show how, again paradoxically, force of circumstance instead of stultifying the creative energy of the writer, provided him with extraordinary impetus. At the Comédie-Française the

public were witnesses to the confirmation on stage of the social rituals and modes of behaviour which they could recognize as inspired by their code.

Yet it was not simply in the thematic content and philosophical reflection contained in these plays that the full burden of the reassurance rested. It arose also from the form and quality of the 'mises en scène'. There needed to be a pertinent and vital interplay between the theatrical framework (the 'mise en scène') and the social framework. We have seen how Barrault in Phèdre attempted to reconcile the traditional with his personal conflicts and concepts; he wished to return to Phèdre the importance which Racine had attached to the spoken word and its musical quality. Barrault presented to the public a work marked with the respect for the social significance of Racine's language and aesthetic. However, he also offered the evidence that Racine's work still contained the potential for new interpretation in his attempt to construct the whole 'mise en scène' in terms of musical form, and in his desire to compose the production in terms of each part existing in total harmony with the rest. Dux, also, allowed the spoken word to be the dominant motif. The simplicity and understatement of his 'mise en scène' of La Reine Morte, recalling the French classical emphasis on *litotes*, allowed full concentration on the beauty of the language and on an analysis of the themes. These last two elements were in close affinity with the social code in their quality and content.¹³ In his 'mise en scène' for Hamlet, conceived in 1932, Charles Gribouval did not strive to produce a work of extreme originality. His avowed aim was to pare the play of the romantic accoutrements to which it had so long been subject; nevertheless he remained within the bounds of the concepts of presentation as dictated by theatrical convention.¹⁴ Although it is conceivable that in 1932 the

13 - The French were well aware that their language was threatened; already the effects had been seen in Alsace and Lorraine (cf. Ch.2).

14 - He did not attempt any radical innovation, such as the removal of the proscenium arch, or a complete evaluation of the purpose and function of the actor, as had been done by Artaud.

production may have seemed revolutionary, if not deliberately anarchic to some, by 1942 the majority of the public would have been familiar with the 'mise en scène'. The austerity of the direction and the décor could answer simultaneously the French classical ethic of strict necessity, and provide an image of life in the Occupation. Therefore, all three productions were allowed to retain and display visible evidence of respect for the French culture code.

However, they also all provided that element of newness which gave promise of continued cultural evolution. La Reine Morte was the first play by Montherlant, and its certain quality seemed to promise more works of equal value in the future. Barrault placed a new and valid emphasis on Phèdre; indeed his 'mise en scène' is still highly regarded in France. Granval's 'mise en scène' for a play which had for centuries been an integral part of French culture offered a fresh approach, which again gave promise of further artistic developments along the lines of this 'mise en scène constructive'.

The outstanding point which arises from this study of the Comédie-Française in the 1942-1943 season is the intimate structural and conceptual relationship between the Occupation, French culture, and the Comédie-Française. In times of social stability, the 'Illustre théâtre' remains a government institution, but its rôle is primarily an artistic one. Were one to limit the examination of this theatre during the Occupation merely to an analysis of the artistic production, one would be presenting an unbalanced view of the real task facing the Comédie-Française. From the evidence given above, there can be no doubt that the Comédie-Française achieved at this time a cultural significance far greater than normal. Yet, it is impossible to fully appreciate this aspect unless each element,

each component which maintained this structural relationship is explained and analyzed. Every detail of the life, the creative process, the productions in the Comédie-Française have to be examined; so too the effect of the Occupation on French culture and its specific code must be analyzed with some elaboration. What I have attempted to demonstrate is the integral relationship of each of these three aspects to one another. Had I not studied in detail the daily life of the Comédie-Française, I would not have been able to illustrate in any valid fashion the vital relevance this life had to the Occupation and to the performance of the plays and finally to the public. The public were obliged by the Occupation to seek escape and reassurance; the paradoxical creativity engendered in the Comédie-Française by this same Occupation, brought the public to the Rue de Richelieu. The social rituals enacted and fulfilled here, between performer and audience, and between audience and institution, exemplified the continued existence of the French specific culture code, sustained here by the structural relationship between the Occupation, French culture, and the Comédie Française. Each element of every aspect is a vital and indispensable component, which must be disclosed and examined in order to comprehend fully the intimate, positive, and imperative nature of the tension between all three aspects. With the Liberation, the cultural significance of the Comédie-Française would lose its predominant import, with the consequent destruction of the tension which had held together a unique structural relationship. The resultant constitutional crisis in the Comédie-Française would have far-reaching and drastic repercussions.

Bibliography

I have tried to include as many photocopies as possible of the unpublished material which I was able to research, and have listed them below. Much of the material I obtained was from daily newspapers, and often the article concerned had no specific title. Where there is no author given for an article, I have listed it alphabetically by its title. For ease of reference in the section concerning Hamlet, I have listed the various translations of the play alphabetically by the names of the translators, not under Shakespeare.

1) Unpublished material :

Boll, André:

- a) Letter to me dated February 22nd, 1973, concerning the 'mise en scène' of Hamlet. Some of this letter is based on Jean Jacquot's study of the production (see below)
(Appendix A1)
- b) 'Extraits de presse' contained in the same letter.
(Appendix A2)
- c) Original 'maquettes' of the décor for Hamlet.
(Appendices A3-A8)
- d) 'Maquettes' for Boll's décors for King Lear and Troilus and Cressida (no copies)
- e) Notes made directly after my interview with Boll on March 15th, 1973. (Appendix A9)

Chevalley, Sylvie, (Bibliothécaire de la Comédie-Française):
Letter to me dated February 12th, 1974, recording the minutes of the Comités de Lecture concerning Hamlet and La Reine Morte (Appendix B)

Dumas and Meurice:

At the Association des Régisseurs de Théâtre in Paris, I was able to study the 'mise en scène' (unsigned) used for this translation in 1904 with Mounet-Sully as Hamlet, and Jean Sylvain as Claudius. I have included a photocopy of the set for Act III, 4 as a useful contrast to Boll's design. (Appendix C)

Dux, Pierre:

'Mise en scène' of La Reine Morte. There has already been some work on this production, but not in any extensive detail. Manuscript is in the private archives of the Comédie-Française.

Granval, Charles:

- a) 'Mise en scène' for Hamlet, copied out for the production of 1934 by the 'régisseur/souffleur', Dupuy. The manuscript is in the private archives of the Comédie-Française.
- b) I have included copies of some of the set dispositions as drawn in this 'mise en scène'. (Appendix D; illustrations 1-6)

Hugo, Jean:

- a) Three letters to me, dated February 8th, 1974, May 25th, 1974, and January 19th, 1975, concerning his décor for Phèdre (Appendices E1-E3)
- b) 'Maquettes' for his décor, contained in the private archives of the Comédie-Française (no copy)

Montherlant, Henri de:

- a) 'Projet de Henri de Montherlant de notice de programme pour la création de La Reine Morte (projet abandonné de la suite)'. Manuscript in the private archives of the Comédie-Française (no copy)
- b) His commentary on the public's reaction to the play. Manuscript in the private archives of the Comédie-Française. (no copy)

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NOTE sur les décors d'HAMLET dans la mise en scène de Ch. Granval

Un rideau d'avant scène spécial reproduisant la page de titre de la première édition. Il servait, en place de l'avant scène du théâtre la séparation des scènes

===

Toute une partie du décor subsistait pendant toute la pièce. Elle consistait en deux chassais, cour et ja/rdin, avec leurs entrées, un vaste praticable sur lequel on plantait les décors, auquel on accédait par deux marches. Entre les marches, deux socles que l'on pouvait utiliser comme sièges. Dans ce praticable avait été percé une plaque transparente de couleur verte, pour l'apparition du spectre, une autre pour la scène des fos-soyeurs.

Les scènes de transition s'effec/tuaient devant trois rideaux (taps) de composition différente.

La couleur était maintenue dans des variantes gr/is-vert, sur lesquelles venaient se détacher les rouges, les noirs et les or des costumes.

La mise en scène de Grandval demeurait, dans ses grandes lignes post-romantique.

Un savant bruitage accompagnait certaines des scènes: rafales de vent, bruit des vagues de la mer (Elseneur). Chaque fois que le spectre dit "Jurez" d'une voix caverneuse, une flamme jaillissait du sol. Un orage unit la scène 2 de l'acte III au moment où le roi démasqué, Hamlet renonce à le tuer. La scène d'Hamlet avec sa mère est également ponctuée de coups de tonnerre.



A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a flourish.

COMEDIE FRANCAISE Extraits de presse sur HAMLET avril 1932

Félicitons André BOLL de nous avoir promené à travers les salles, les chambres, les plateformes du vieux château d'Elseneur, et d'avoir su avec sobriété et noblesse, créer un cadre digne de Shakespeare. "L'Art et les artistes".

Tous les décors dont la constructivité a été confié à André BOLL sont nouveaux. Leur beauté, leur logique, leur puissance d'évocation seront remarquables. Plus de toiles peintes, plus d'extérieurs ou de palais en trompe l'oeil, mais des combinaisons architecturales, des reliefs, des plans étagés. Les éclairages prennent une place importante, l'atmosphère dans laquelle doit se dérouler normalement l'angoissante tragédie est créée dès le début. Elle subsiste jusqu'à la scène finale. (Le Matin : Jean Prudhomme).

BOLL a reconstitué et créé de fort belles tapisseries en même temps que composé un très bon ensemble, ni trop réelle ni trop stylisé. (L'avenir : Eugène Poë)

Les décors aux lignes nettes et simples d'André BOLL dans des gammes grises et endeuillées me satisfont pleinement. Il sont plus remarquables par l'intelligence que par le faste. Leur dépouillement a des vertus sévères. (La Liberté : Robert Kemp.)

La Comédie-française a somptueusement fait les choses et les décors d'André BOLL ont un caractère de grandeur d'une majesté admirable. (Aux écoutes)

Les feux de lumière, la mise en scène, les décors d'André BOLL, produisent le meilleur effet (Le Temps : Pierre Brisson)

La présentation fort belle et dès le lever du rideau, les applaudissements ont crépité pour la décoration hardie quoique classique d'André BOLL (La Semaine à Paris : L.J. Finot)

André BOLL a composé pour le drame un beau décor, aux vastes proportions, où les personnages semblent menacés par ces énormes pierres qui sont à l'échelle de leurs passions. Cela fait pressentir l'anéantissement final. (Ami du Peuple : Septime)

Les décors d'André BOLL sont fort beaux, simples avec grandeur, évocateurs sobrement; les costumes sont très réussis (Figaro : Gérard d'Houville)

André BOLL nous a offert des décors stylisés sans sécheresse, éclatants sans indiscretion (Le Ménestrel : Jane Caillaud Mendès)

Les décors d'André BOLL, technicien consommé, très sobres de forme et de couleurs, stylisés comme on dit, fort éloigné du trompe l'oeil, aident par leur habile architecture scénique, le groupement des acteurs et collaborent heureusement avec la mise en scène proprement dite. (Ouest Eclair : Maurice Brilla-nt)

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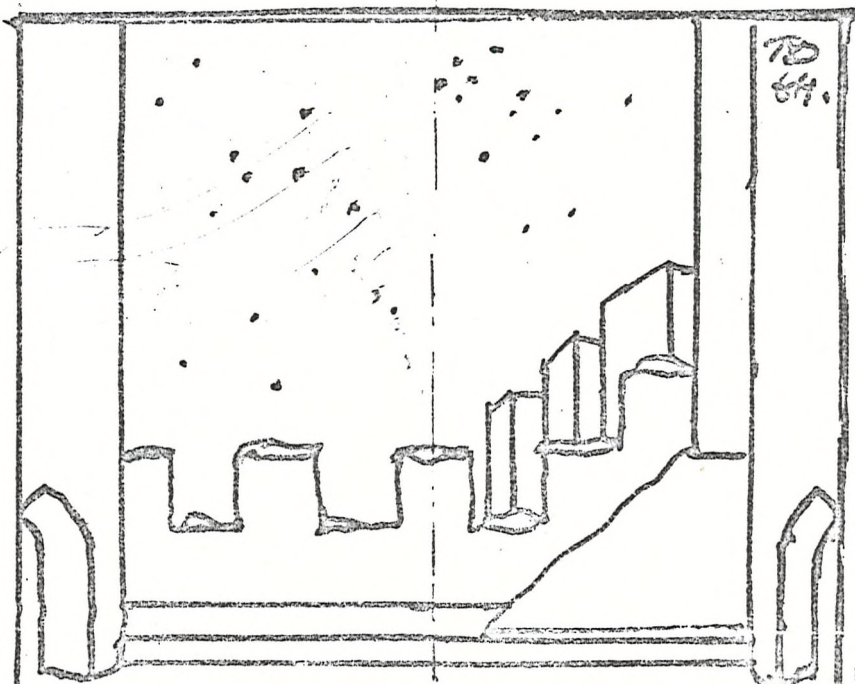
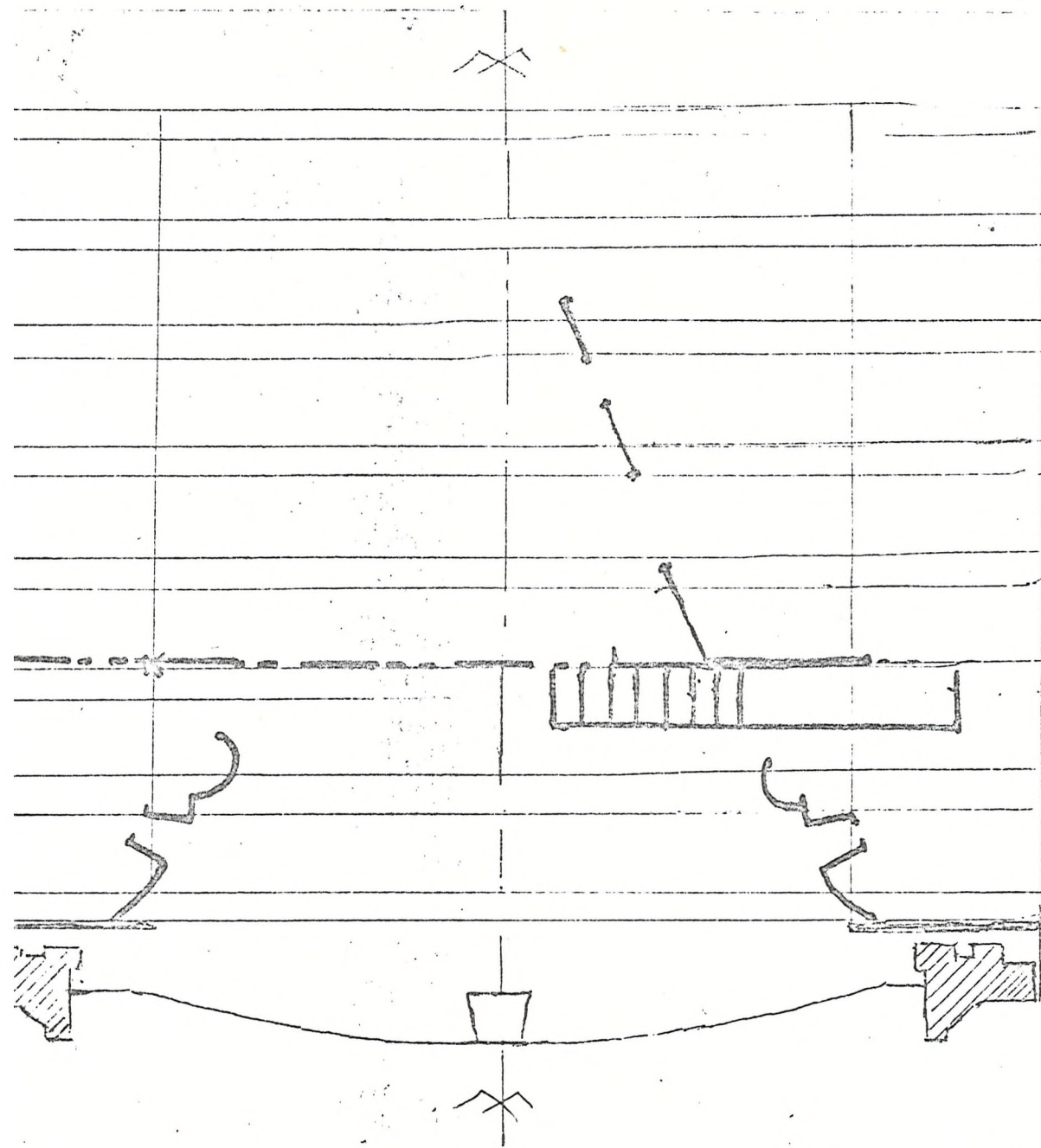
ANDRE BOLL
89, QUAI D'ORSAY
PARIS-7

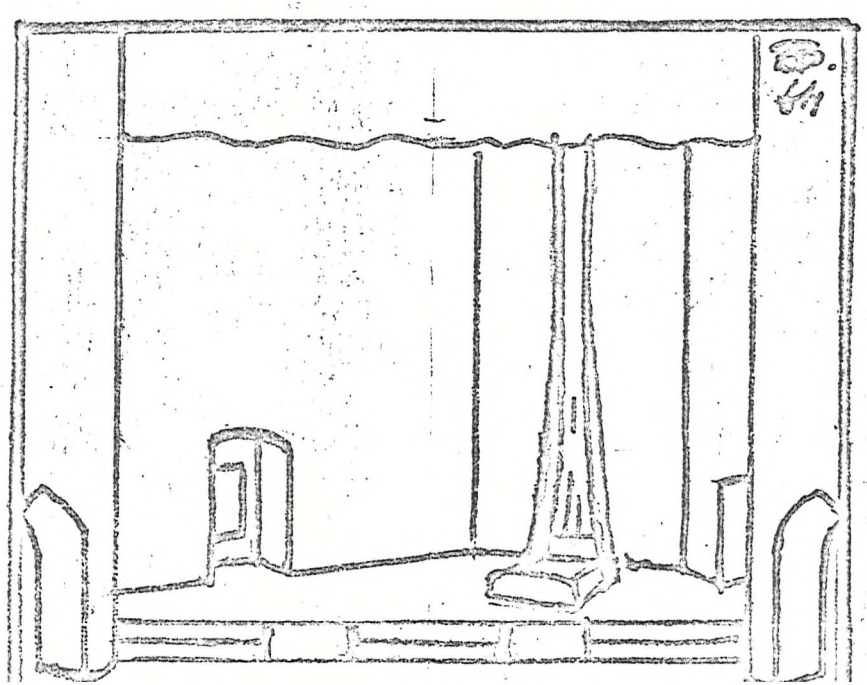
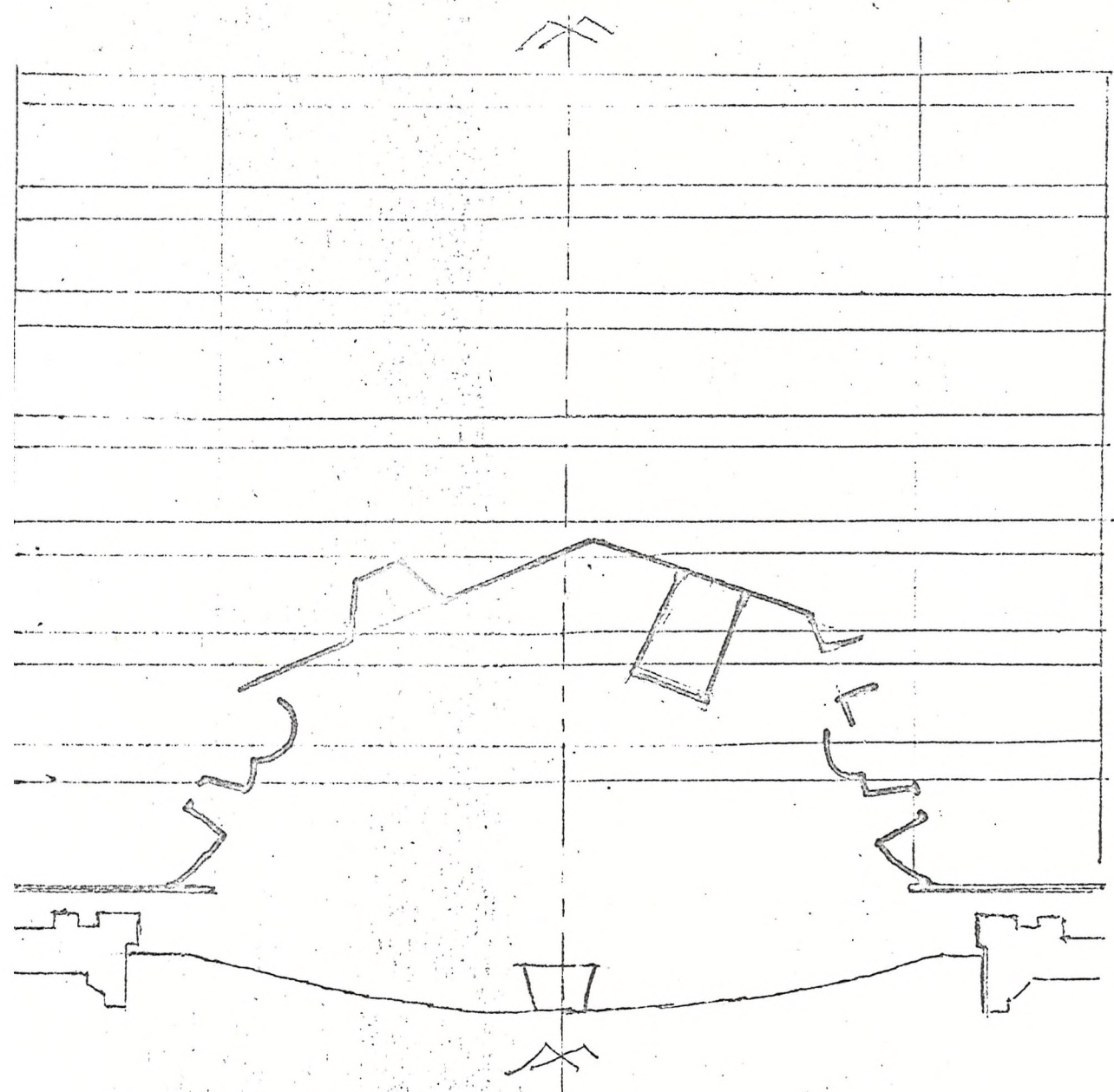
Scène de Charles GRANDVAL. Décors et costumes d'ANDRÉ BOLL.
Don du Château d'Elseneur

Acte I tab.: 1, 4, 5

Acte II tab: 3

APPENDIX A3

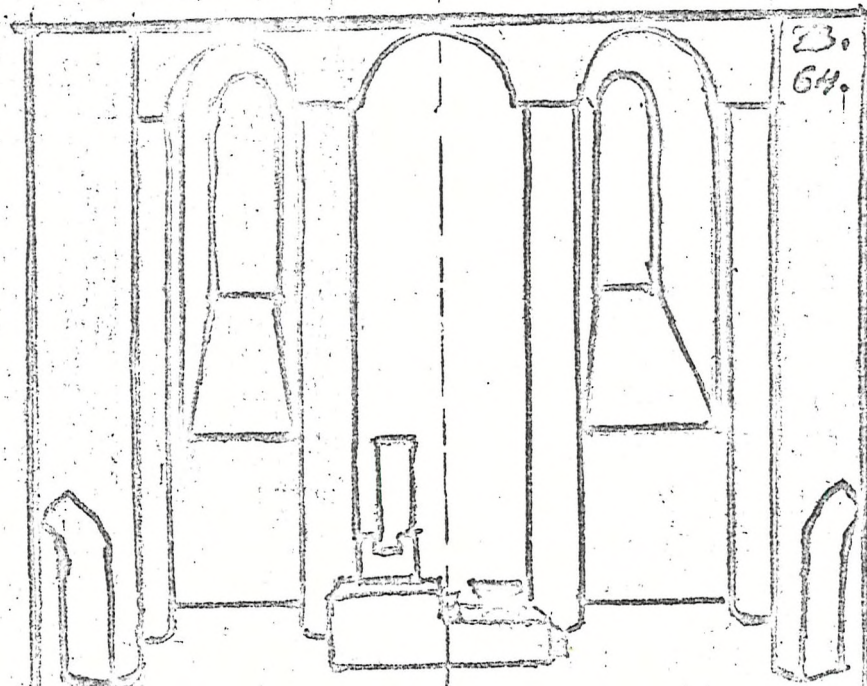
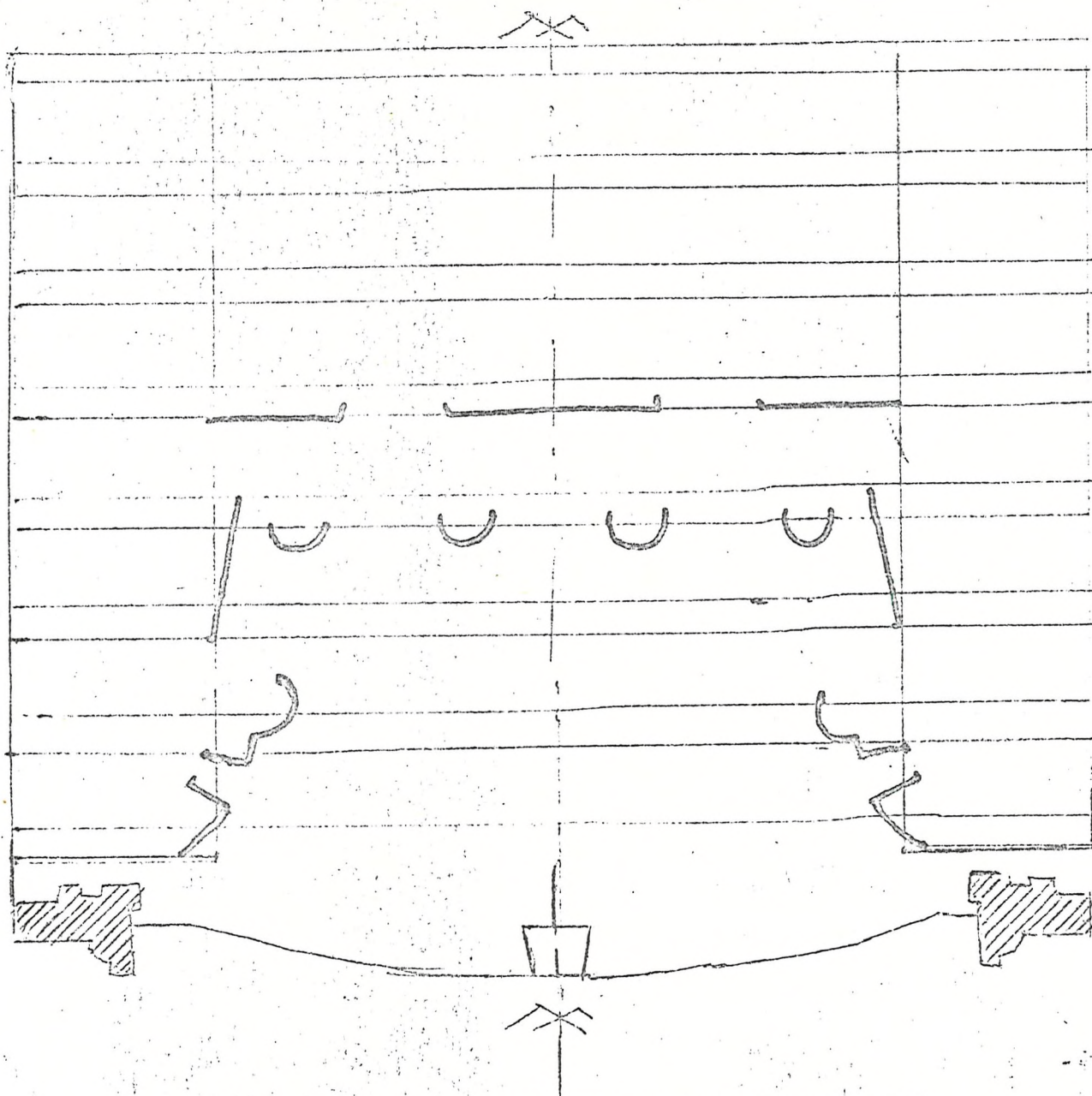




en scène de Charles GRANDXVAL. Décors et costumes d'ANDRÉ BOILL
salle dans le château

note III : tab. 1 et 2

APPENDIX A5



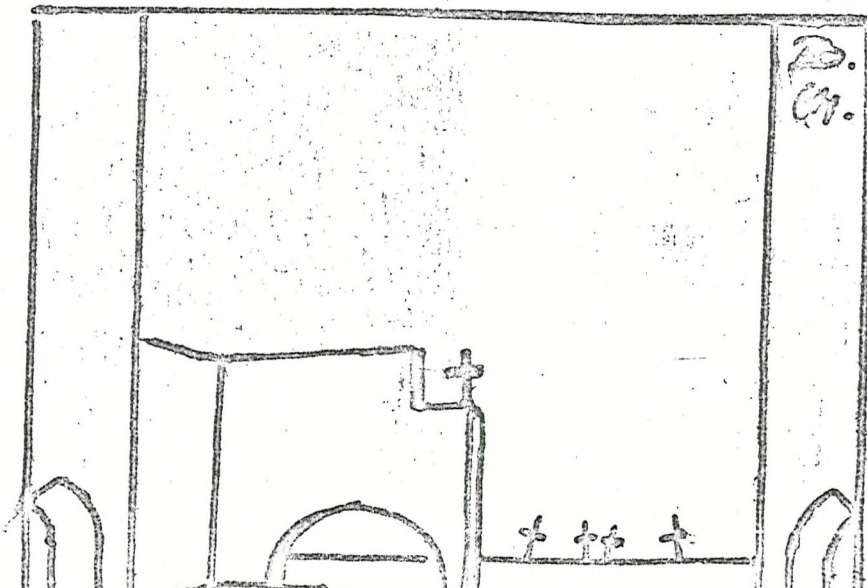
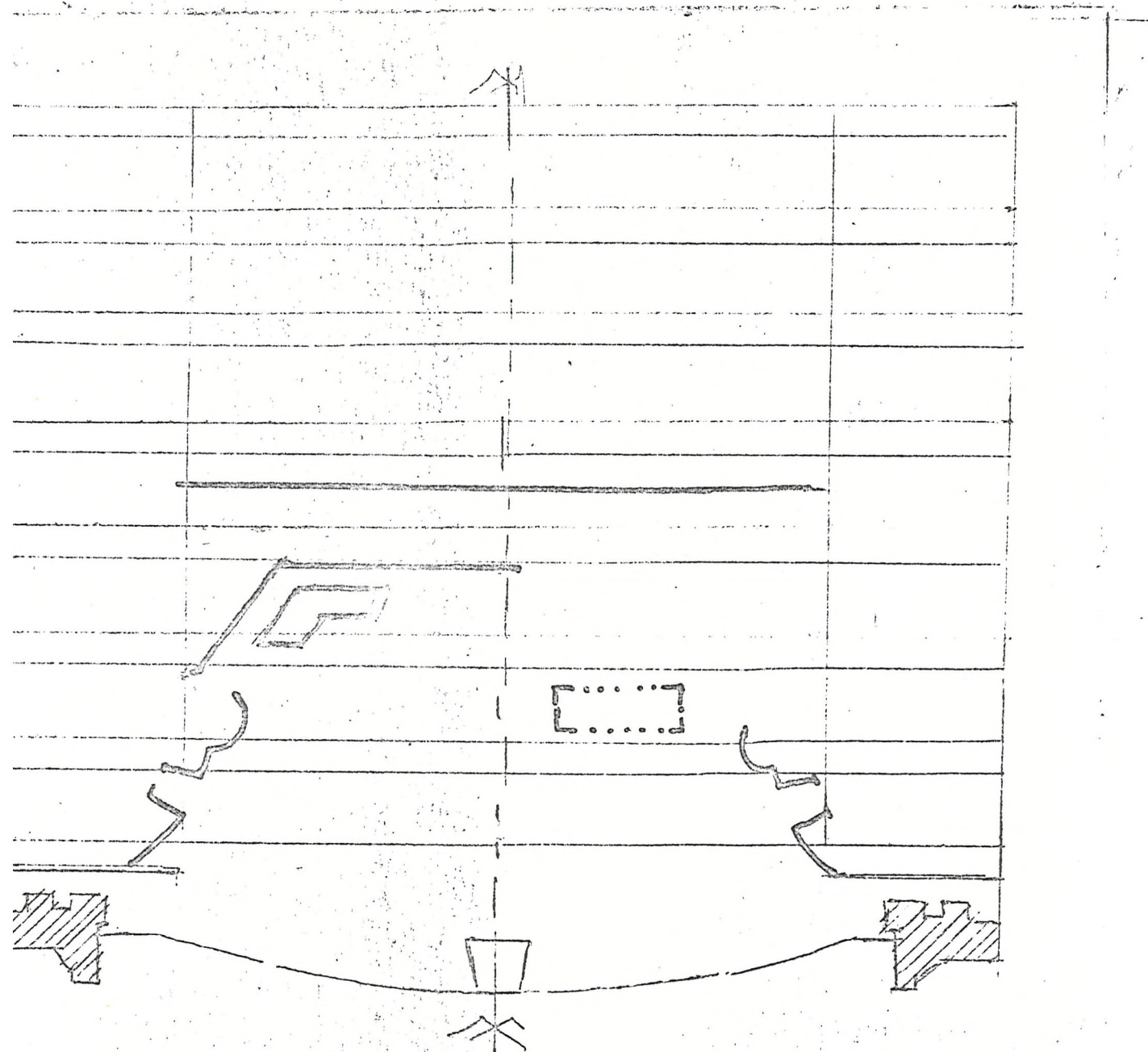
23.
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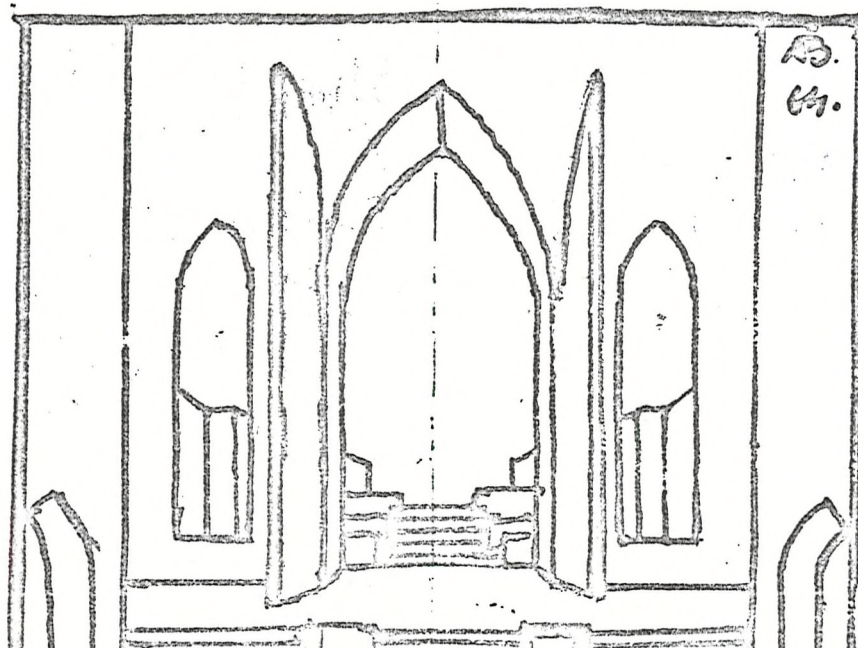
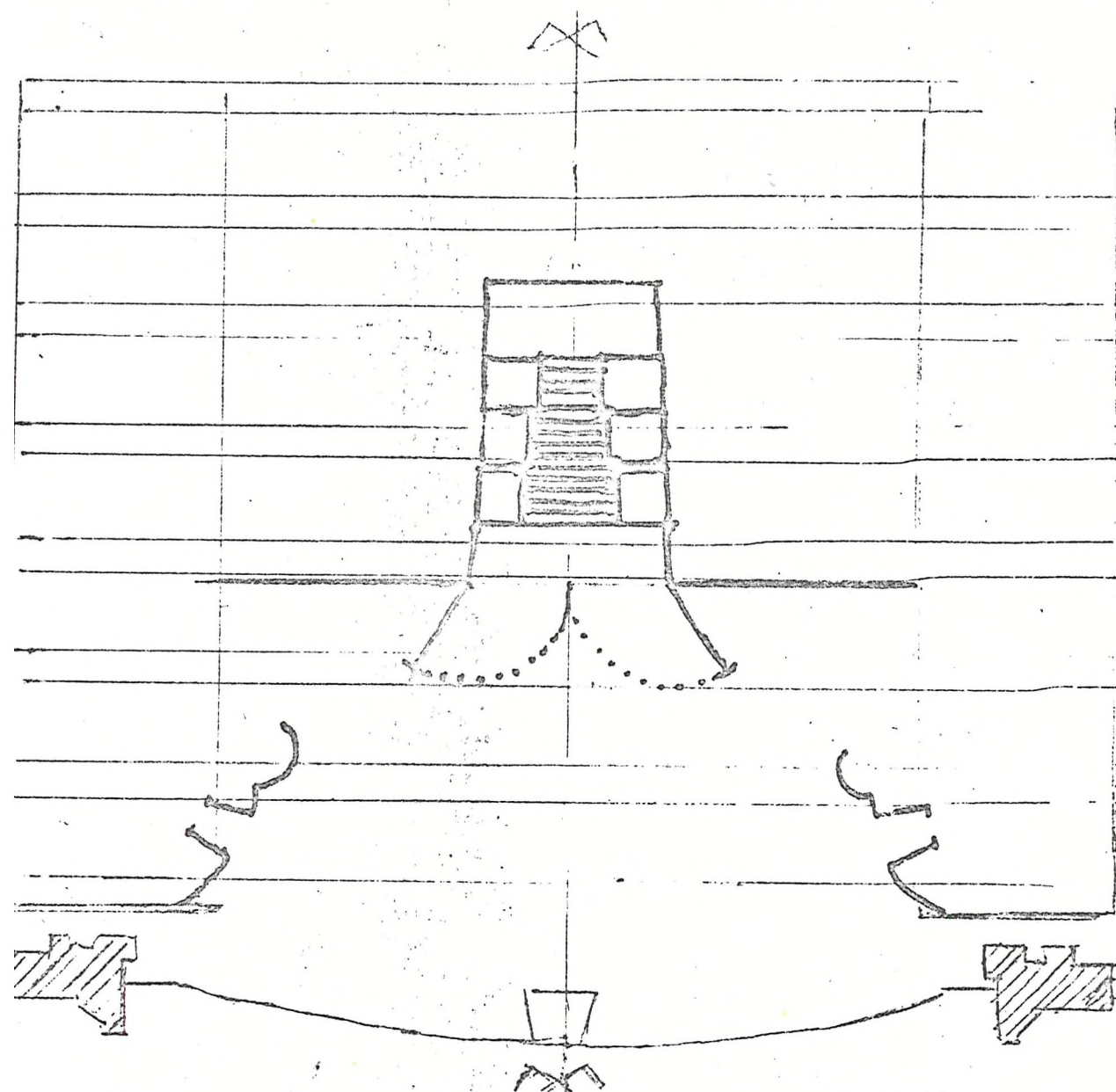
E T : COMEDIE FRANCAISE 1932 : Version E.Morand et M.Schwob

scène de Charles Grandval . Décors et costumes d'ANDRE BOLL
tière

Acte V. tab. I

APPENDIX A6





scène de Charles GRANVAL. Décors et costumes d'ANDRÉ BOILL

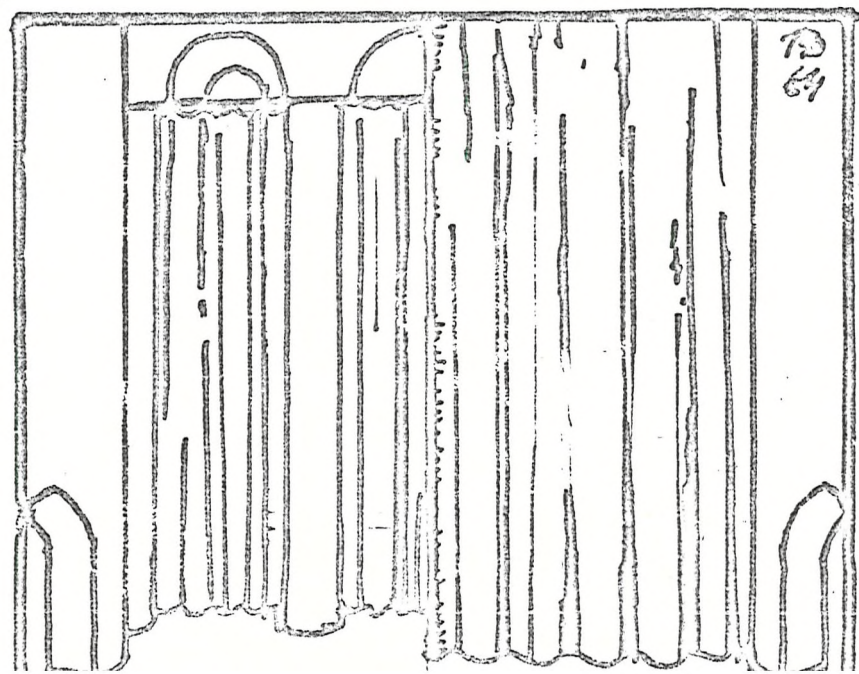
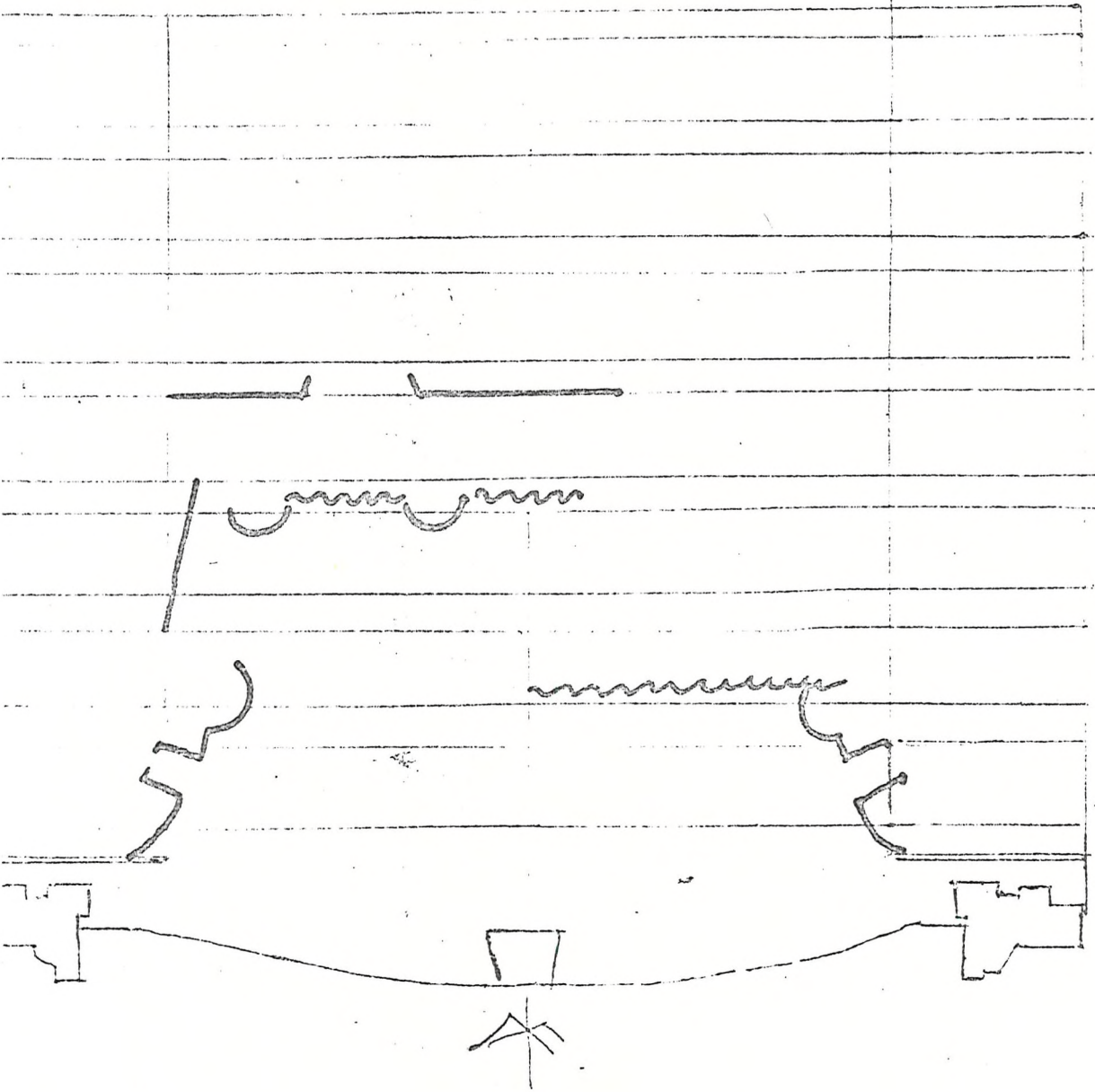
Acte I : tab. 2 e 3

Acte II : tab. 1

APPENDIX A8

Acte III : tab. 3

Acte IV : tous les tab.



APPENDIX A9Interview with Andre Boll on March 15th, 1973

- 1) The understanding between him and Granval was intimate and total. Boll regards the metteur en scene as the "grand patron" and above all attempts to follow his directives. He found Granval an extremely likeable and sensitive person.
- 2) Boll allowed himself to absorb the play as much as possible and then in conjunction with Granval created a fixed decor with "tapes" for the intermediary scenes. One inspired by Uccello and the other by the Bayeux Tapestry of la Reine Mathilde. A lot of discussion with Granval.
- 3) Boll's intention was to create a timeless decor, so he did not use any historical reference but allowed the text to be paramount. To some extent recalls M.A. by the "courbes".
- 3) Granval intended to create a Hamlet "depouille" against the extravagant Romantic tradition. Minimum of accessories. e.g. the scene where Hamlet uncovers the truth had only a platform and two thrones.
- 4) Boll was not consulted for the lighting as was usually the case, Barrault dealt with it.
- 5) Same decor in 42 & 43.
- 6) Reproduced the title page of the 1603 edition of Hamlet so as to produce a feeling of continuity even in the intervals
- 7) Boll strove essentially for a unity in the colour scheme, on the base of a green/grey, with the "taches" of the costumes as a contrast; e.g. King in red/purple, Queen blue tones (?), Hamlet in black, his friends in grey/beige (i.e. "tons neutres")
- 8) Boll wasn't able to create original costumes even in 32 due to lack of funds, so he had to make use of the costumes in the "reserve", modifying them into the greatest simplicity. The costume of Hamlet was the traditional one of "velours noir" c.f. Delacroix.
- 9) Boll started off in the atelier Amable where he was a "tache ron". When 14 or 15 went to see a production of Rouché and was extremely impressed by his attempt at a stylisation; however at the atelier with its dogma of 2 trompe oeil" he was ridiculed and left. He spent two days in another atelier, and then to Simas. Simas was a very conscientious worker; though his concept of theatre design was essentially traditionalist, he was nevertheless very aware of the need of harmony between the spoken word and the visual aspect. Boll joined up in 1914 and then on his own. His first work was with Paul Colin "l'affiche" for Josephine Baker's negro revue (had to create decor in the courtyard of Champs-Elysees with canvas held down by paving stones etc. Then for 15 years at the Comedie Caumartin under Rene Roche (?) until sent to Emil Fabre and his first decor was the Passion d'Haracourt (?) At the same time he did work for Paul Abram (?) at the Opera, e.g. King Lear and in 1932 Troilus and Cressida.

- 10) As he had his own atelier there was no problem of "decalage" between the sketches and the finished decor
- 11) For him the theatre is a "lieu thetrale" rather than a "scene". He thought out an overall conception of the decor first and then worked on the modifications for the individual scenes
- 12) The consciousness of volume and space is obvious in King Lear and after in 1932 in his Troilus and Cressida. Always feeling of vertige, of striving towards the Hexens. In Lear more abundance of colour than in Hamlet (cf the burial scene in grey mist) Vastness not only vertical but linear
- 13) Yonnel in 1932 (in the tradition of Mounet-Sully at the same time combining "sobre/expansive") Barrault in 1942 (much more restrained style especially noticeable in the movements) But both were fully integrated in the mise en scene
- 14) cf l'Opera spectacle integral Boll 1963 Paris Olivier Perrin

Paris, le 12 février 1974



APPENDIX B

Adresse codifiée :

B. P. 266

75001 PARIS CEDEX 01

Monsieur K. Charisse,
Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines,
rue Lavoisier,
76130 - Mont-Saint-Aignan

Monsieur,

Accablée de travaux divers, j'avoue avoir oublié une promesse qu'aucune demande écrite ne rappelait à ma mémoire... Voici les indications dont vous avez besoin.

Hamlet - Comité de lecture du vendredi 16 janvier 1942, présidé par Monsieur Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, administrateur général.

"Lecture est faite par Monsieur Dux, d'une traduction en prose d'Hamlet par Monsieur Guy de Pourtalès.

Après la lecture, les membres du Comité, à l'unanimité, ont voté pour la réception.

Cet avis donné, Monsieur l'Administrateur a déclaré la pièce admise à la représentation."

La Reine morte - Comité de lecture du mardi 30 juin 1942, présidé par Monsieur Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, administrateur général.

"Lecture a été faite par Monsieur Bertheau d'une pièce en 3 actes et 5 tableaux, en prose, de Monsieur Henry de Montherlant intitulée

La Reine morte

Après la lecture, les membres du Comité ont donné, par scrutin secret, leur avis sur la pièce qu'ils ont reçue à l'unanimité.

Cet avis donné, Monsieur l'Administrateur a déclaré la pièce de Monsieur de Montherlant admise à la représentation.

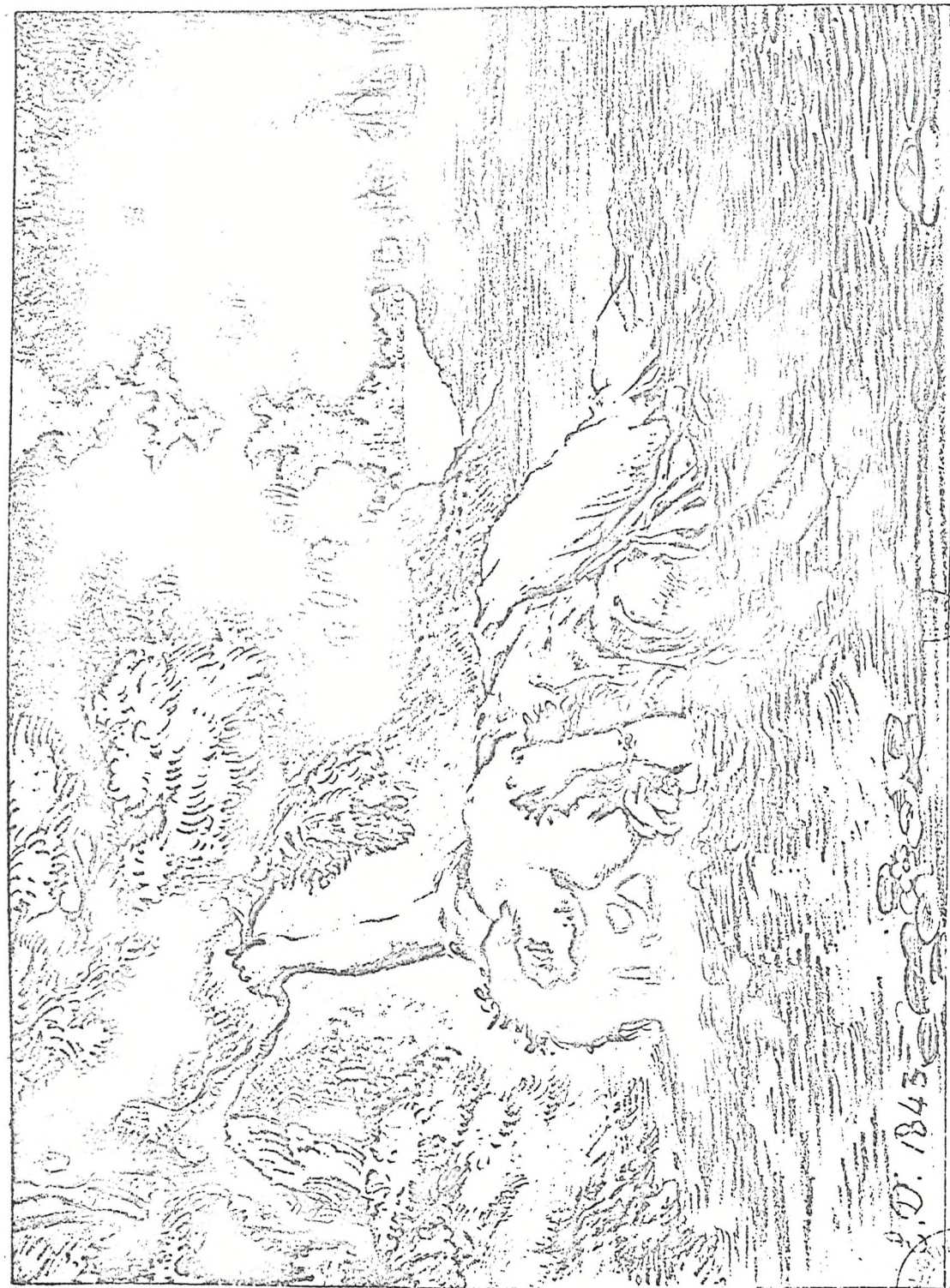
...

APPENDIX C1
 Druot's illustration

ACTE QUATRIÈME



APPENDIX C2 Delacroix's lithograph



A.D. 1843



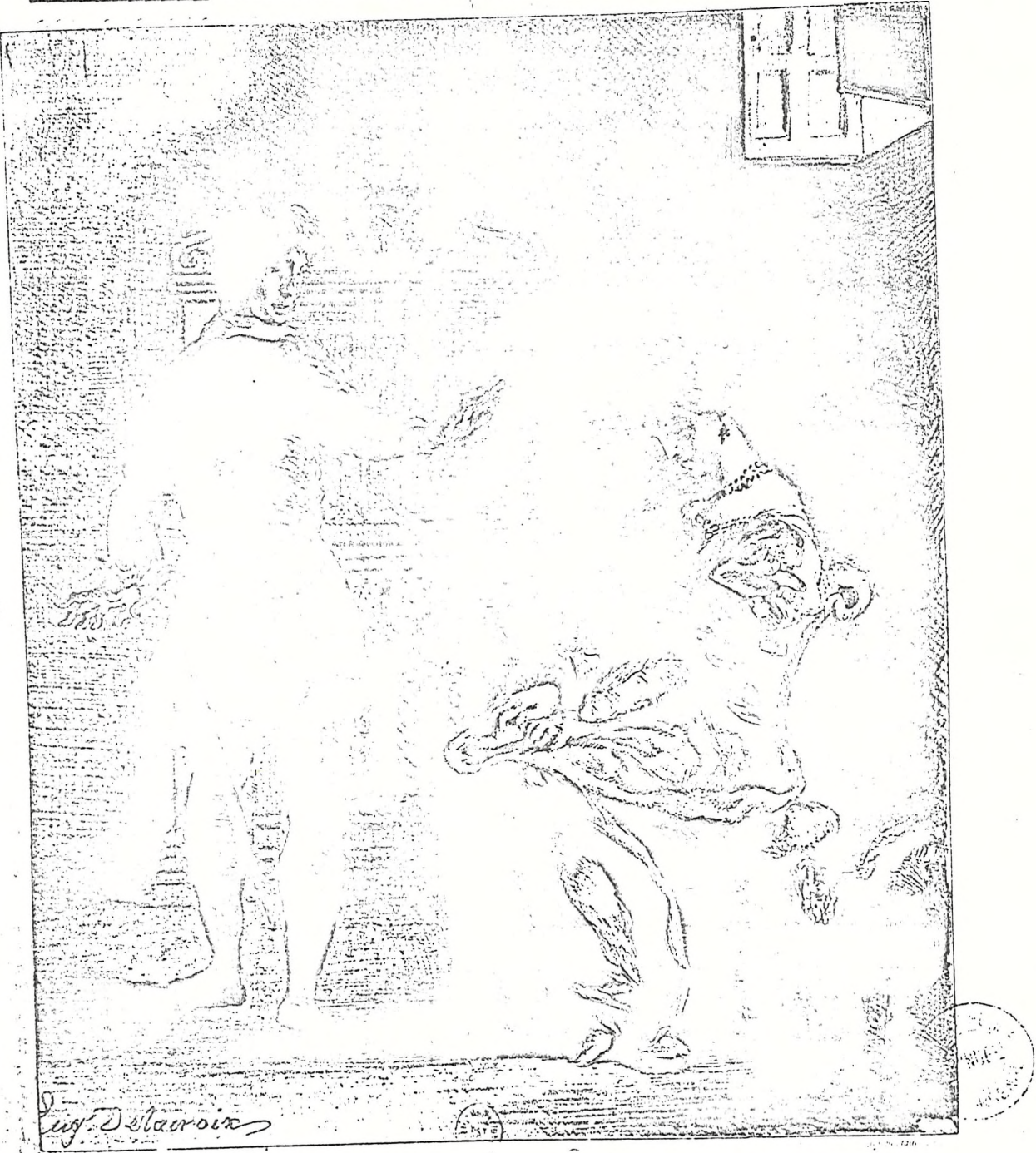
Ses vêtements appesantis et trempos d'eau ont entravé la pauvre combattante

PPENDIX C3
ruot's illustration

A C T E D E U X I È M E



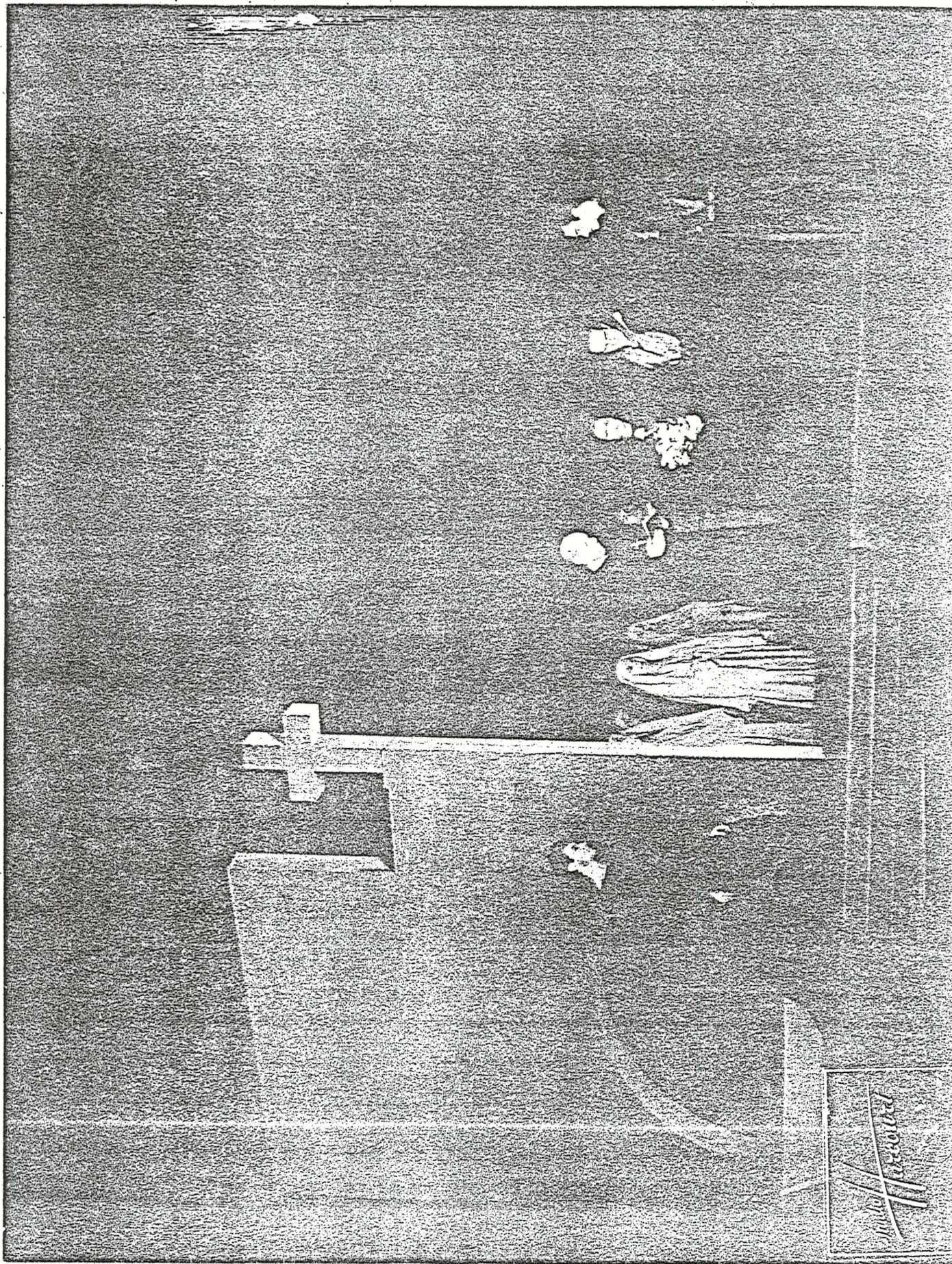
APPENDIX C4 Delacroix's lithograph

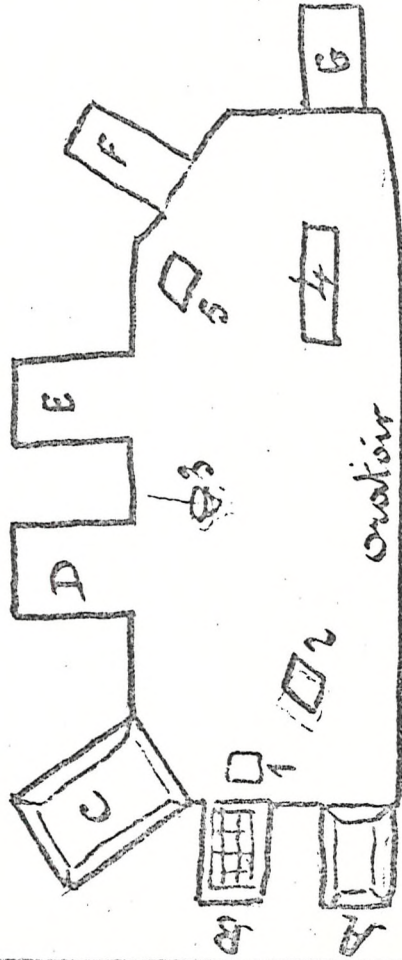


Va-t'en dans un convent!

1827

APPENDIX C5 Boll's decor for the funeral scene in Hamlet.





- A portrait d'Hamlet père
 B Fenêtre vitraill en relief
 C portrait de Claudius
 D porte en toile métallique
 E excavation dans le mur recouverte d'une tapisserie
 F partie en toile métallique pour l'apparition du spectre
 chambre de la Reine
- 1 prie - Dieu sous vitrail
 2-5 fontaines
 3 Lampe suspendue au plafond
 4 canapé

4 plans de profondeur
 2 tapisserie peinte sur tout le décor

Hamlet, vous offensez gravement votre père.

HAMLET. — *descend à la hauteur du siège H.*

Allons donc! c'est un fou qui parle en ce moment!

Allez! c'est une impie à coup sûr que j'écoute.

Qu'est-ce à dire?

HAMLET, croisant les bras et la regardant.
 Plait-il?

Vous oubliez sans doute — elle se lève
 Qui je suis; mais je vais chercher ceux-là qu'il faut
 Pour rappeler chez vous la mémoire en défaut. — *elle remonte*

Eh non! je me souviens à merveille, au contraire (1)
 N'êtes-vous point la reine, et la femme du frère
 De votre époux? de plus, pour mon malheur, hélas!
 Ma mère?

Attendez!...

HAMLET, lui saisissant la main.

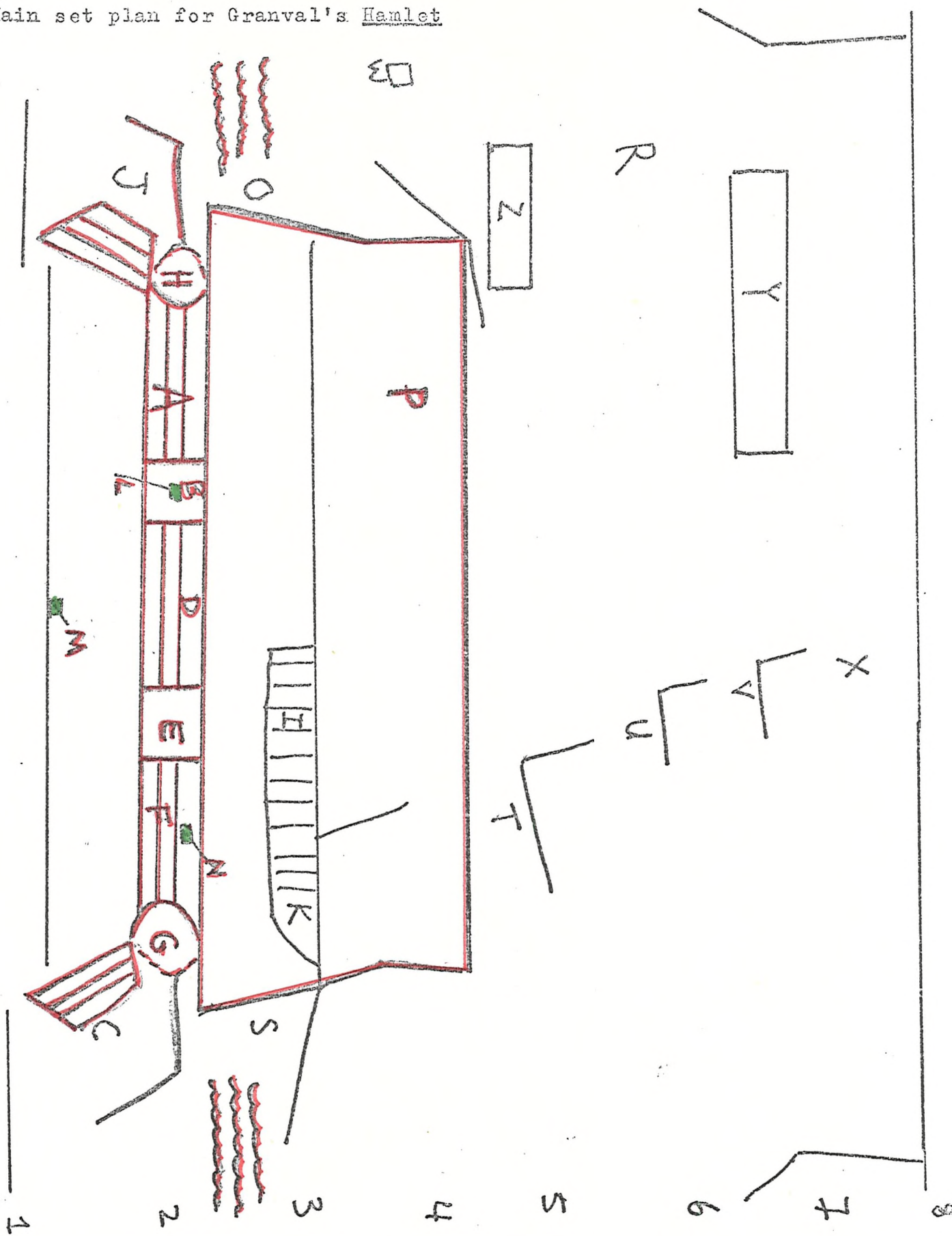
Non! vous ne sortirez pas,
 Vous ne bougerez pas, que je n'aie à votre âme
 Offert un miroir sûr, où vous pourrez, madame,
 La voir dans ses replis les plus secrets.



Hamlet ôte sa toque - La Reine recule devant le siège H.

Appendix D

Main set plan for Granval's Hamlet



APPENDIX D

Illustration 1 : Tableau 9

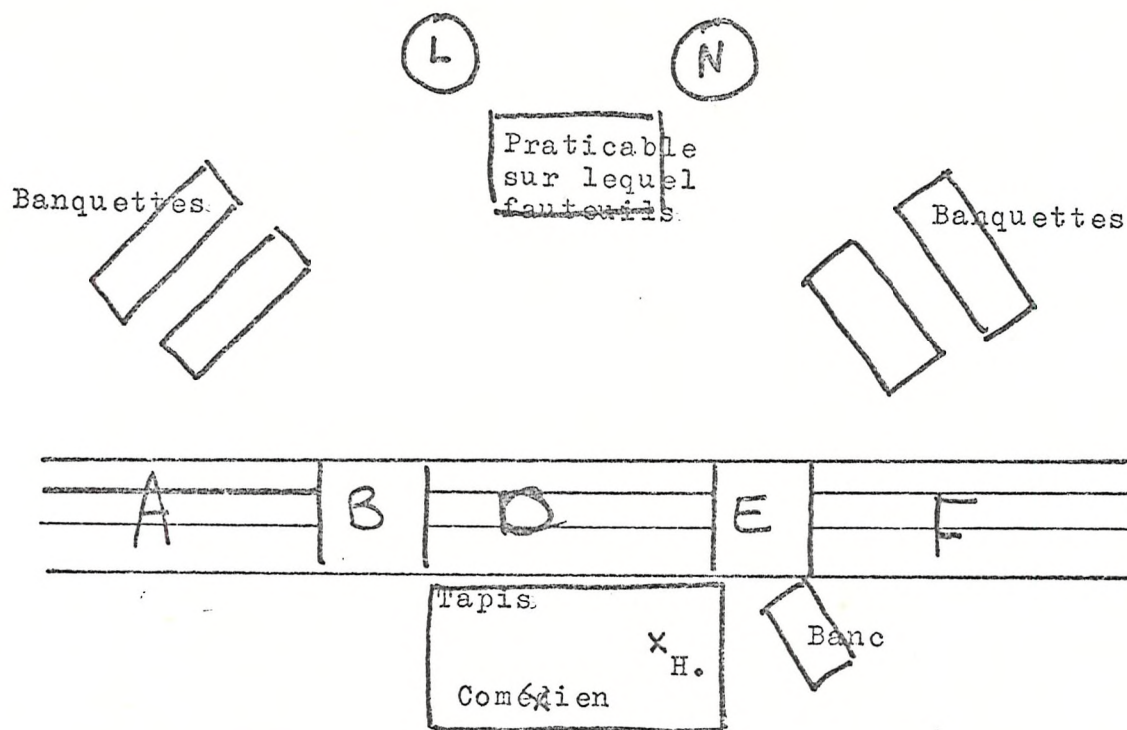


Illustration 2 : Act III, 2 (Position générale)

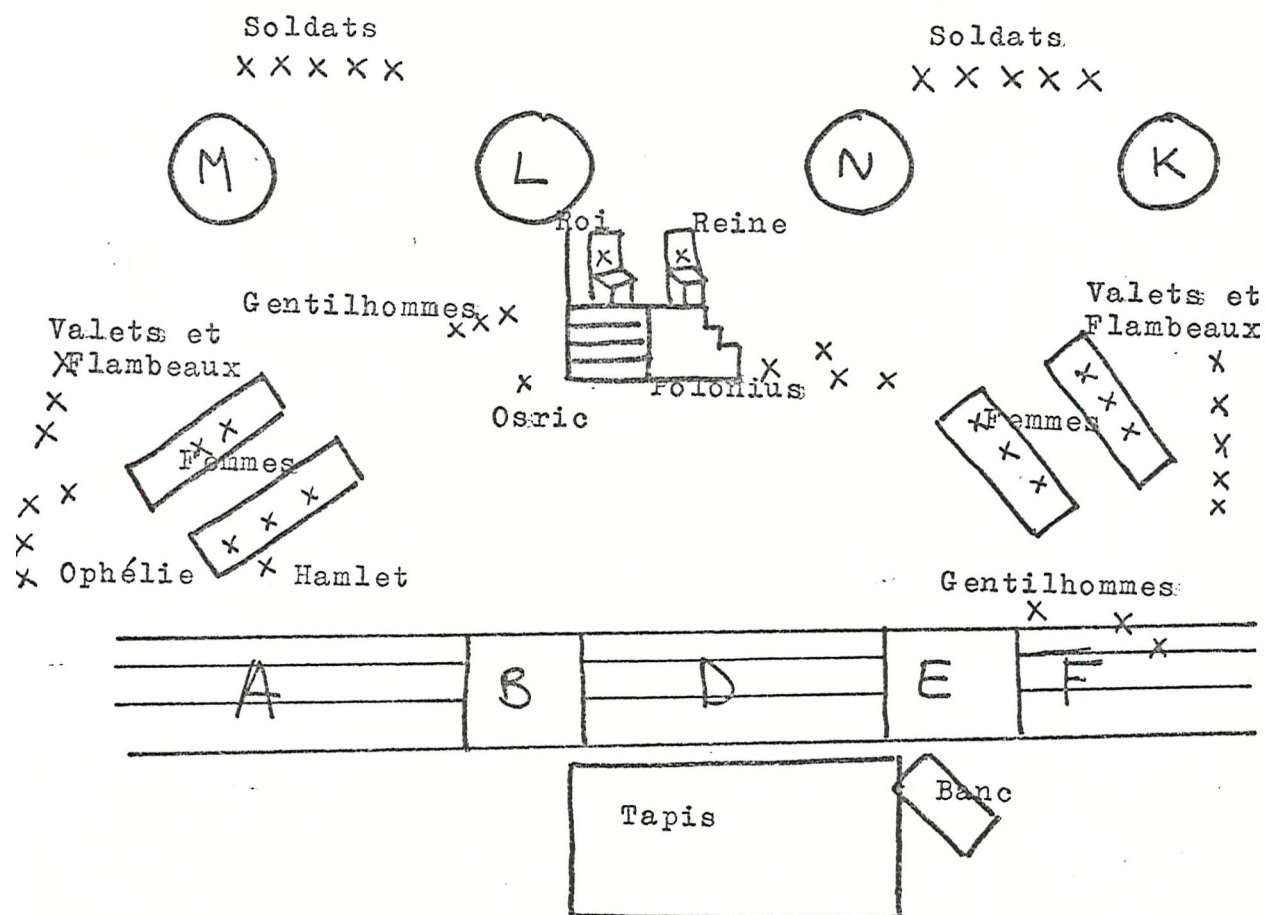


Illustration 3 : Act III, 3 (Tableau 10)

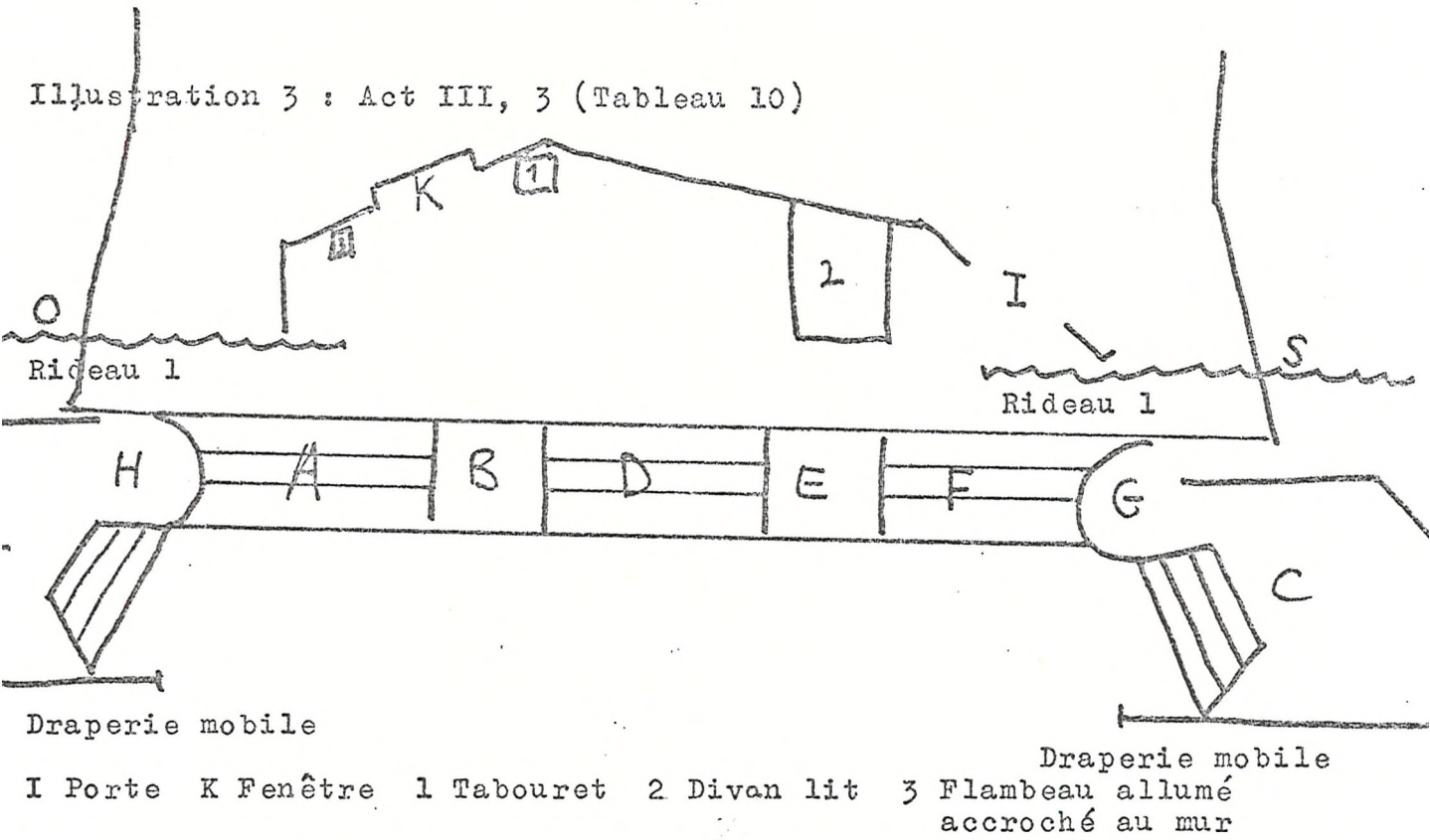


Illustration 4 : Act V, 1 (Tableau 15)

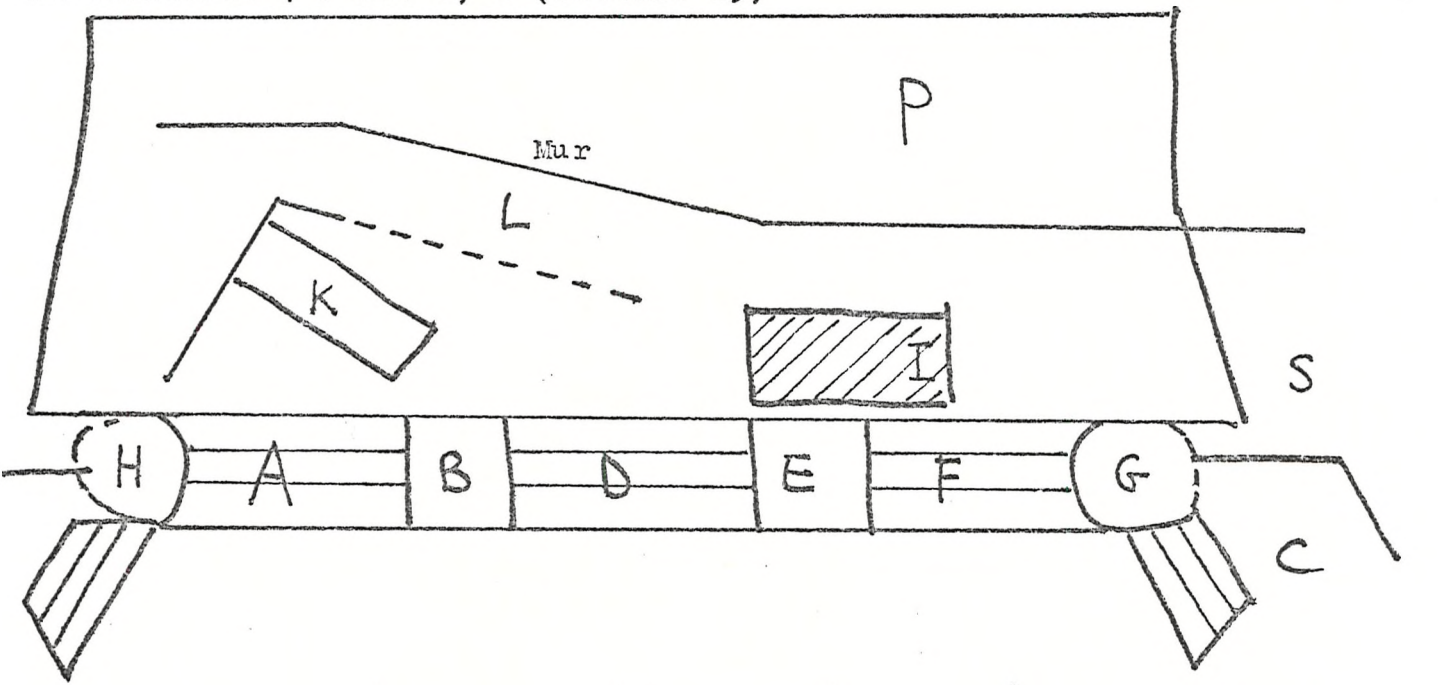
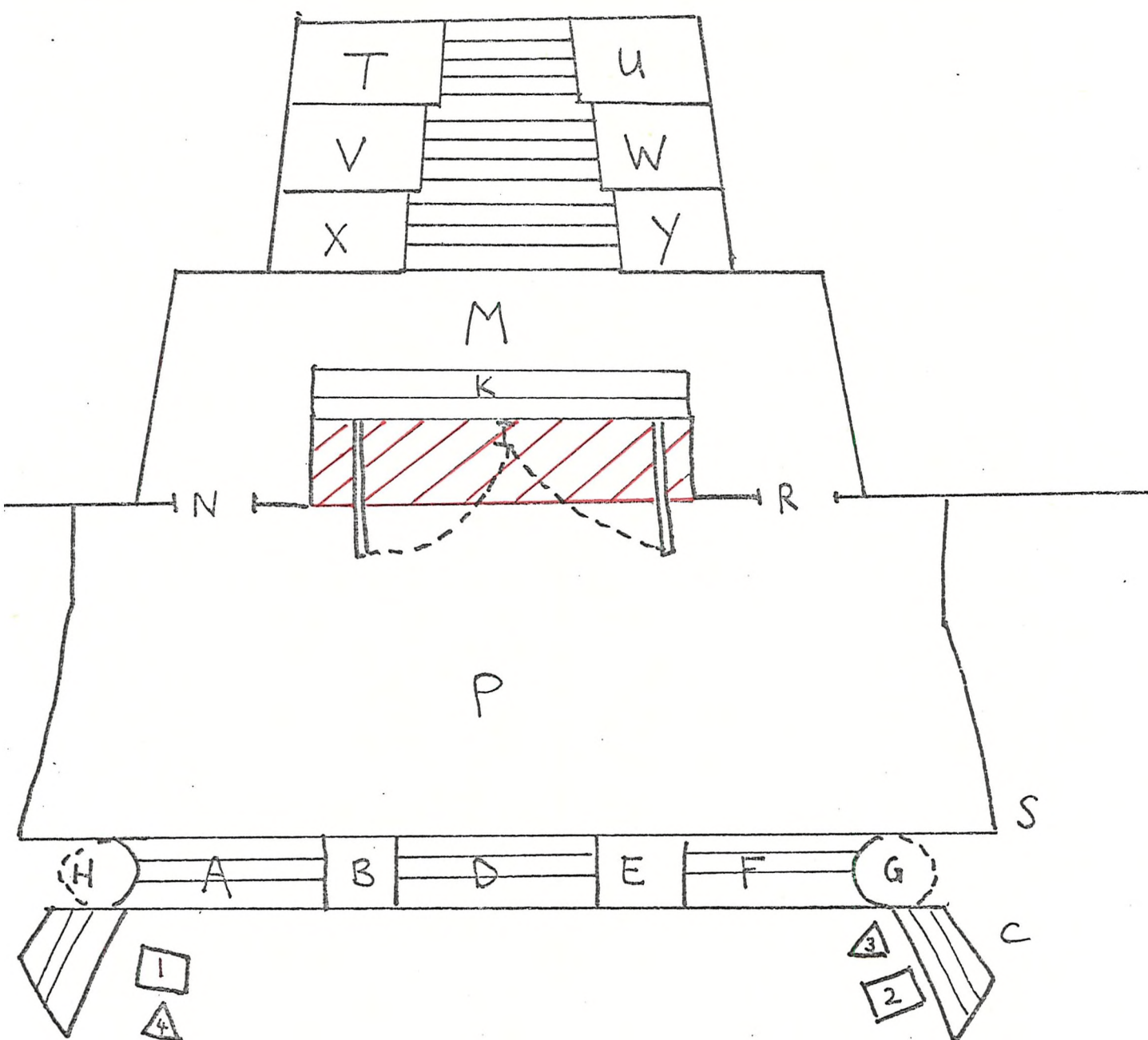
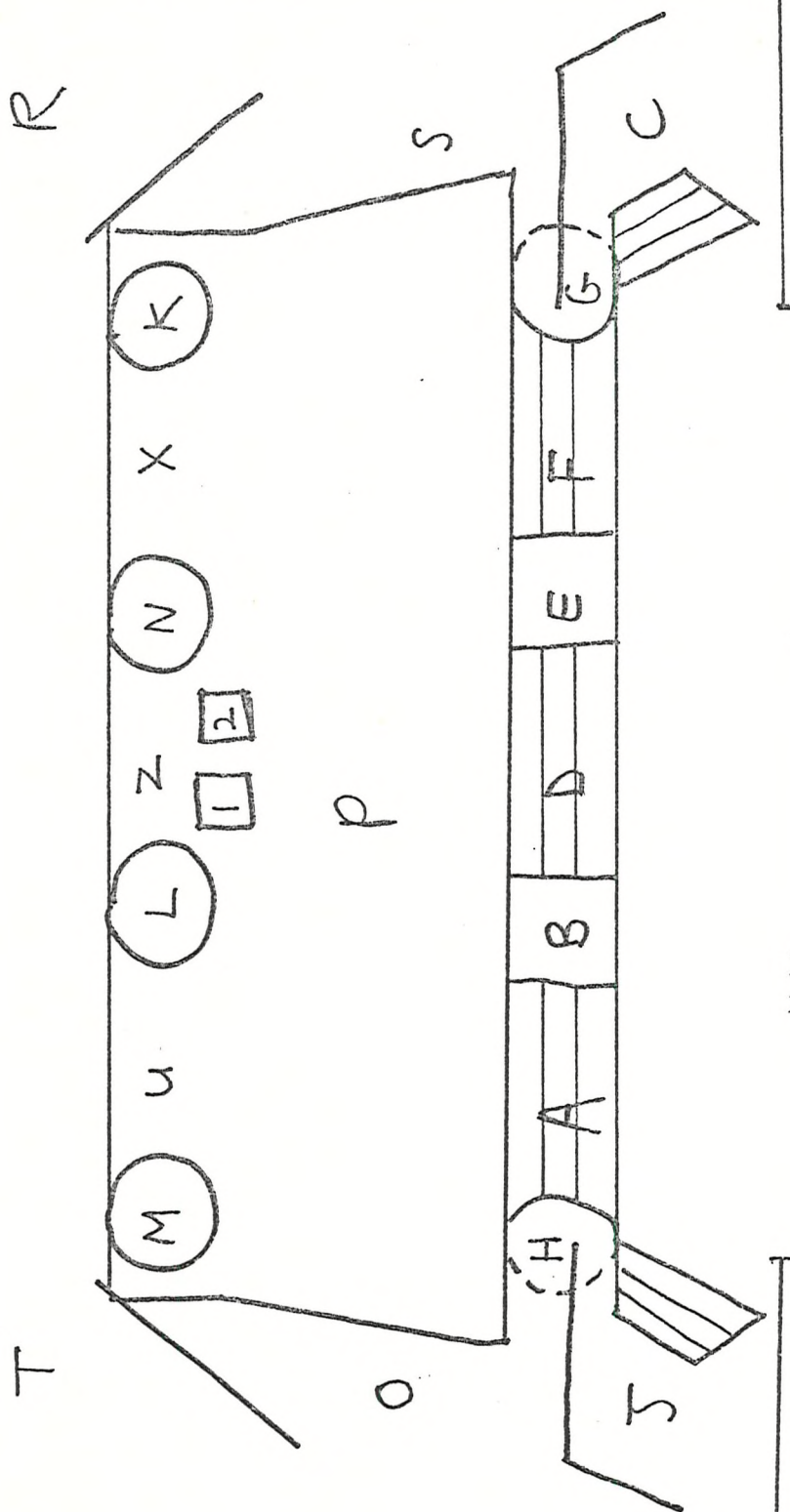


Illustration 5 : Act V, 2 (Tableau 16)



La partie du décor indiquée en hachures rouges représente un praticable qui est posé derrière le praticable P
 K Deux marches descendant du praticable sur la scène
 M Passage entre les escaliers L et K
 L Escalier N,R Fenêtres
 T.U.V.W.X.Y. Platesformes de chaque côté des marches L
 I Grande porte à double battant s'ouvrant en scène. Elle est fermée au début du tableau
 1.2. Fauteuils du Roi et de la Reine
 3.4. Petits guéridons triangulaires

Illustration 6 : Act II (Tableau 7)



Mas de Bouzques
d'une
dixant

8. II. 74

Monsieur

La bibliothécaire de la Comédie Française vous a, il me semble, mal renseigné. Toutes les maquettes de décors et de costumes pour des pièces représentées au théâtre lui appartiennent obligatoirement. La bibliothèque doit donc posséder la maquette en relief du décor de Chère ainsi que des maquettes des costumes de cette tragédie. Elle possède aussi les maquettes que j'ai faites en 1946 pour Antoine et Cléopâtre, également pour T. L. Danaël. Si ces maquettes ne sont plus à la bibliothèque de la Comédie Française, si elles n'ont

pas été prêtés pour une exposition (auquel cas la bibliothécaire le savait, et mal même aussi sans doute), c'est qu'elles ont disparu d'une manière irrégulière.

Je suis désolé de ne pouvoir vous renseigner et, en revanche, je dois très humblement, si vos recherches dans d'autres directions étaient plus fructueuses, de devoir par vous ce que ces maquettes sont venues.

Dans cet espoir et avec tous mes vœux pour la réussite de vos travaux, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués

Jean Stieglitz

Mas de Bouzques
d'Unel Renaut
25.V.74

Monsieur

Je suis heureux que vous ayez pu retrouver
les maquettes de Thidie à la Comédie
Française.

Pour la réalisation des décors et costumes
en 1942 il n'y a eu aucune difficulté matérielle
ni par les conditions techniques. Le
decor — "L'Affaire Dicos de Thidie", comme l'ont
nommé les techniques — m'avait été commandé
par Edouard Bourdet en 1938 et devait servir
pour toutes les tragédies classiques du répertoire.
Il avait été exécuté avant la guerre en 1939.
Il devait évoquer, dans mon idée, un piège
où les personnages sont pris, un labyrinthe
dont ils ne peuvent trouver l'issue.

Quant aux costumes ils furent exécutés
à merveille par Mme Hainska, avec qui
j'avais déjà travaillé pour les Cent Gaisies
et pour Ruy Blas et qui savait interpréter
exactement mes maquettes et obtenir le
résultat que je voulais. J'ai cherché dans
ces costumes à créer un style qui s'inspire
à la fois des modes écossaises de l'époque mi-
moenne et de celles du siècle de Louis XIV.

Je n'ai eu de difficultés qu'avec des
mises répétitions, quand il s'agit de

régler l'éclairage. Jean Louis Barraud,
dans la tradition de Gordon Craig, voulait
des lumières venant des côtés de la scène,
des projecteurs cachés derrière les portants
et les principales, donnant des reflets très
accusés et des ombres violentes — un éclairage
pour des décors faits par des sculpteurs
ou des photographes, non par des peintres.
Je n'aime — et mes maquettes étaient
faites pour cela — qu'un éclairage venant
de la rampe ou de casseroles placées à
l'avant-scène, un éclairage de face,
donnant la lumière qu'on voit dans les
gratels de danses de Degas. Dans
mes discussions avec Barraud, quand
je parlais de la rampe, supprimée par
Gordon Craig et son école, M^{me} Madeleine
Renard avançait :

— C'est vrai qu'avec la rampe, nous étions
bien plus jolies !

Tout à votre disposition si vous avez
d'autres incertitudes, j'écris avec
d'agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de
mes sentiments les meilleurs.

Je n'ago

Mas de Bouquus

Amel
Ménalt

19.I.75

Monsieur

Je crains de ne pouvoir vous dire grand chose sur ce que vous me demandez dans votre dernière lettre.

Quand j'ai fait le dicton et les costumes de Phèdre, je n'ai eu

affaire qu'à l'administrateur, Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, à Barzault, me l'avez

en scène, à Mathis, directeur de la scène et aux acteurs, costumiers et

peintres de décors. Des rapports de l'administrateur avec les services

allemands chargés de la culture, je n'ai rien su — et je pense qu'il

vous sera très difficile d'appréhender

quelque chose. L'histoire de la France occupée est encore très loin

de pouvoir être écrite. Tout était terriblement embrouillé. Il y avait ceux

qui étaient plus ou moins ouvertement

pour les allemands, ceux qui étaient

plus ou moins ouvertement pour les alliés, ceux qui, sans aimer les allemands, croyaient en Pétain, et enfin ceux qui, notamment parmi les fonctionnaires, aidaient secrètement la résistance derrière une façade de collaboration.

Vous voyez pourquoi les documents "ne sont pas accessibles". Cependant je pense que les autorités allemandes n'ont pas du tout intervenu dans les affaires de la Comédie Française, car les allemands n'y allaient pas. A l'opéra, c'était autre chose, et ils ont du souvent intervenir dans le choix des programmes etc. Vous connaissez sans doute le "Décret de Moscou" qui a constitué la Société des Compositeurs Français et leur donne le pouvoir, par leur Comité de lecture, de recevoir ou de rejeter les pièces de théâtre. L'administrateur ne fait qu'administrer. Tout cela a continué pendant l'occupation comme par le passé. Ce n'est qu'après la guerre qu'on a, je crois, changé certaines dispositions.

Avec tous mes regrets de ne pouvoir vous renseigner avec plus de précision, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur,

de l'expression de mes sentiments les meilleurs

Je - J. J.

Reprise de la mise en scène
de JLB (cf J-J. Gautier)
le Figaro

Les Nouvelles Littéraires PHÈDRE

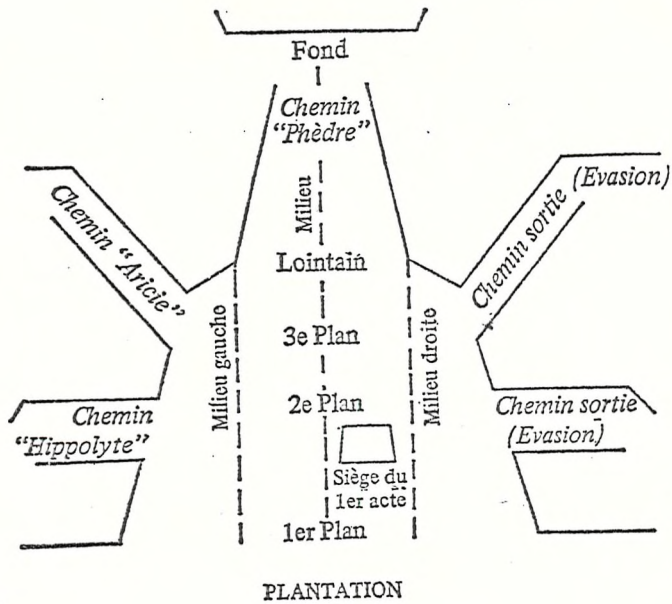
7.4.49



Dans son cycle racinien la Comédie-Française inscrit à son programme « Phèdre » en même temps qu'« Iphigénie en Aulide ». Jean Hugo a conçu pour cette tragédie des temps mythiques un décor de style classique rayonnant en multiples couloirs, et des costumes inspirés des images archaïques. L'interprétation réunit les noms de Marie Bell, Maurice Escande, André Falcon, Renée Faure et Maurice Donnaud.
Texte et dessin de BEN.

APPENDIX E5

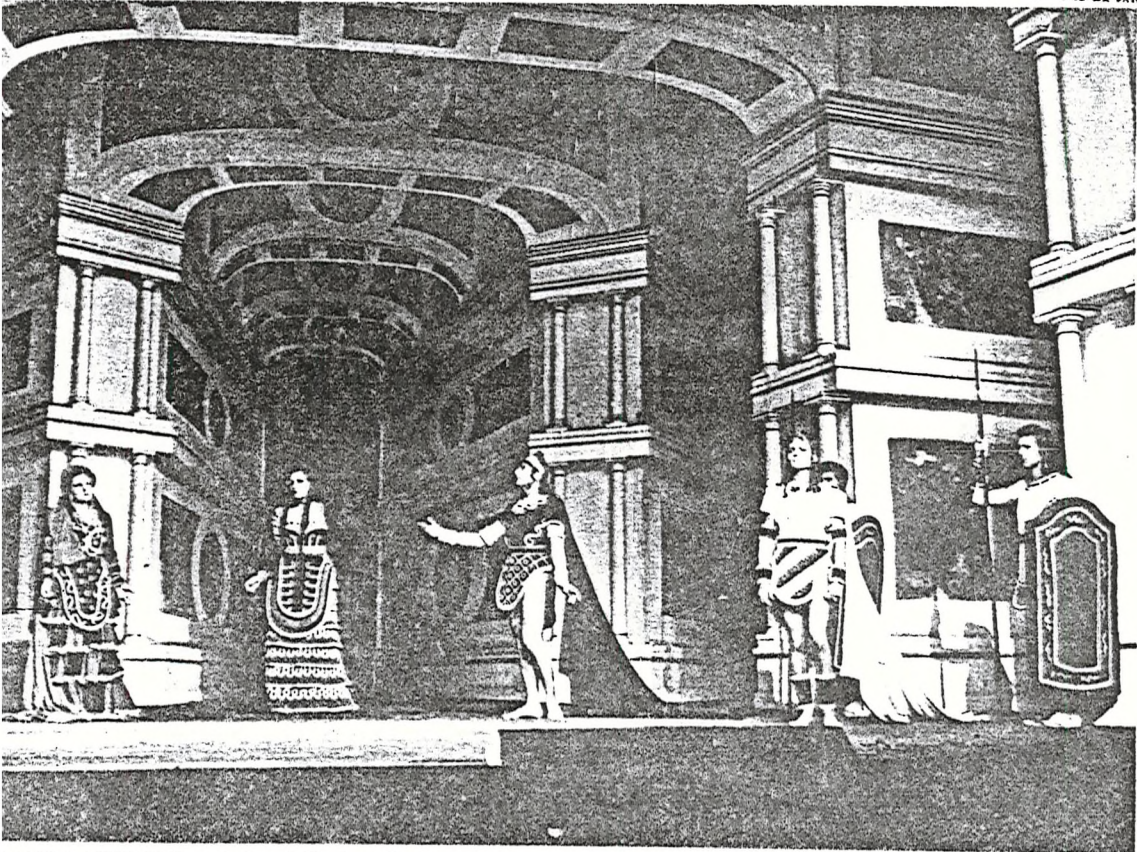
From the 'mise en scène' of Phèdre



Il va pieds nus¹, com
des sandales de cuir
c'est le blanc, avec d
tillés de noir qui s'ac
Mais si Hippolyte
comme un cheval da
s'arrêter sur son élan
ventre ». La fièvre,
Les veilles l'ont épu
et cet amour le révo
c'est qu'en réalité il
Il se débat avec sa pa
par un amour tragiq
rable, au moins pend
Théramène, qui le
Fénelon. La qualité
race. C'est par Thér
à son gouverneur q
l'état social d'Hippo
Théramène est, en
païenne. Il a pris la
les humains ». Thér
son âme et de son co
Veille sur
Au corps
.....
Afin que
Au sein d
pourrait-il dire, com
Sa morale, toute
qui a pu choquer en
celle d'Hippolyte. A
courses de char.
« Les forêts de nos
a donc gardé l'échi
sonore, son ceil est v
vement à faire jou
cocher. Son costume
grande simplicité.
Grâce à Théramène

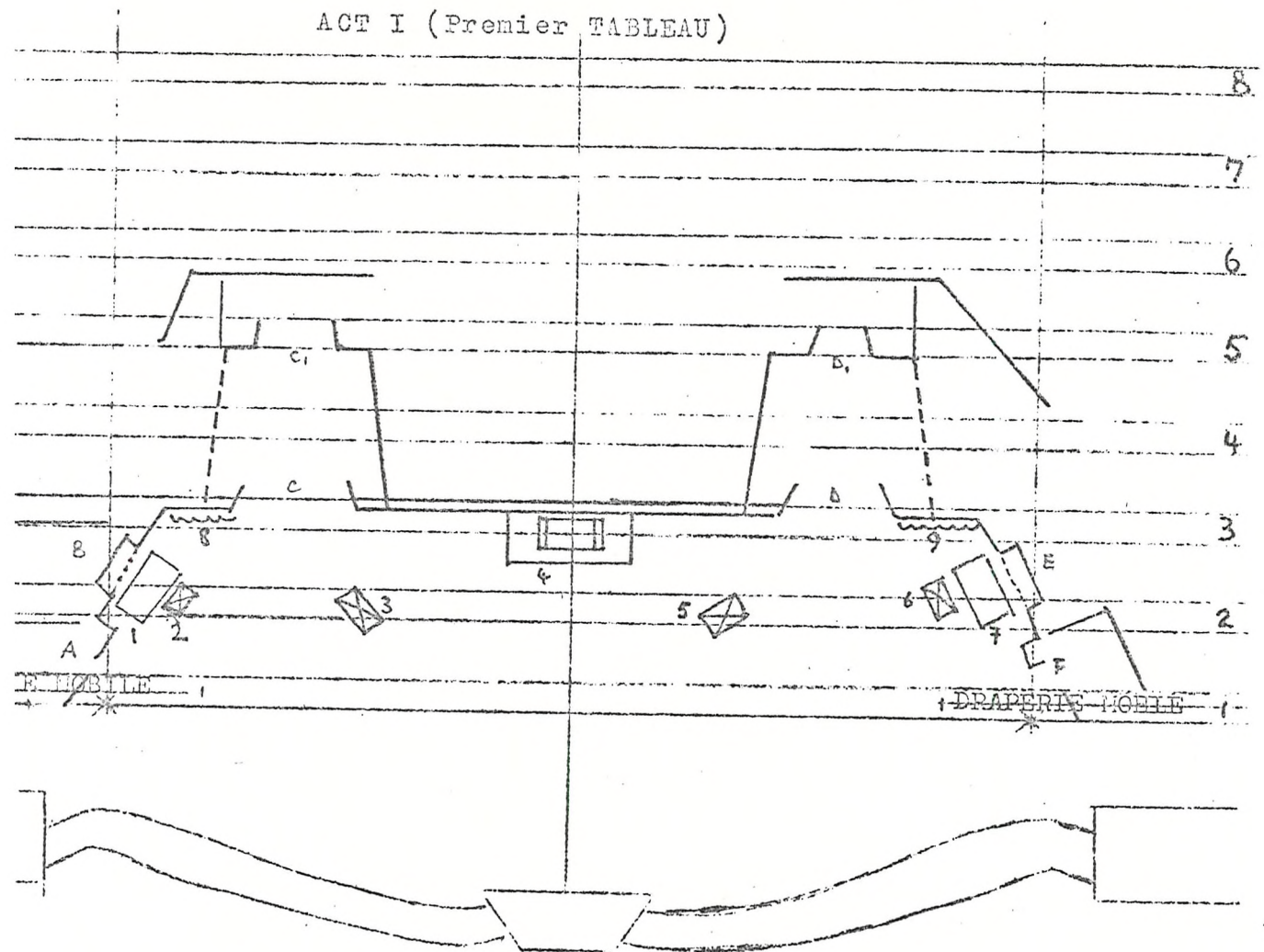
APPENDIX E6

Photograph of the same production.



1. Certaines person

ACT I (Premier TABLEAU)



CULTE DES LETTRES
STITUT D'ANGLAIS

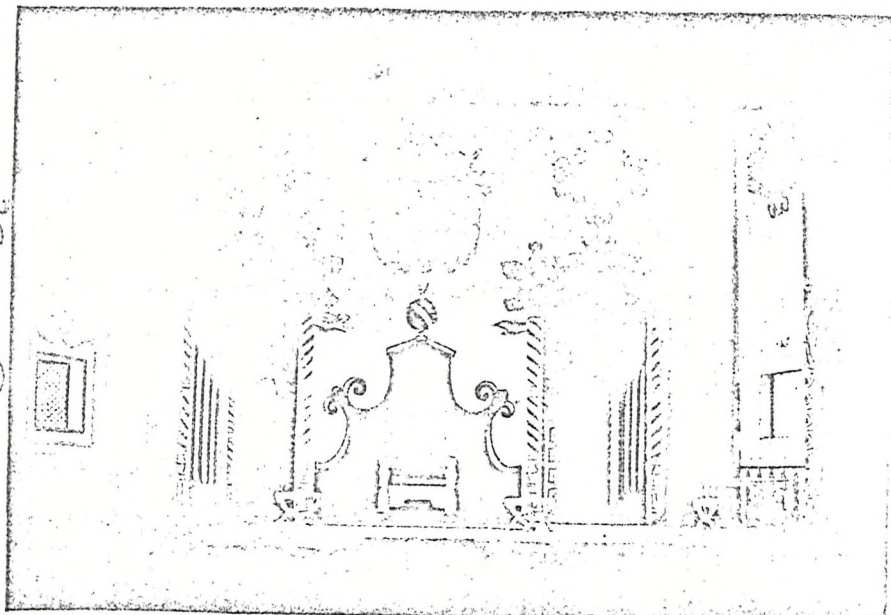
ie cadre jardin
nêre (cavité) (grille enler
Portes 2 vantaux
" " "
Fenêtre (fermée par une
grille)
Baie cache cour

Tables

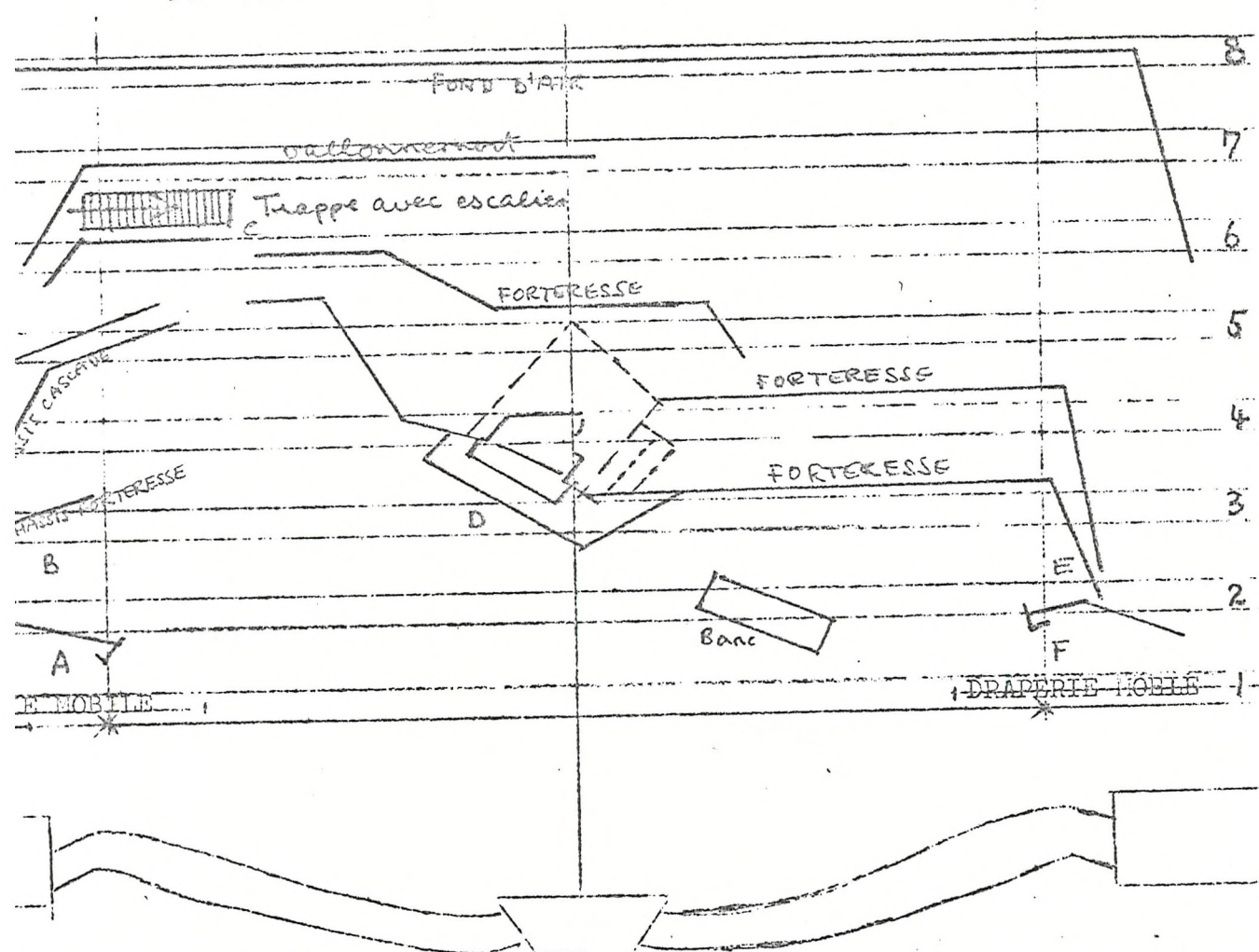
Tabourets

Trône sur platicable

grands rideaux pour masquer
les portes c et d au 3^{ème} Acte



APPENDIX F2



baie cadre jardin

Trappe avec escaliers d'accès
à la scène

Porte de la forteresse

Baie cadre cour

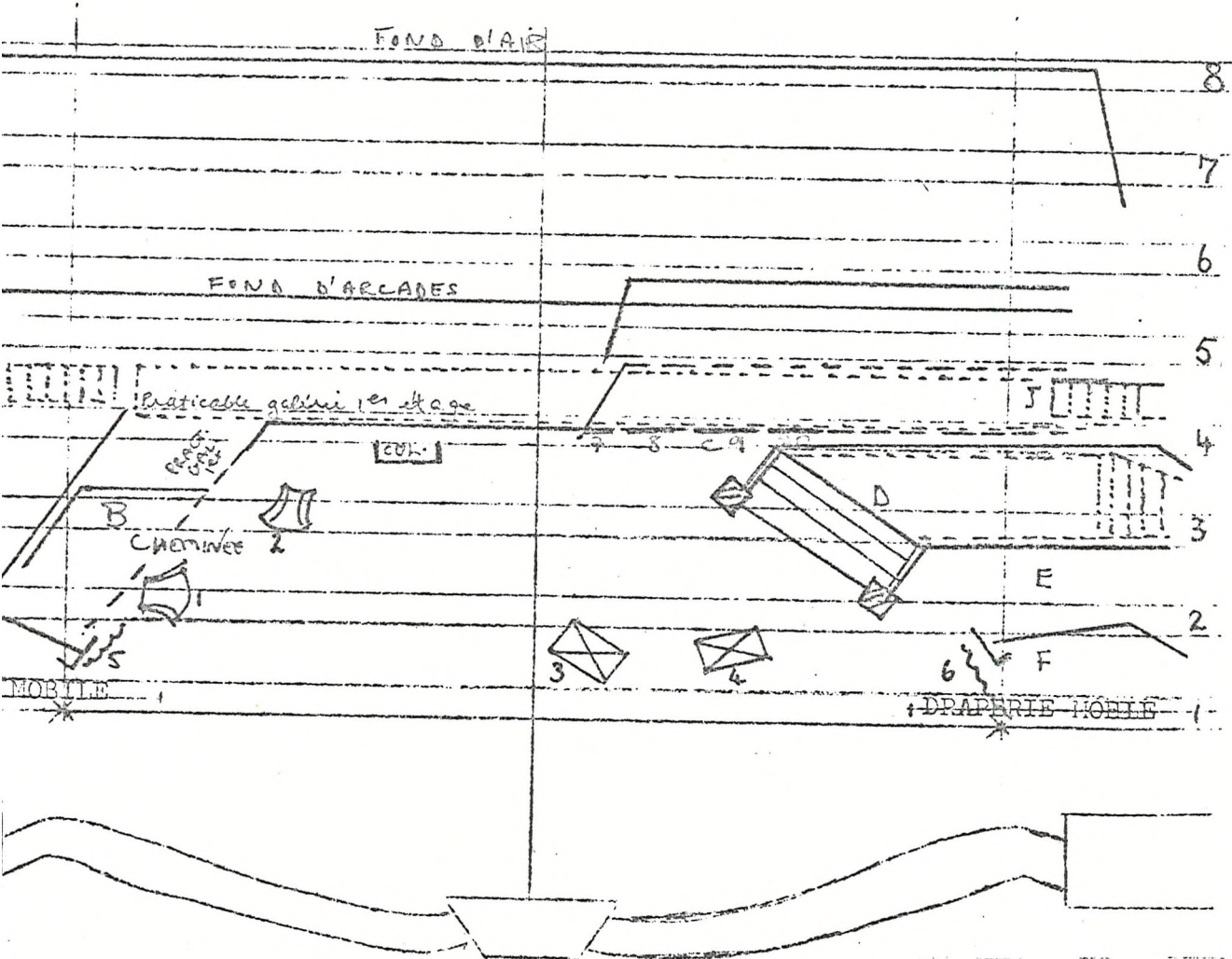
Act III Scene VIII
(p.161)

FERRANTE (*le prenant par le poignet*)

Messieurs, je ne sais comment l'avenir jugera l'exécution de doña Inès. Peut-être un bien, peut-être un mal. Quoi qu'il en soit, voici celui qui, avant tout autre, l'a inspirée. Veillez à ce qu'il en réponde devant le Roi mon fils. (*Des assistants entourent Egas Coelho.*) O mon Dieu ! dans ce répit qui me reste, avant que le sabre repasse et m'écrase, faites qu'il tranche ce nœud épouvantable de contradictions qui sont en moi, de sorte que, un instant au moins avant de cesser d'être, je sache enfin ce que je suis. (*Il attire Dino del Moro et le tient serré contre lui.*)⁴ Que l'innocence de cet enfant me serve de sauvegarde quand je vais apparaître devant mon Juge. — N'aie pas peur, et reste auprès de moi, quoi qu'il arrive... même si je meurs... Dieu te le rendra, Dieu te le rendra, mon petit frère... — Bien meilleur et bien pire...⁶ Quand je ressusciterai... — Oh ! le sabre ! le sabre ! —⁷ Mon Dieu, ayez pitié de moi ! (*Il s'écroule.*)

3-4 Ferrante lâche Egas. Aussitôt celui-ci cherche à fuir : il passe devant 3 pour remonter milieu; il a un mouvement d'hésitation au moment de fendre la foule, puis il s'élance Il est aussitôt entouré de plusieurs Seigneurs qui l'entraînent et sortent fond cour. Dino est descendu à droite de 4.

7 Ferrante veut se diriger vers F. Il chancelle et tombe mort devant 3 et 4. Dino se précipite et s'agenouille devant lui.



Act I Scene I
(pp.16/17)

L'INFANTE 2

Vous êtes venu, Seigneur, dans ma Navarre (que Dieu protège !) pour vous y entretenir avec le Roi mon père des affaires de vos royaumes. Vous m'avez vue, vous m'avez parlé, vous avez cru qu'une alliance entre nos couronnes, par l'instrument du Prince votre fils, et de moi, pouvait être faite pour le grand bien de ces couronnes et pour celui de la chrétienté. Vous deux, les rois, vous décidez d'un voyage que je ferai au Portugal, accompagnée de l'Infant, mon frère, peu après votre retour. Nous venons, nous sommes reçus grandement. La froideur du Prince, à mon égard, ne me surprend ni ne m'attriste³. J'avais vu plus loin; au delà de lui, je voyais l'œuvre à faire.

Trois¹ jours se passent. Ce matin, don Pedro, seul avec moi, me fait un aveu. Il plaide n'avoir su vos intentions qu'à votre retour de Navarre, quand il était trop tard pour revenir sur notre voyage. Il me déclare que son cœur est lié à jamais à une dame de votre pays, doña Inès de Castro, et que notre union n'aura pas lieu². Je crois que si je ne l'avais retenu il m'eût conté ses amours de bout en bout et dans le détail : tant les gens affligés du dérangement amoureux ont la manie de se croire objet d'admiration et d'envie pour l'univers entier³. Ainsi on me fait venir, comme une servante, pour me dire qu'on me dédaigne et me rejeter à la mer ! Ma bouche sèche quand j'y pense. Seigneur, savez-vous que chez nous, en Navarre, on meurt d'humiliation ? Don Guzman Blanco, réprimandé par le roi Sanche, mon grand-père, prend la fièvre, se couche, et passe dans le mois. Le père Martorell, confesseur de mon père, lorsqu'il est interdit, a une éruption de boutons sur tout le corps, et expire après trois jours. Si je n'étais jeune et vigoureuse, Seigneur, de l'affront que j'ai reçu du Prince, je serais morte.⁴

APPENDIX F6

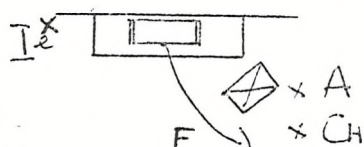
Act I Scene I
(mise en scène, pp.14/15)

2-3 L'Infante parle en regardant le roi en face

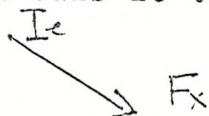
3-1 L'Infante face au public

1-2 L'Infante de nouveau face au roi, la fureur monte en elle

2-3 L'Infante parle avec ironie face au public. Ferrante descend à don Christoval et le regarde silencieusement ainsi que don Alvar comme pour leur faire partager sa stupéfaction.

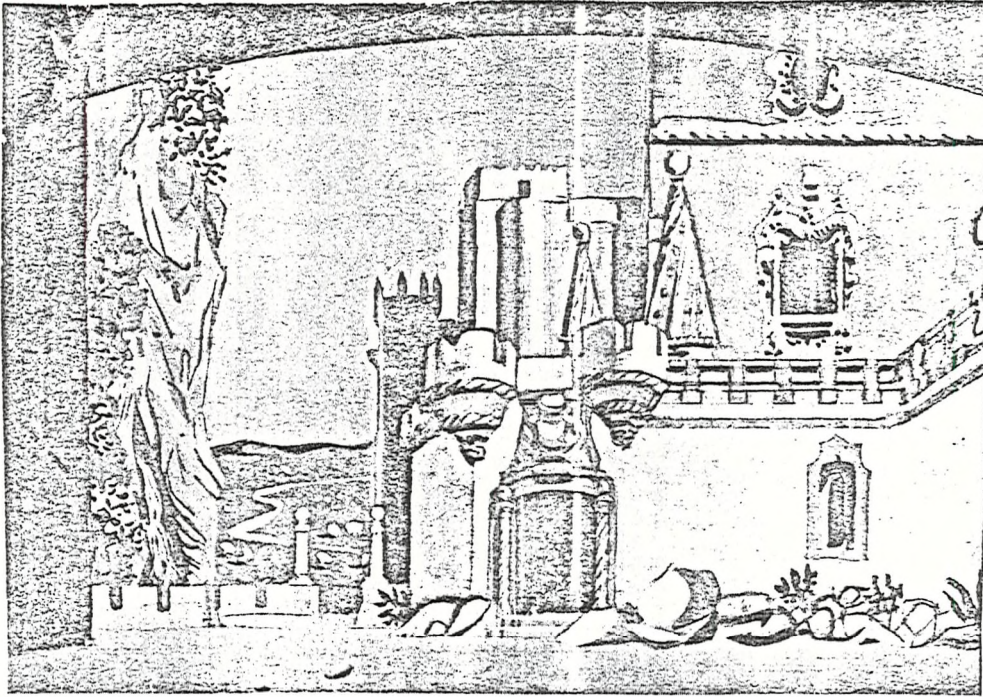
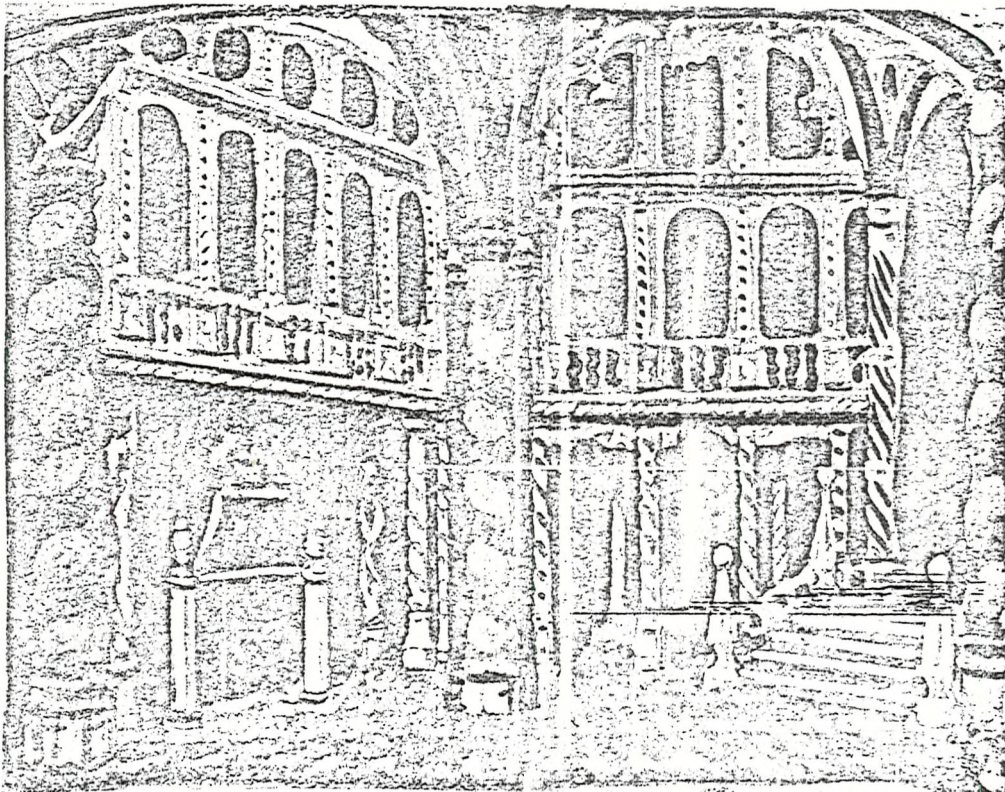


3-4 Ferrante se retourne sur place face à l'Infante qui vient rapidement à lui dans le temps.



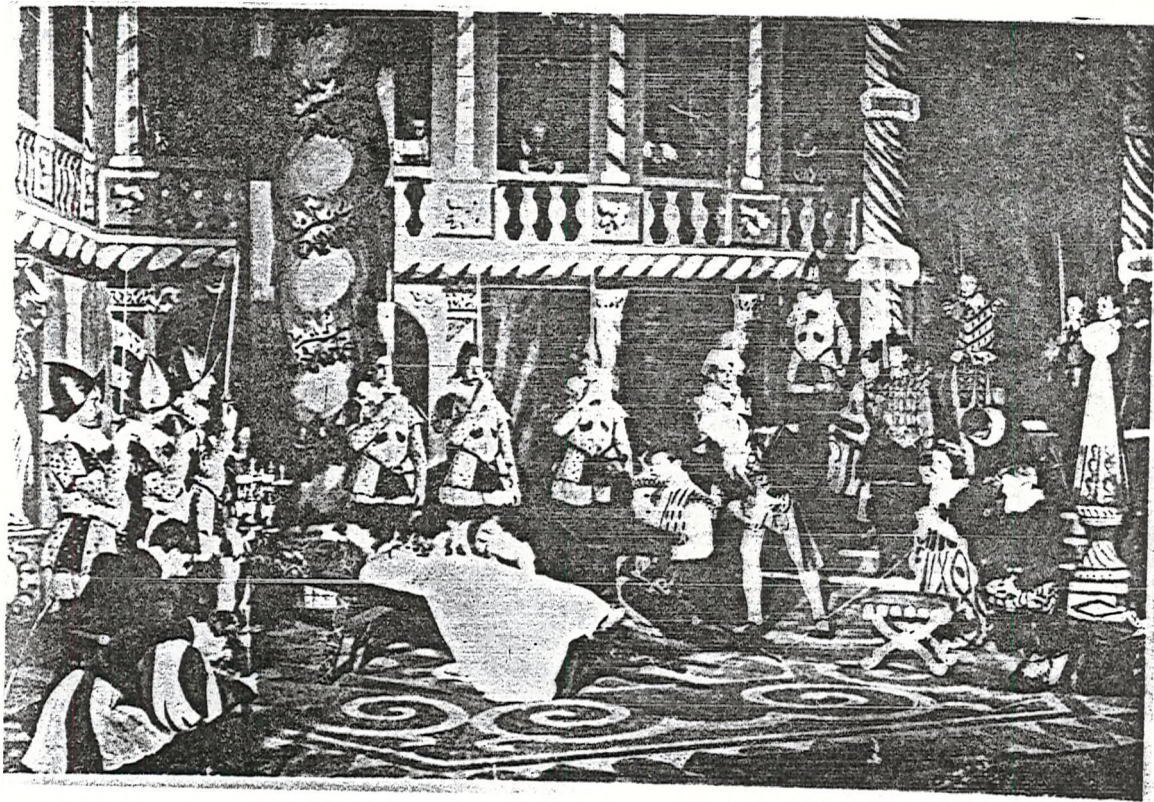
4 L'Infante tourne brusquement le dos au roi et rejoint ses dames d'honneur côté jardin. La première dame s'est avancée à sa rencontre.

(For the exact stage layout, see p.29 of this chapter)

APPENDIX F7Fourth Tableau
(Act II Scenes IV & V)Fifth Tableau
(Act III Scenes I/VIII)

APPENDIX F8

Photograph of the last scene in Dux's production of
La Reine morte





L N'EST

POINT DE L'INTÉRÊT DE LA FRANCE
DE FAIRE UNE ALLIANCE OFFENSIVE
OU DÉFENSIVE AVEC L'ANGLETERRE.
LE SECOURS DE LA FRANCE EST
PROMPT: MAIS CELUI DE L'ANGLE-
TERRE EST LONG ET INCERTAIN.

MONTESQUIEU

ESPRIT DES LOIS - TOME I, PAGE 32



*J'aimerais mieux
rendre l'âme à Dieu,
que d'être en la main
des Anglais.*

JEANNE D'ARC

Procès de Jeanne d'Arc

BRUNO V. 1972



E ME SUIS

IVRÉ LIBREMENT ET DE MON
CHOIX, À L'ANGLETERRE PARCE
QUE JE CROYAIS À SES LOIS, À
LA MORALE PUBLIQUE. JE ME
SUIS CRUELLEMENT TROMPÉ.
MAUTEFOIS, IL EST UN CIEL
VANGEUR ET TÔT OU TARD
VOUS PORTEREZ LES PEINES
D'UN ATTENTAT QUE LES HOMMES
VOUS REPROCHENT DÉJÀ.

NAPOLÉON

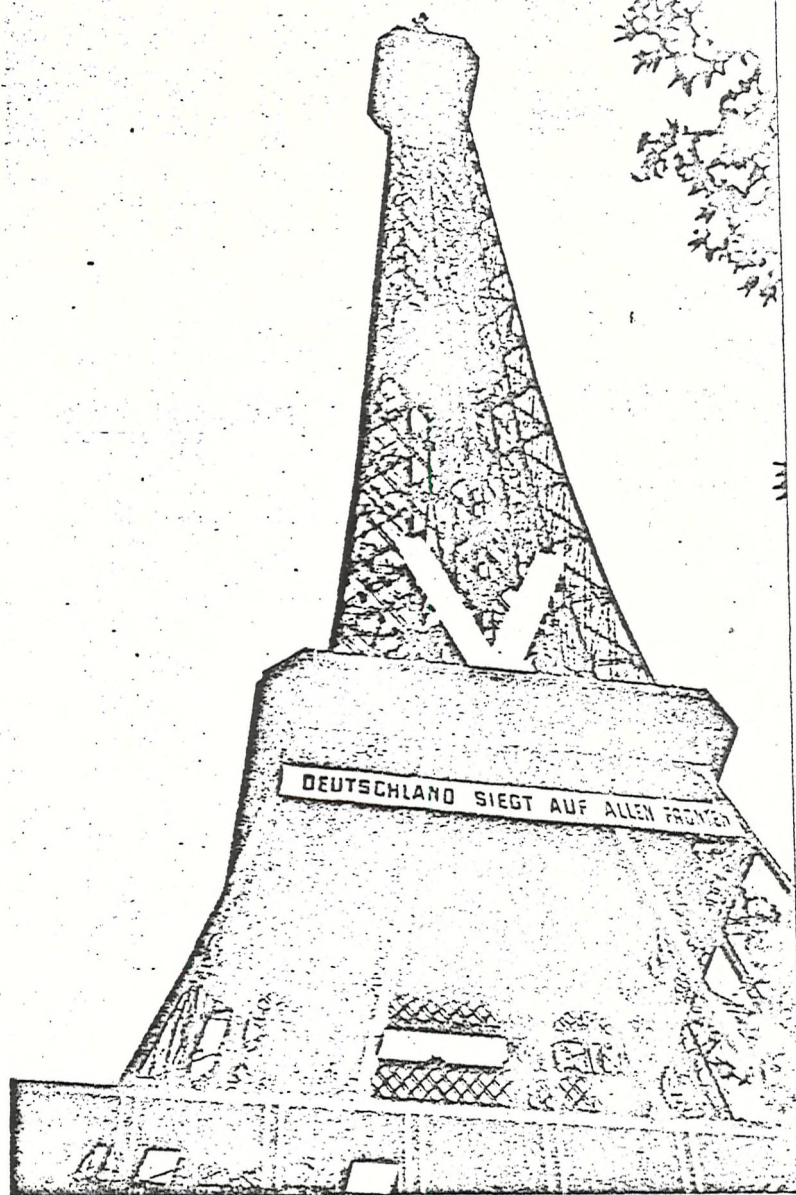
MÉMORIAL DE S^{te} HÉLÈNE, TOME 2, PAGE 142



LA NOUVELLE EUROPE
SE FERA DONT SERONT EXCLUES
L'ANGLETERRE ET LA RUSSIE.
ON CHASSERA L'ANGLETERRE
DANS LES OCÉANS ET LA RUSSIE
TARTARE DANS LES STEPPES.

VICTOR HUGO

APPENDIX G2



« L'ALLEMAGNE VAINC SUR TOUS LES FRONTS »
...ET LA BANDEROLE QUI LE PROCLAME
COUVRE LES MONUMENTS DE PARIS.



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