THE DRAMATIST, JEAN ROTROU.

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Thesis submitted in January 1976 for the degree of
Master of Philosophy of The University of Southampton.

The work described in this thesis was supervised by Dr. J.W.Scott, to whom the author wishes to acknowledge her sincere gratitude for assistance and encouragement during the course of the research.

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS

FRENCH

Master of Philosophy

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Previous studies of the work of Jean Rotrou have often shown that a specific preconceived framework of interpretation - Classicism, for example - can successfully be applied to a limited number of his plays. This thesis, however, is intended to show that certain fundamental principles identify Rotrou's entire dramatic output as a unified canon.

Such principles can only be discovered from the plays themselves, viewed primarily as effective pieces of drama. From a detailed analysis of the individual plays, three basic principles emerge: - the interweaving of folk motifs, creative exploitation of the visual medium and structural unity from the interplay of contrasts.

These three principles underlie all Rotrou's drama, and point us towards an understanding of the artistic and philosophic precepts informing the canon. Rotrou's drama embodies a different conception of Man and The Universe from that capable of being conveyed by the Classical ethos of Reason; he argues for moderation and humility, and his faith-oriented drama evokes an aura of primitive group ritual. Rotrou's seventeenth-century success and subsequent neglect may be explained by the fact that his drama represents one of the last protests of the mediaeval spirit, unhampered by a surfeit of reasoning.

1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1 APPROACH.

Of the drama of Jean Rotrou, we possess today thirty-five extant plays* covering a period of roughly twenty years. This impressive output is perhaps even more remarkable if one takes into account the preface to Cléagénor et Doristée, (for us, the second of Rotrou's plays to be published), where the author comments that this is "la cadette de trente soeurs". Although futile to speculate on the nature, and even existence, of these other early plays, the comment does encourage us to regard Rotrou as a prolific writer with periods of intensive dramatic productivity. In addition to this, there is reason to believe that Rotrou was a very successful dramatist in his own time - despite later neglect by classical theorists. Succeeding Hardy as writer for the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1632, there is evidence[1] that at least thirteen of his plays were staged by 1634. He became one of Richelieu's "cinq auteurs" in 1635, and according to Chapelain[2] his career reached a point of triumph when Les Sosies rivalled Le Cid for public acclaim in 1637.

In contrast to this is the relative paucity of biographical information about Rotrou,[3] and the scarcity of seventeenth-century or subsequent reference to him as a literary figure. Thus, in retrospect, he seems a somewhat unsubstantial presence in a century of dramatic renown, remaining strangely silent throughout the controversial disputes over dramatic theory and practice which his contemporaries found so engaging,**

* for the complete works of Rotrou, see Oeuvres de Jean Rotrou, edited Viollet le Duc, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1967.

** however there is evidence to suggest that Rotrou was possibly the author of a pamphlet in defence of Corneille at the time of the quarrel over Le Cid - see Gasté, La Querelle du Cid.

and leaving behind no real indication as to his thoughts on questions of the theatre - with which he was so much involved - other than the plays themselves.

Consequently, any attempt to acclaim Rotrou a dramatist worthy of serious attention - perhaps for original artistic sensibility, aesthetic awareness, or even competent dramatic technique - must rest finally upon firm supporting evidence from within the texts. Because so little is known about the man's life, and more particularly, thought, it would seem somewhat perverse to approach his plays from the stand-point of external criteria - for example, the author's religious or philosophical beliefs, or the literary trends or prevailing theories which marked the intellectual climate of the seventeenth century. To undertake a critical appraisal of Rotrou's work by superimposing upon it dramatic or philosophic assumptions which may well have been alien to Rotrou's vision of art and its function, does not encourage a true appreciation of that work and may account for some of the vague and uncertain conclusions that have been drawn about it.

Looking at some of the major studies of Rotrou, it becomes clear that very little attention has in fact been paid to evaluating the plays "per se", as working dramatic units intended for stage performance and the entertainment of an audience. Nelson, in Immanence and Transcendence[4], is more concerned with establishing Rotrou's place on the theological axis between Jansenist and Jesuit interpretations of the nature of God. Van Baelen's study of Rotrou[5] consists of judicious sampling in order to fit a few of the plays into a framework of twentieth-century existentialism; Buffum[6] uses the plays as further evidence to support

his ideas on Baroque literature; Jarry's Essai sur Les Oeuvres de Rotrou[7] evinces a strong nineteenth-century preoccupation with realism and rules; Hubert[8] sees the plays as typical of the seventeenth-century intellectual climate. While we may mention some partial exceptions (in Morel[9] there is some consideration of dramatic structure and functioning, although this is not central and merely adds to his conclusion that the plays are illustrations of "des apories", and Knutson[10] unfortunately looks only at the comedies, and these only with regard to the use of irony), it nevertheless becomes clear that much of the research on Rotrou has proceeded along almost every other line than that of investigating the plays themselves as meaningful drama. Thus there emerges from the literature the paradox of, on the one hand, an almost total absence of information about Rotrou as a thinker and a dramatist apart from what the plays themselves might tell us, and on the other hand, a plethora of studies into Rotrou that largely disregard the "dramatic" and "theatrical" in his work to the extent of leaving us in doubt as to whether he wrote plays or novels.

With no other source of information about Rotrou's attitude towards drama than the plays themselves, and knowing only that they were popular in the seventeenth century, it is suggested that the most logical way to approach a study of Rotrou as playwright and artist is to begin with a detailed study of the individual plays - as plays - and to attempt to discover if, and how, they work as drama intended for performance on stage. If we can arrive at a satisfactory answer to this question, then there is a claim to be made for the plays as successful drama, needing to be performed, or at least considered from a dynamic viewpoint, in order to be appreciated for what they are. Furthermore, from an analysis of the individual plays as dramatic units, we are then in a position to proceed to an evaluation of any recurrent patterns and stylistic

consistencies which emerge, so moving towards an overall view of the plays as "oeuvres complètes". Thus working as it were from the "inside out", it may be hoped that detailed textual observations would form a firm basis for more generalised remarks about the plays as a whole, and that they would point us towards seeing some sort of coherent attitude on the part of the author, informing the plays and shaping them as works of art. We may then be in a position to derive from the plays themselves an understanding of the metaphysic underlying them and the assumptions about man and life which help to shape the drama.

It is certain that an understanding of Rotrou's aims in drama and of any view of the human condition he may be deemed to have, will only be reached through close study of his plays. Thus our approach to research on Rotrou has been conducted along the following lines:

(i) detailed study of the individual plays as dramatic constructs intended for performance upon the stage;

(ii) an overall appreciation of the plays as a canon;

(iii) a statement based on (i) and (ii) of the metaphysic underlying the plays, i.e. the assumptions about the human condition which inform the drama.

1.2 PROGRESS.

With the foregoing terms of reference in mind, the research was begun by looking closely at Rotrou's early plays (those plays contained in c. Vols I, II & III of the Oeuvres de Jean Rotrou). From a detailed analysis of the individual plays, we were able to establish certain recurring techniques and dramatic features which emerged as fundamental to Rotrou's approach to drama as a dynamic, social experience. These

were: the repeated use of symbolic folk motifs as the basic building blocks of the drama, a highly functional but imaginative attitude towards the visual medium as an integral part of the dramatic experience, and structural coherence from the dynamic interplay of contrasts.

Having discovered specific dramatic techniques in Rotrou's early work, we then turned to the later plays (those contained in c.Vols IV & V of the Oeuvres). Here we found, underlying the more regular "classical" structure, the continued use of the same three basic features which characterised the earlier work.

Thus, the research breaks down into three areas: establishing Rotrou's dramatic techniques, verifying their continued use and importance throughout all the plays, and examining the developments and modifications that occur as Rotrou becomes a more experienced dramatist, and as French drama moves towards the maturity of classical form. It may be noted that the structure of this thesis reflects the chronological progress of the research.

1.3 FINDINGS.

Of the three techniques discovered in the early plays, perhaps the most important is the repeated use of folk motifs - devices, themes and figures found to occur throughout the world in mythology and legend, and creating a spirit of magic and wonder. Folk motifs are concerned with the area of popular conventions, those elements of a play which the audience might look forward to seeing, and which are almost guaranteed to evoke an instant and "programmed" emotional response. Many such conventions are temporally and socially circumscribed, but others seem

to span time and are as valid in the theatre today as they were in the seventeenth century and before; for example, the childlike and universal features of magical power, identical twins, country girls who are really princesses, cruel tyrants and damsels in distress. Rotrou makes extensive use of such conventional features, and in providing his audience with so many recognisable "old favorites", helps them to feel more at home in the world of the play, and thus more involved. In Chapter 2 we discuss the "participatory" aspect of folk motifs and the magical, ritualistic atmosphere that they lend to the drama.

Chapter 3 considers Rotrou's awareness of the visual dimension of the theatre, and the particular creative ways in which he uses it to add depth and significance to his drama, in addition to the more obvious entertainment value which it may be said to have. Rotrou exploits the visual dimension to a considerable degree, often putting so much weight on movement and gesture that words become unnecessary ornaments in terms of actually understanding the significance of a scene. Thus, as we shall show, he creates a kind of mimed ritual on stage through the universal language of gesture.

The third factor to emerge from a study of the early plays is Rotrou's approach to dramatic structure, and this is examined in Chapter 4. Although more classically influenced critics have claimed to find no coherent structure in Rotrou's work (apart from, possibly, the last few plays), and have instead bemoaned the absence of any organising principle behind his drama, we shall argue that structural coherence is provided by a complex pattern of dynamic contrasts, operative at every level of the drama, and creating the tight internal infrastructure which moulds every play into an almost geometrically shaped and integrated unit.

Thus, having established Rotrou's fundamental dramatic techniques (Chapters 2,3 & 4), we proceed in Chapter 5 to examine the later plays for signs of continuity of approach. This would enable us then to consider the plays as a whole, manifesting - despite their individual differences of plot, genre and theme - a coherent attitude on the part of Rotrou towards the place and function of drama in society. In fact, as we shall show in Chapter 5, there is a considerable and surprising degree of consistency throughout the whole of Rotrou's work which enables us to draw important conclusions about his attitude towards his art and towards the human condition which that art, to some extent, attempts to portray. Such consistency is deemed to be surprising in view of the many changes that classical theories were imposing upon French drama of the mid-seventeenth century and which can be seen, to a certain degree, in Rotrou's later plays. The influence of Classicism over Rotrou's later work is discussed in Chapter 6.

Having considered both the consistencies and the modifications in Rotrou's dramatic technique, Chapter 7 looks at the plays as a whole. From the use of the folk motifs and the visual medium, we are able to derive a statement about Rotrou's artistic vision of drama as a ritual experience, embodying a mystic view of the world quite at odds with the growing rational ethic of Post-Renaissance France. From the structural use of contrasts we discover an attitude towards human behaviour which recommends avoidance of extremes in favour of a judicious moderation that involves both responsibility for self and humility before God. Here again Rotrou seems to be at odds with his time - a time which, in drama, vaunted the merits of the egocentric, rational hero, capable of everything through the exercise of will. Thus it seems that, through his drama, Rotrou was giving life to a totally different conception of the world than that capable of being conveyed

through the principles of Classicism. Rotrou's "mediaevalism" will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Rotrou's approach to drama and to questions of Ethics bears a close resemblance to Aristotelian thought, and his Providential view of the universe reflects Thomistic doctrine, itself Aristotelian in essence. We are therefore led to question the possible influence of Aristotle upon Rotrou, and although such a study is outside the scope of this research, it is outlined briefly and suggested as a future line of enquiry. This, and brief conclusions to the thesis, form the contents of Chapter 8.

A detailed bibliography is to be found at the end of the thesis, and notes are located at the end of each chapter.

NOTES.

1. H.Carrington Lancaster, Le Mémoire de Mahelot, Laurent et autres décorateurs de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne et de la Comédie Française au XVII^e Siècle, Paris 1920.

2. Jean Chapelain, Lettres, edited Tamizey de Larroque, Paris 1883, I 134-135.

3. See, for example, the two excellent nineteenth-century biographical studies of Rotrou: Henri Chardon, La Vie de Rotrou mieux connue, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1970 and Léonce Curnier, Etude sur Jean Rotrou, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1971.

4. R.J.Nelson, Immanence and Transcendence: The Theatre of Jean Rotrou, Ohio State Univ. Press, 1969.

5. Jacqueline Van Baelen, Rotrou: Le Héros Tragique et La Révolte, Paris, Nizet, 1964.

6. Imbrie Buffum, Studies in the Baroque from Montaigne to Rotrou, Yale Univ. Press, 1957.

7. Jules Jarry, Essai sur les Oeuvres Dramatiques de Jean Rotrou, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1970.

8. J.D.Hubert, 'Le réel et l'illusoire dans le théâtre de Corneille et dans celui de Rotrou' (Revue des Sciences Humaines, XCV, pages 333-350).

9. Jacques Morel, Jean Rotrou: Dramaturge de l'Ambiguité, Librairie Armand Colin, 1968.

10. H.C.Knutson, The Ironic Game: A Study of Rotrou's Comic Theatre, Univ. of California Press, 1966.

2. FOLK MOTIFS.

An initial reading of Rotrou's early plays leaves one with the impression of having wandered into the magical realms of fairy story. The plays abound in such devices as women disguised as men, "happy-ever-after" endings and marriages, magicians, magic rings and magic potions, Kings who are tyrants and humble maidens who are really princesses. These are the universal motifs of folklore, and they are to be found, again and again, throughout the early work of Rotrou. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine the major folk motifs that Rotrou employs and to explain the significance of their appearance in his drama.

2.1 THE MOTIFS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION.

Some of the major and most frequently used motifs (with the plays in which they occur,) are as follows:

(a) Woman disguised as a man.

L'Hypocondriaque; Cléagénor et Doristée; La Diane; La Célimène; L'Heureux Naufrage; La Céliane; La Belle Alphrède; Laure Persécutée.

It may be added here that disguise in general appears in one form or another in virtually every play by Rotrou - sometimes a man disguised as another man (Alphonse in Les Occasions Perdues,) or a woman disguised as another woman (Angélique in the play La Pèlerine Amoureuse.)

(b) Magicians, magic and "le merveilleux."

L'Hypocondriaque; La Bague de l'Oubli; Les Occasions Perdues; Hercule Mourant; L'Innocente Infidélité.

In the above plays, magic is predominant, but some reference to magical and supernatural happenings is to be found in most of Rotrou's other plays also.

(c) Madness.

L'Hypocondriaque; La Bague de l'Oubli; Les Ménechmes; La Pèlerine Amoureuse; Les Sosies.

The madman, the fool, or simply the character who is confused to the point of doubting his own identity - all these occur, even if only in a very minor way, in many other plays also.

(d) Happy endings with one or more marriages.

L'Hypocondriaque; La Bague de l'Oubli; Cléagénor et Doristée; La Diane; Les Occasions Perdues; L'Heureuse Constance; Les Ménechmes; Hercule Mourant; etc.

In fact, marriage is used to conclude nearly every one of Rotrou's early plays.

(e) The dominant heroine.

L'Hypocondriaque; La Diane; La Célimène; L'Heureux Naufrage; La Céliane; La Belle Alphrède; La Pèlerine Amoureuse; Laure Persécutée.

These are the women with seemingly super-human powers, who guide and control the destinies of all the other characters by means of an intuitive understanding of what is required, what is right, and what is ordained. Woman, generally, has a special role in Rotrou.

(f) Discovered Parentage.

La Diane; Laure Persécutée; La Pèlerine Amoureuse; La Belle Alphrède.

The character who during the course of the play discovers his true birthright and the identity of his true parents.

(g) Doubles.

Les Ménechmes; L'Hypocondriaque; La Soeur; Les Sosies; La Bague de l'Oubli; Les Deux Pucelles.

The "doubles" theme may occur in the form of identical twins, mistaken identity between similar people, or "le personnage double" - the character with two alternative personalities.

(h) Corrupt Sovereignty.

L'Heureuse Constance; La Bague de l'Oubli; Les Occasions Perdues; Laure Persécutée.

> The theme of corrupt Sovereignty is generally accompanied by the sister theme of "the curing of the king" - returning the king, and thus implicitly, the society of which he is head, to a healthy state of body and mind.

This list of the thematic motifs employed by Rotrou shows not only their repeated use throughout a number of plays, but also the large number and variety chosen to occur in any one play. They are often accompanied by the following additional motifs or devices:

> The agency of Time in the affairs of Man,
> Nature as a living, sentient force,
> Dreams, premonitions and portents,
> Tempests at sea,
> Cosmic symbology embodied in the images of light and dark,
> Preoccupation with the inevitability of death,
> The woman whose virtue is under attack from a dishonourable man,
> Journeying abroad to seek a lost love or relation etc. . . . .

The ubiquity of these motifs indicates that Rotrou was using a group of popular and traditional folk themes as the basic building blocks with which to construct his drama. Their repeated use imposes a certain "likeness" on all the plays; that is, from the point of view of this self-contained and highly stylised technique, all the plays are representative of a special attitude towards drama - that it is essentially a ritual experience.

In order to explain this more fully, we shall consider each of the listed devices in turn to examine the dramatic significance with which it is used in individual plays.

2.2 DRAMATIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOTIFS.

(a) Woman disguised as a man.

When a woman disguises herself as a man it is important to note that Rotrou's audience is taken into the woman's confidence and

made a party to the trick.[1] In this way Rotrou ensures an intimate complicity between actress and audience. The former reveals her disguise and true identity in private asides and monologues during which the audience alone shares her secret. The dramatic irony is reinforced by deliberate double-edged remarks made before other characters on stage who grasp only a small fraction of the meaning, compared with the privileged audience (e.g. Cléagénor et Doristée, Act II sc1.) Thus the audience is at one and the same time drawn into and distanced from the stage fiction.

In most cases, the process of successful disguise is totally invraisemblable. It is unlikely that Doristée would carry off her disguise so successfully as to cause Théandre's wife and servant to fall in love with her, in her guise as Philémond. It is even more unlikely that Perside's father would fail to recognise his own daughter when disguised as the family friend, Aliaste. However, such is the case, and Rotrou gives us a full two scenes of the confusion during which this invraisemblable situation is stretched to the limits (L'Hypocondriaque, Act IV sc3 & sc4.) In terms of Unity of Action, these two scenes form a quite irrelevant episode and interfere with the progress of the play. In terms of audience participation, they are more significant. By exaggeratedly emphasising the unlikelihood of all the disguise situations, Rotrou forces his audience, already becoming involved in the stage action through the disguise complicity, to enter fully into the world of the play and to accept its reality without question. (For further examples, see Laure Persécutée, Act I sc9; La Diane, Act IV sc9.)

Disguise is also used as a source of humour, sometimes full of ironic significance (La Diane, Act III sc10) and sometimes frankly sexual

(Cléagénor et Doristée, Act III sc6.) The dramatic ironies and multiple ambiguities it produces ensure a wealth of meanings to be found in the slightest word or gesture. Rotrou's extensive and varied use of disguise turns this simple physical device into a concrete dramatisation of the verbal "équivoque." As well as having equivocal speeches to utter, a character's appearance is also a dramatic equivocation.

In addition to exploiting the audience's capacity for becoming involved in the stage action, disguise always has a functional purpose within the context of the play. Physical disguise is the deliberate creation of an illusion, the adopting of a mask so that one's external appearance belies the reality of one's identity. The problem of illusion and reality, external appearances and inner truth, are themes which recur throughout the whole of Rotrou's work, and disguise is one of the principal ways by which they are given dramatic expression. Disguise is seen as a useful tool in the arduous process of revealing the truth. Act IV sc9 of La Diane, for example, shows us the heroine using her disguise as Célirée in order to force Lysimant (unfaithful to her and confused as to his feelings for any woman) to reveal his true feelings about her. Disguised as someone else, she is able to adopt any false attitude, constantly challenge Lysimant, and help him discover and reveal his true feelings, as much for his own benefit as for hers.

Thus disguise has a two-fold importance. Functionally, it is a device used to draw the spectator into the fictional world of the play and ensure his committed acceptance of the laws of that fictional world, however unlikely they may seem to be. At the same time, it is an artistic dramatisation of the illusion/reality theme

so basic to Rotrou's theatre.[2] The spectator, from his comfortable position of omniscience, is made to see the dangers and possible uses of illusion in life.

(b) Magicians, magic and "le merveilleux".

Scherer[3] puts particular emphasis on the seventeenth-century fascination for all things spectacular and marvellous on stage. The desire to be visually dazzled by spectacular happenings was a major contributory factor in the temporary flourishing of "pièces à machines." Many authors, of course, even if they were writing for theatres which could technically satisfy the demand, did not succumb to it to the extent of littering the stage with amazing mechanical artefacts, but most felt the need to incorporate something marvellous and magical in their plays, in order to satisfy public taste.

It is not sufficient, however, to describe this interest in magic as merely "fashion". There is considerable evidence to suggest that the belief of Pre-Renaissance man in magic, a belief stretching back into history and embodied in myth, folklore and legend throughout the world,[4] survived well into the seventeenth century.* Rotrou seems to have been particularly sensitive to this undercurrent of popular folk belief, and far from simply having occasional recourse to magic to appease the public, exploited fully the deeply-rooted belief in the supernatural in order to add depth and immediacy to his drama.

It is generally recognised[5] that early seventeenth-century dramatists tried to avoid "le merveilleux chrétien" for fear of incurring ecclesiastical wrath and charges of heresy. "Le merveilleux païen"

*cf. the hesitations of Sir Thomas Browne in seventeenth-century England.

was a much safer subject. Certainly, it is not until St.Genest that Rotrou uses Christian marvels overtly, although it is possible to ascribe to many earlier plays a Christian interpretation. The apparently pagan myth and figure of Hercules is seen in this light by D.A.Watts:

> "Notre auteur a voulu faire d'Hercule le symbole du pécheur endurci que la grâce divine appellera néanmoins à la sainteté." (6)

Although it is undoubtedly possible to interpret the play thus, such a view advances our understanding of Rotrou's drama very little. It ignores the fact that Hercule Mourant is one of a number of plays written by Rotrou around the early 1630s. Considering that little is known about Rotrou's religious habits at the time,[7] and that his plays of the period evince a high content of pagan magic and fairytale wonders, it is probably more useful to look at Hercule Mourant in its historical context as one of the many early plays by Rotrou, and to see what overall comments can be made about these as drama. It is suggested in this chapter that in his early work, Rotrou was drawing heavily on elements of ancient folk culture as the basic building blocks of his drama, and that the deep-rooted themes of folklore afforded him the means of creating a very direct and powerful dramatic experience for his audience. Magic rings and potions (in Hercule Mourant, magic monster's blood), Gods in daily commerce with mankind, and all the stuff of fairytale abound in the early plays. Rotrou seems to have been exploiting something of world-wide appeal and interest, something which would ensure the captive attention of his audience and their immediate active interest in the story being unfolded before them. In this respect, then, Hercule Mourant is of a kind with those plays immediately preceeding and succeeding it. The protagonist is a Man/God, half human and half divine, a corrupt ruler using his strength to persecute Iole cruelly; Iole is the virtuous maiden whose honour is

threatened by male lust; Déjanire, Hercule's wife, uses the magic blood of a monster, on a symbolic level to "cure the king", to restore Hercule to the right path, and on a personal level to win back her husband. Clearly, many of the dramatic devices discussed in this chapter are to be found in the play, and if it is successful drama, "une pièce d'une réelle valeur",[8] this is rather the result of the harmonious blending of folk themes with perceptive dramatic artistry, than the transmutation of Senecan mythology into a disguised Christian exemplum.

"Le merveilleux" is diversely represented in Rotrou. L'Hypocondriaque features palmistry and prediction (Act III sc4); Les Occasions Perdues opens with Queen Hélène resembling Diana the Huntress - "en habit de chasse" - capturing the heart of Clorimond, to whom she is an angel from heaven, a divine being, "la céleste beauté," (Act I sc2); in the final scene of Hercule Mourant, Hercule, now fully divinised, returns to earth to counsel the mortals he has left behind; magic potions are used and, more commonly, a magic ring with special powers over its wearer (La Bague de l'Oubli and L'Innocente Infidélité); and countless plays are filled with omens and premonitions which always come true in some sense. Rotrou's use of magic and illusion has been variously described and justified according to fashionable theory, but essentially - regardless of all topical interpretations - it is the age old appeal of fairytale.

> "C'est le merveilleux des contes de fées auxquels les enfants ajoutent si sincèrement foi, auxquels les hommes, à l'occasion, prennent un plaisir extrême, et croient encore pour un moment comme au temps de l'enfance." (9)

As in fairytale, Rotrou never naively presents us with magical happenings as pure entertainment alone, but adds some kind of moral consideration at the human level, generally involving the concept

of responsibility. For Déjanire, the decision to use the monster's blood carries with it the responsibility for Hercule's safety, and, in Act III, the guilt of having unwittingly caused his death. Hermante uses a magic ring in L'Innocente Infidélité to recover the love of Félismond, without realising that it has the power to turn him into a murderer. In every case there is seen to be an intimate relationship between the supernatural and mortal man, so that the effects of magic cannot be imputed solely to some external force. Whether these effects be good or bad, man is always seen as having played a significant part in the process and must accept some responsibility. Possibly this particular emphasis superimposed on the fairytale material is a reflection of Rotrou's Jesuit preference for a limited free will, that man is not totally doomed, but has some power to influence his own destiny. Free will brings with it the idea of responsibility.

The audience is very much involved in all the marvels and is given ample opportunity to watch their effect. In La Bague de l'Oubli, the magic ring works only when worn on someone's finger, and then its effect is quite startling. Its power to change the king's personality is emphasised by his behaviour, language and attitude, and could presumably be further underlined in performance by a change of gesture and facial expression. The audience is permitted to watch magic at work, and to see the king's illusory state of mind gradually becoming a reality. Thus the audience sees dramatically represented the notion that illusion can lead to reality and become truth. Similarly in L'Hypocondriaque, the audience is enabled to see that reality is a subjective concept, and that deliberate indulgence in illusion can lead to positive good (Act V sc6).

As with disguise, the audience is given some warning that an unlikely situation is about to develop which must be accepted for what it is. The basic fairytale atmosphere is established in Act I sc5 of La Bague de l'Oubli with the introduction of the magician. His presence prepares the audience for the type of play they are about to see and gives them an advanced warning of the conventions that are likely to follow which they must accept fully in order to enter into the spirit of the entertainment; the levels of reality become confused from Act II sc6 onwards. As with the device of disguise, magic and the marvellous force from the audience a deliberate abandonment of reason and "cause and effect" logic for a return to the simplistic themes of childhood, when all things are possible.

"Le merveilleux" has the same two-fold function as disguise. On one level, it is a device to draw the audience into the world of the play by eliciting from them a tacit acceptance of the stage reality. Once this boundary to credibility is removed, the audience is free to become so involved in the marvellous happenings on stage as to forget that it is only a play after all, and that such things do not normally happen. But, in addition to this, "le merveilleux" is important at the thematic level, for it is, in itself, illusion, the non-real, and is thus the most direct dramatic expression of the illusion/reality theme that Rotrou could use. The art of the theatre is by definition the creation of illusion, therefore what better way to explore this topic than by using illusion to investigate illusion?

(c) Madness.

Phrases like "Je m'ignore moi-même" and "Je doute si je vis" recur throughout much of Rotrou's early work. They are indicative of the character who has become confused to the point of doubting his own sanity.

Equally, to his friends, he appears to be going mad. Such is the case with Alphonse in La Bague de l'Oubli, whose ever-changing personality causes mystified reactions from all at court. Being quite unaware of his own changeable personality, he feels that the odd reactions he provokes in others are a sure sign that either they or he must be going mad (see especially Act III).

The treatment of madness in terms of confused identity rather than violent histrionics accomplishes two aims. Firstly, Rotrou is able to tone down the subject matter to a level of polite bewilderment acceptable to the proponents of bienséance. This is particularly evident if one compares Rotrou's treatment of the madness episode in Les Ménechmes, Act IV sc2, with the original scene in Plautus. In contrast with the original, uninhibited and quite violent displays of madness, Rotrou substitutes a much calmer scene, relying solely upon linguistic aberrations - bienséance, after all, demands that even madness be reasonable on stage. Secondly, Rotrou is able to adapt the subject of lunacy to his own thematic purpose, the exploration of illusion.

Madness in Rotrou is always seen as a further dimension of illusion. The universe of the madman is as real and valid to him as our own is to us, and it is this alternative reality, this illusion of reality, which Rotrou presents to the audience. The dramatic function of madness is thus to expand the audience's awareness of the subjective nature of both illusion and reality by presenting their imagination with both. They become involved with Perside's efforts to restore Cloridan to sanity, (L'Hypocondriaque), thus implicitly judging her world to be the real one and his to be the world of illusion, but all the while they are watching a play, where all is illusion:

> "De l'auteur au lecteur, les chimères se transmettent, mais ce qui était fantaisie d'un côté, de l'autre devient fantasme; la ruse de l'écrivain est reçue en toute naïveté comme figure du réel. En apparence, il n'y a là que la critique aisée des romans d'invention; mais, un peu au-dessous, toute une inquiétude sur les rapports, dans l'oeuvre d'art, du réel et de l'imaginaire, et peut être aussi sur la trouble communication entre l'invention fantastique et les fascinations du délire." (10)

Thus the dramatic focus is upon the error, the illusion within which the victim is trapped, rather than the individual himself, and there is no need for violent, physical displays of insanity. Furthermore, by involving the audience as he does, Rotrou can make use of an additional level of reality, that of the external observer. In this way he can manipulate a multi-level reality, and involve the audience in a meaningful way, using their presence as an added dimension in the drama.

The manipulation of various levels of reality can most readily be seen in St.Genest, where the author has the problem of interweaving four different levels at once. In the early plays, L'Hypocondriaque is a less dramatically successful example of manipulating three levels, using madness as the dramatic impetus for the action. Before Act III sc2, there exist the two basic dimensions of drama, the audience and the dramatic fiction on stage. But from Act III sc2 onwards there is a major change. Cloridan in his madness begins to exist on a different plane from everyone else and to experience a different kind of reality. His madness introduces a third level, which coexists with the others, without any point of contact, until the final scene. (In Act V sc6, with the intervention of Perside, stage reality becomes unitary again). So for the duration of half the play, there is a total breakdown of communication between Cloridan and all other characters, during which they think he is mad, and he thinks essentially the same of them. The two stage worlds are mutually exclusive. It is this long period of insanity which tests the play's dramatic credibility. It takes two acts

to persuade Cloridan that he is still alive, and the success of the dénouement depends entirely upon Cloridan remaining mad until the very last scene. This, coupled with many lengthy monologues, makes the central portion of the play somewhat tedious.

The lengthy monologues and récits are, however, important (Act III sc2, Act IV scl & 2, Act V scl etc). They provide the audience with an inside picture of what it is like to be mad, and of what the universe of the madman looks like to him. Thus equipped, the audience is able to move, albeit in imagination only, between the various levels of reality depicted in the play. Placed in this godlike position, they can see how subjective and narrowing is our appreciation of what we call reality. Looking through Cloridan's eyes, it becomes possible to appreciate why his world is as real to him as everyone else's is to them. Only the gods, it seems, have all the necessary information to make absolute judgements about truth, because only they can see all sides of an issue. Mortals must stumble along as best they can, always coming to imperfect conclusions as to the nature of reality. The audience, by being the only point of contact between the various levels in a play (and this is especially so in St.Genest), is led to an understanding that "one man's reality is another man's illusion." Cloridan's madness, and the confusion which ensues for all other characters, is a direct dramatisation of this theme. The apparently irrelevant episode of Act IV sc3 & 4 can be seen as a short comic restatement of the same principle.

Whereas Cloridan moves from one kind of reality to another and back again, in La Bague de l'Oubli, we see Alphonse moving continually backwards and forwards through two different types of personality, according to whether or not he wears the magic ring. The audience,

aware of the ring's power, not only understand what is happening, but also why everyone else thinks the king is going mad. Again, from their godlike position of omniscience, they see that the other characters are not in possession of sufficient information and therefore come to imperfect and ill-formed conclusions. Alphonse's madness is caused through being two different people, both quite real when in existence, and unimagineable otherwise. In modern terms this is the dramatic enactment of schizophrenia; for Alphonse it is the paradox of being two alternative but equally real people. Again reality is shown as subjective and relative.

The paradoxes embodied in illusion are dramatised by Rotrou in many ways, madness being one. The madman or fool is very often presented in a sympathetic light, characterised by a fool's wisdom which eludes the other, more apparently sane members of society. In La Bague de l'Oubli, Fabrice is used to contrast with the king. He is portrayed as a rather foolish mercenary who can think or speak of little other than his purse, and he provides much of the comic content of the play. But as the fool, he displays typical fool's wisdom and insight, and sees the king as he really is. His witty quips barely disguise an accurate observation about the king which the latter is incapable of seeing for himself (eg. Act I sc6 & 7). Foucault[11] discusses the way in which the role of madman has gradually changed over the years, from a straight representation of insanity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to a paradoxical representation of truth in the early seventeenth century:

> "Dans les Farces et les soties, le personnage du Fou prend de plus en plus d'importance. Il n'est plus simplement dans les marges, la silhouette ridicule et familière: il prend place au centre du théâtre, comme le détenteur de la vérité."

This observation is applicable to all the master/valet pairs in Rotrou. Not only is the valet a comic extreme of his master (eg. Ménechme and

Ergaste), he is also lucidly aware of his folly - in the case of Ergaste, his subjugation to his stomach - and more importantly, of the folly of his master. To this extent, then, the fool is very often the "realist" of the play. (eg. Les Ménechmes, Act I sc2).

Madness has been described as the most total form of "qui pro quo",[12] that which takes the false for the true, death for life, man for woman. The dramatisation of madness is thus another very direct way of expressing the appearances and reality theme forcefully on stage. Not only is it the ideal vehicle for Rotrou's thematic preoccupations, but also, coupled with his extensive exploitation of dramatic irony, it draws the audience into the drama as an extra level of awareness, or an additional dimension of reality through which to direct the theme. The audience is, in a sense, used as additional material for the play.

(d) Happy endings with one or more marriages.

Without entering into a lengthy discussion as to the exact classification of Rotrou's early plays into tragedies, comedies, pastorals and tragi-comedies,[13] it is possible to state that, whatever the nature of the "intrigue", the "dénouement" is always happy, hopeful, and often blessed with marriage.

It is known that Rotrou was significantly influenced by the Spanish dramatists, Lope de Vega and Rojas,[14] and it seems likely that the convention of the happy ending with marriage was one of the Spanish principles that he decided to adopt and employ extensively. There are two probable reasons for this. Firstly, the popularity of this type of ending, even for tragedy, was becoming well-established. Although it was normal for comedy and pastoral to end happily, such an ending was not possible in French tragedy before the beginning of the seventeenth

century, and by 1640-50 it was losing its popularity again. During the intervening years, however, when the happy ending was very fashionable, it became a major feature and accounted to some extent for the flourishing of tragi-comedy during the same period. Scherer[15] explains how dramatists would experiment with a variety of different endings, and that by "public request" the most popular format was the "noeud" full of potentially tragic events, followed by a last minute change to good fortune to contrast with this. The biggest impact on an audience was made by having them think the protagonist dead, and then miraculously bringing him back to life in the last scene (see, for example, Cléagénor et Doristée). Rotrou explores a variety of different methods for creating this suspence and tension throughout the main body of the play, and equally a variety of different ways of releasing the tension in the dénouement. The second reason for adopting the happy ending is that the stark contrasts embodied in tragic threat and happy outcome are directly in line with Rotrou's over-riding principle of using contrast whenever possible, for maximum effect - whether this be dramatic, aesthetic or thematic, (see Chapter 4). Thus as well as satisfying public demand, Rotrou is creating a certain aesthetic balance and symmetry in his work. The scale pan weighed down with tragic crises throughout so much of the play is finally counterbalanced by another filled with good fortune and hope.

It is not enough, however, to describe the dénouements as just happy endings. It is important to include the idea of marriage. Nearly every play ends with one, two or more marriages which help to create an air of general festivity as well as good fortune. A.A.Parker draws attention to this nuptial compulsion in Spanish Golden Age drama, and claims that its importance lies in the symbolising of social order and stability.[16] That the characters, dogged by ill-fortune and beset by

obstacles to their love, should finally be united in marriage, marks a return to the social norm and a reaffirmation of all the old social values which had become confused and questioned during the course of the play. Similarly in Rotrou, the return to order, security and happiness which is marked by the dénouement, is symbolised by marriage - and sometimes by "mass marriage". (La Diane ends with four prospective weddings, L'Heureuse Constance with three.) It could be supposed that underlying Christian values account for the symbolic nature of such dénouements - the Christian sanctity of marriage itself symbolising a holy and blessed union in the perfect society of Christ - and that Rotrou saw in this device a means of expressing a fundamental religious tenet (see Nelson[17] on "chaste désir"). Whether or not Rotrou intended specifically Christian overtones to be found in his dénouements is a matter for conjecture. What is certain is that they all belong to the readily identifiable tradition of "once upon a time" which ends predictably with a "happy ever after", where boy marries girl or prince marries princess (always notably after a catastrophic series of events which threaten the romance). Once again we see Rotrou adhering to the age old traditions of fairystory, and dramatising a basic format which would appeal directly to the imagination and the heart of his audience.

The convention of the happy ending seems to have been accompanied by a tendency to collect together the entire cast during the course of the final act for a last-scene gathering of all characters (possibly excepting minor, non-speaking parts such as servants and guards). Scherer[18] (and long before him Corneille in the third Discours[19]) comment on the popularity of this relatively new dramatic feature, and we see Rotrou exploiting the several variations which developed. Often in the final scene, most of the cast will exit at the end, leaving one or two

characters on stage for the last word. This generally signifies a moment of reflectiveness or sadness, the lonely character being the only one not to have been blessed in the general good fortune. In La Diane, Sylvian decides to drown his sorrows in wine (Act V sc10); in Cléagénor et Doristée, Diane is left alone at the end, the only person not to have been blessed by love (Act V sc7); at the end of L'Heureuse Constance, Act V sc4, Argant and Ogier reflect on the unfairness of life which seems to favour the highborn and omit the lowly from the pleasures of life:

"Mon trône est à bas, et je ne suis plus rien."

While acknowledging public enthusiasm for this particular form of ending, Rotrou introduces a note of true-to-life observation into the fairytale happiness by occasionally closing his plays with examples of sadness, loneliness or unjustifiable exclusion from the bounties of Providence. Possibly this would bring the audience back sharply to "reality" and the mediocrity of life to which they must return after their brief sojourn in the land of make-believe.

(e) The dominant heroine.

Perside in L'Hypocondriaque dresses up as a man and sets off to find Cloridan. She is not the typical shy, retiring maiden, but a dominant and purposeful figure, the means by which Cloridan recovers his sanity and the other characters recover their happiness. Doristée (Cléagénor et Doristée) and Diane (La Diane) are similarly purposeful females, instigating and directing the main action of their plays, manipulating the other characters, dealing out happiness and reprimand, and generally dominating all things. Interestingly, it often happens that the title of a play bears the name of its ruling female (the two mentioned above, and also: Laure Persécutée, La Belle Alphrède, La Pèlerine Amoureuse etc). The figure clearly has its origins in Garnier's Bradamante,[20] the first

warrior-heroine who set the stage for Rotrou's many females disguised as males, willing to abandon their feminine role and fight for their love. (Rotrou acknowledges Garnier in Act IV sc8 of Les Deux Pucelles).

Rotrou's dominant heroine asks no-one's permission for ruling the lives and destinies of her fellows and makes no apology for doing so. Equally, no-one ever complains about it. Her natural supremacy is tacitly accepted, and although her male victim may do his best to thwart her schemes, he never questions her self-appointed "sovereignty". Even "sovereignty" is an inadequate term. Laure (Laure Persécutée) is referred to as "ce chef d'oeuvre immortel"; Hélène (Les Occasions Perdues) is described as "la céleste beauté"; Doristée (Cléagénor et Doristée) is "ce jeune astre" - and so forth. The divination of the beloved may seem a natural lover's tendency or a typical poetic epithet, but in these plays it is important to notice that the divine, or other-wordly, or supernatural essence of the heroine is markedly stressed. Laure is always no less than "ce jeune soleil", "l'achèvement de toutes les merveilles", "cet astre d'amour ". Even when scorned by the king, she becomes not simply an evil woman but other-wordly, a siren who lures man's soul to perdition (Act I sc5). The supernatural attributes are continually repeated, encouraging in us the idea that perhaps there is something special about Laure. They serve to reinforce her words and deeds, and help build up a figure who is truly larger-than-life.

In accordance with the divination of these women by their male admirers, it is significant that, while asking no human's permission for their actions, they do appeal to the gods for both help and sanction. Since their schemes always succeed, we are left very much with the impression that their prayers were heard and answered. In this sense, then, they seem to be in league with cosmic forces directing mortal

affairs. They are the earthly ministers of the divine powers that be. From this it may be concluded that the larger-than-life heroine is a female counterpart of the male magician, so popular a feature in Pre-Classical drama and occasionally used by Rotrou (Alcandre in La Bague de l'Oubli, for example). To the audience her magical powers to direct the action and cause all to end happily make her a kind of "fairy god-mother", a readily identifiable symbol of the power of good. She is thus an alternative manifestation of magic and the marvellous, intervening in human affairs in a way analogous to Alphonse's magic ring or the blood of the monster Nessus - i.e. as a vehicle for the revelation of truth and the furtherance of some divine plan.

Described in this way, the fairytale heroine does not seem in the least human. There is no three-dimensional characterisation imbued with psychological reality, no study of complex inner motivation. Also the events with which she is associated are often invraisemblable. To some extent these factors encourage us to see Rotrou as a "dramaturge baroque"[21] who sacrifices psychological reality for the demands of plot and action. Indeed, these larger-than-life females are mainly responsible for the action of their plays, and are associated with bizarre and fascinating plots. Many of the definitions offered for Baroque drama seem to apply to Rotrou: the use of disguise, masks, madness, illusion etc,[22] and the magical female seems to correspond directly with Rousset's ideas on Circe, the goddess of metamorphosis and change, who features in late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century drama and ballet.

On closer examination, however, the Baroque ~~solution~~ interpretation becomes increasingly less adequate, especially in the case of the central females. Although in some ways these women do seem to be symbolic, and more like emblematic

constructs than flesh-and-blood females, there are other ways in which they are shown to be as human and as flawed with human faults as their associates. On one level of interpretation they are special and set apart, seeming to exist on a different plane, but on another level they are like everyone else, suffering the same miseries, frustrations and joys. Thus in the former context, the audience is unable to identify with a character like Diane, for she is emblematically significant rather than realistically credible. Her first appearance on stage sets her apart. Act I scl of La Diane sees her invoking the god of love to sanction her schemes:

> "Divertissons, Amour, ce fatal hymenée:
> Accorde ta faveur au dessein que je fais,
> Et ne t'offense pas de tes propres effets".

The entire opening monologue elevates sexual jealousy to the level of divine retribution for a cosmic crime, and Diane speaks as if in intimate league with the gods. However, in contrast to this, she also operates on a completely human level, closely involved with the action on stage and making her fair share of human errors. At this level the audience can more readily understand her, and Rotrou encourages in them a sympathetic identification with Diane through extensive use of dramatic irony whereby they are her sole confident and "accomplice". Use of the verbal "équivoque", multiple ironies, quiet asides, short but frequent monologues all foster a special relationship between Diane and the audience which apparently belies her aloof, symbolic value as divine instrument. A similar paradox may be seen in the case of Doristée, Laure, Alphrède, and all these larger-than-life heroines.

In Rotrou we see the use of a multi-purpose, multi-functional character, generally female, who is all things to all people, and who is capable of being interpreted with whatever degree of subtlety is desired. Thus Laure can, at one and the same time, be the divine being who sets all

things right, an unhappy woman, an object of the king's lust, a male courtier, etc. It may not be too imaginative to suggest here that in this respect Rotrou shows a very modern approach to drama, conceptually ahead of his time. The multi-purpose figure is reminiscent of some twentieth-century approaches to character - or rather the dissolution of character - which permit the spectator (or reader, in the case of novels), to make what he will of the creation presented, freed from the restraints of precise delineation. The same ambiguous delineation is given to Rotrou's multi-purpose characters. The audience see each of Doristée's associates reacting to her as a different person, and are to a certain extent free themselves to interpret her in the light of their own understanding.

Nevertheless, whatever subtleties of interpretation are involved, the basic issue comes down to the paradoxical split between human and divine. On the one hand Laure is an ephemeral fairytale being, and on the other a flesh and blood woman. Here again we have another example of Rotrou taking a simple and ever-popular folk image and adding to it an extra dimension of moral awareness which produces a didactic effect. The folk image is the young woman with magic powers, the fairy who waves her magic wand and all is well. Moral awareness, however, is seated firmly in the realm of mortal activity, and it is therefore necessary to ensure that the larger-than-life female is also a human being who may be seen to undergo some morally educative process. Diane directs and corrects in a magical way, but is a flesh and blood human to the extent of having to undergo the same learning process as her fellows in order to humble her pride and teach her true self-knowledge. In Act V sc8 we see her in tears, repentant and humbled and made small before those she loves. By Act V sc10 she has risen again to the level of the fairy queen who metes out to each person their share of happiness.

In the section on magic (2.2b), responsibility was the important moral consideration concomitant with the use of supernatural powers for personal gain. The dominant heroine, however divinely inspired, could be seen as the embodiment of supreme egoism, but Rotrou accompanies the use of this device with the notion of Christian humility and lowliness. The egoists, whether male or female, are always seen to undergo a painful learning process which humbles their pride. The fairytale material is used as a direct means of stimulating the audience's interest, and thereby, their willing imaginative involvement. The moral dimension is incorporated to add depth and significance at the human level.

(f) Discovered Parentage.

Although the use of this particular device is not so widespread as some others, it may be seen as another example of Rotrou's preference for building his drama from fairytale elements. Diane, the simple country girl, suddenly discovers (Act V scl0) that she is of noble birth, but was secreted away as a baby to be reared in safety by an old cottager. Similarly, in Laure Persécutée, Act V sc9, the secret is revealed that Laure is really a high born princess and not a humble country girl.

Discovered parentage may readily be seen to fulfill the same dramatic functions as the other devices so far examined. As well as appealing directly to the audience, it is a major element in any "happy ever after" ending, as it assures not merely a happy but an ideal outcome. It is the ultimate in happy endings, with the most lowly character suddenly promoted to the top of the social hierarcy, and transformed from peasant to princess in a flash. Also, on the thematic level, the sudden discovery that one is not the person one had believed oneself to be for a lifetime, shows Providence itself to be capable of

manufacturing illusions which are accepted as truths. Individual characters may consciously adopt a disguise - Cléagénor dresses up as a robber - and succeed in fooling a limited number of people for a short time only. Providence, however, is capable of deluding a person without his knowing it and capable of maintaining the illusion before everyone until such time as it is expedient for truth to be revealed. This forms an exaggerated example of the simpler workings of illusion embodied in temporal disguise and, furthermore, is one occasion when the audience is not made a party to the trick. By fooling the audience as well as the characters on stage, it emphasises the need for caution in life when making absolute judgements. The surprise impact on an audience of such an unexpected "coup de théâtre" shocks them into an awareness that nothing need necessarily be the way it seems, and extends the dramatic fiction into everyday life. As always, the fairytale romance is moulded to illustrate the paradoxes and problems of the here and now.

The revelation of someone's true birthright is not always left to the last moment (although this has the greatest dramatic impact). In La Belle Alphrède, for example, the discovery of Alphrède's true father is made as early as Act II. Obviously this cannot be said to add to the effect of the dénouement in any way. Like the other "péripéties" in this play, discovered parentage is a concrete dramatisation of the paradoxes of Providence. On the one hand Providence smiles on Alphrède and restores to her a lost father and brother, and on the other hand it leaves her pregnant and unmarried, deserted by her unfaithful lover. It seems impossible for Alphrède to reconcile the contradictions of this simultaneous benevolence and cruelty. The fact that all ends happily, and that Alphrède is eventually reconciled to her lover, is an indication that the paradoxes were only apparent paradoxes, or, in other

words, illusions created by her imperfect understanding of the workings of fate.

> "Que les décrets des dieux passent de loin nos sens,
> Et qu'à les pénétrer nos yeux sont impuissants."
> (Laure, Act V sc9)

Here, as well as at the end of a play, discovered parentage is closely related to thematic exposition and, on a more superficial level, with the exciting and eventful development of the action.

(g) Doubles.

In L'Hypocondriaque and La Bague de l'Oubli, a man in a state of confusion is shown as having two mutually exclusive personalities: in the case of Cloridan, madness and sanity; in the case of Alphonse, benevolence and tyranny. In Les Ménechmes the extreme attributes of virtue and lust, instead of conflicting in the one person, are divided between the twin brothers. However, their identical physical appearance underlines the fact that this is just a variation of the above situation - one physical appearance masking two inner states. The same problem is also found in Les Sosies, presented by means of yet another dramatic formula, the use of mistaken identity. To a lesser extent, and occupying a less prominent position, Rotrou uses these three variations of the doubles motifs very often. Many plays feature a character, confused and unsure of himself, reaching a crisis of identity where the one body seems to house two minds.

Preoccupation with the idea of a double, an "other" self, may be symptomatic of the times, with sensitive artists like Rotrou reacting against the reasoned self-sufficiency of Renaissance Man by emphasising humanity's dual nature, the body and the soul, and by giving exaggerated artistic expression to those vague and confused impressions of there being more to life than reason can explain. However appropriate the

motif may have been for the seventeenth century and its philosophical trends, man's dual nature has long been a source of wonder, and anthropological studies have revealed a world-wide tradition where the double features in myth, legend and religious taboos in both primitive and modern cultures. Otto Rank[23] has written a number of interesting studies which survey the occurrence and significance of the double in primitive anthropology, and trace its development in the literature of modern civilisations. He explains how, in the most primitive tribal communities, the idea of man as body and soul is very real. Far from being an abstract religious concept, primitive man believed that his other self was a coexistent being revealed as a shadow or image likeness, (as in water reflection etc). This separation of the spiritual side of man into a separate entity with the same physical appearance is the earliestand most basic manifestation of the doubles motif, and is common to primitive belief throughout the world. It is easy to see how various taboos which have persisted into modern times have their roots in this ancient folk belief. Breaking a mirror, for example, is believed to bring seven years bad luck, since it means in effect destroying one's own image, one's other self.

Although originally and in its purest form, the double was an identical self, a shadow or a reflection which signified man's spiritual and immortal being, eventually, through its migration into literary symbology, the double came to be an opposing self. The dichotomy generally conveyed the idea of good and evil, with the evil being somehow associated with mortal, animal man, and the good being man's higher, spiritual nature. The most direct literary expression of this is in the motif of twins, with one person being the opposite of the other. Ménechme Ravi in the play by Rotrou is characterised by a distinct lack of moral principles. He lusts after a virtuous widow, lies to his wife,

and expects other people to help him in his immoral exploits. His twin, Ménechme Sosicle, is the very paragon of virtue. He has spent selfless years devotedly seeking out his lost brother, is full of high-minded principles, and when in love is filled only with honourable thoughts and "chaste désir". The animal passions of the former are emphasised as much as is the spiritual devotion of the latter.

Rank discovers[24] three principle interpretations of the doubles theme in literature, and these are:

(i) two figures who confront each other as real and physical persons of unusual external similarity, usually twins (eg. Les Ménechmes),

(ii) representation, by one and the same person, of two distinct beings separated by amnesia (eg. Alphonse in La Bague de l'Oubli), and

(iii) an independent and secondary form of the ego, generally as a shadow or other unsubstantial entity (eg. the divine incarnations in Les Sosies).

These are found to be the three most common literary expressions of the idea of man's dual nature, no matter to what century one may turn. As may be seen from the suggested examples above in brackets, Rotrou makes use of all three. Equally, the characteristic treatments of this motif which Rank outlines are to be found in Rotrou. The double resembles the main character down to the smallest detail - a likeness "stolen from the mirror" - and always works at cross purposes with its prototype (Alphonse in La Bague de l'Oubli). Generally the catastrophe occurs in the relationship with a woman (Les Sosies) and sometimes this situation is combined with a thorough-going persecutory delusion. (It may be seen from these remarks that in many respects the doubles theme links up neatly with madness and the illusion/reality theme. It becomes very

difficult at times to separate many of these dramatic devices into discrete elements because they overlap so much. Rotrou seems to have chosen particularly those motifs which would blend together and act as alternative but closely related manifestations of his central thematic interests).

The doubles motif, in presenting an alternative self, is dealing with polarisations of character, and thus lends itself to exaggeration and consequently to humour. Rotrou exploits the polarisation of character as a source of ironic humour, and it is through ironic parallels and contrasts that he manipulates his presentation of the Ménechme twins. One of the major changes in Rotrou's version of the play is in the character of Ménechme Sosicle. The changes were probably instigated by the demands of bienséance (in order to refine this somewhat lusty character), but Rotrou turns this to his advantage and not only refines Ménechme Sosicle but pushes the character to the extremes of noble behaviour, making him utterly virtuous and thereby the complete opposite of his brother. It seems therefore as if bienséance, a temporal phenomenon, was instrumental in permitting Rotrou to incorporate another a-temporal folk motif into his drama, while at the same time observing the tastes and inclinations of his public to the full. The fashion for propriety does force a fundamental change in the nature of the comedy, from the frank, uninhibited bawdiness of the original to the quieter, more intellectual humour of ironic observation in Rotrou. It may be argued that the play loses something from such changes (which is probably a very twentieth-century notion), but nevertheless they are indicative of a similar change in French public taste in the seventeenth century which Rotrou was careful to observe.[25]

Temporal interpretations can be found to account for the appearance of

the doubles motif at any one particular time. In modern terms it is the dramatic enactment of schizophrenia; in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it underlined Freudian theories of the alter ego; perhaps in the seventeenth century, as we have suggested, it was symptomatic of a reaction against the newly emerging scientific man. But at root, the doubles motif is the continuing presence in literature of a symbol found in folk belief and legend everywhere, acknowledging the coexistence and interdependence of the physical and spiritual worlds. Considering Rotrou's extensive dramatic use of many other folklore motifs, we must conclude that his use of the double is in accordance with his general principle of using folk material as the building blocks of his drama, and that it should be seen in this light, rather than as an isolated vehicle for a specifically seventeenth-century protest. All the folk devices that Rotrou uses link his drama to a timeless and universalising tradition which has its roots in the attempts of primitive man to come to terms with himself and his relationship to the Cosmos.

(h) Corrupt Sovereignty.

The tendency of power to corrupt those individuals in positions of influence and authority is a problem diversely represented in the works of Rotrou. In later plays like Cosroès it is handled directly and explicitly (see Chapter 5), but in the earlier ones it is veiled in heavy symbolism and exposed as a problem only in terms of love or sexual attraction. The corruption, the abuse of power, is translated into sexual obsession (La Bague de l'Oubli) which causes the sufferer to act solely according to selfish motives and to pursue, regardless of moral considerations, any course of action which will lead to the furtherance of his sexual ambition. Certainly, the ideas of sovereignty, power and social justice are of topical interest in any century, and

Rotrou can be seen making contemporary allusions to the problem. In Les Occasions Perdues, Act I sc2, Clorimand scorns the influence wielded by hypocrites and flatterers at court who always misrepresent the truth:

> "Mille jaloux ont lu dans nos intentions,
> Et de fausses couleurs ont peint nos passions.
> Cette peste de gens toutes les cours infecte."

However, these are minor comments in the context of the play as a whole. In general in the early plays Rotrou avoids making topical issues the centre of interest, but confines them to the level of occasional observation. In this way they satisfy a certain public curiosity to have current concerns aired on stage, but in no way intrude upon the main issues of the play, whose focus is away from the topical and temporal towards the timeless and universal.

It is through dealing with the problem of abuse of power in terms of sexual obsession that Rotrou achieves this timeless quality. Although the love-lorn character is generally someone in a position of power (a king), and thus evokes strongly the idea of absolute power corrupting absolutely, Rotrou elevates the problem from the specific issue of how to govern a country to the universal one of how to govern oneself. Not many people become kings, with power over the destiny of a nation, but most people experience love and are entrusted with the welfare of the loved one. The responsibilities implicit in this situation can be usefully highlighted by making the lover a king as well. Sovereignty is the ultimate symbol of power and responsibility. Corrupt sovereignty is the specific motif which concentrates the question of power over others and lends it dramatic impact; sexual desire for the opposite sex is the human truth which universalises it.

The image of the king in society gains dramatic impact not only from

contemporary observation of royalty, but more importantly, because it is evidence of the survival in literature of an ancient and widespread belief that the king, or ruler, held a special place in the great bond of nature. Being divinely and naturally appointed, he had a special relationship with the Cosmos, was endowed with mysterious powers of healing and was linked to everything in nature that kept its rightful place and order. Should the leader misuse his priviledged gift, not only would his people suffer, but it would be taken as a sign that nature herself was in chaos. The cosmic disorder could be remedied only by purifying its human representative. Thus from mythology we see that the king was not merely the arbitrary guardian of his people's welfare, he was their link with the forces of the universe, divinely appointed according to natural laws to act as their intercessor for peace and order in life. Although it is likely that such an idea originated amongst peoples whose leader was a specifically religious figure, it has been crystallised for centuries in myths and legends featuring a king (whether secular or religious) straying from the path, often where love is concerned, and needing the help of outside forces to restore his sense of what is right, both for his own sake and that of his people. (Frye[26] quotes the legend of Sakuntala from fifth-century India. Its kinship with La Bague de l'Oubli is evident). Again we see Rotrou choosing an ancient folk image as the most powerful vehicle for conveying his meaning simply and directly to the audience.

Associated with the image of the corrupt king is that of the ritual healing of the king. Because of the cosmic significance of such an act, it comes as no surprise to discover that it is generally performed by some supernatural agency. In La Bague de l'Oubli, the king is cured through the gradual effect of the magic ring; the king in Laure Persécutée is healed by the spiritual enlightenment and grace bestowed

by Laure in her capacity as divine instrument. Again we see that it is difficult, if not undesirable, to separate out the individual motifs which Rotrou employs. The appearance of any one particular motif can imply a number of others intrinsically interlinked with it. It is from a complex of such interwoven images that Rotrou builds up his drama.

2.3 CONCLUSIONS.

In this chapter we have attempted to establish that, throughout his early plays, Rotrou repeatedly used a number of simple folk motifs as the basic building-blocks of his drama. This conclusion has been reached by looking at a large number of plays belonging to the period c.1630-40 and regarding them collectively as representative of Rotrou's early dramatic technique. This approach shows conclusively not only the repeated use of such folk motifs throughout the early plays, but also the number and variety chosen to make up any one play.

We have further argued that Rotrou's seemingly deliberate and undeniably wide-spread use of folk images suggests a particular attitude towards drama: that it is essentially a ritual experience which involves the spectator in the stage action. The motifs, being thoroughly invraisemblable, act as a set of highly stylised and artificial conventions which force the spectator to abandon his reasoned sense of what is possible and to substitute for the logic of external reality the self-consistent universe being unfolded on stage. This involves more than the passive "suspension of disbelief". It requires active imaginative involvement in the dramatic fiction, and spontaneous acceptance of whatever rationally unlikely things may happen. To this extent, then, the spectator is involved in the play.

The motifs Rotrou uses undermine the spectator's critical faculties and encourage willing imaginative participation in the creation of a world of fantasy and make-believe.

That the motifs should have this effect is explained by the existence of basic beliefs in mythology and folklore which, with the passage of time, have been perpetuated in the themes of fairytale and legend told to children the world over. Rotrou is exploiting this popular tradition by using the same motifs in his drama. His device of discovered parentage, for example, would be familiar to the audience as an echo from childhood, and would thereby encourage in the sophisticated adult spectator the same unquestioning delight and enthusiasm as are found in the responses of a child. One of the important functions of the folk motifs is thus to reawaken the spirit of childhood and regenerate the uncomplicated imaginative faith associated with it.

Whilst it must be remembered that most of these early plays were written when Rotrou was a "poète à gages", responsible for entertaining Paris and keeping an acting troupe in work, it should not be assumed as a result that he merely wrote anything that would "do the job", without having some kind of underlying concept of the function and purpose of drama. These two aspects of the dramatist, one might call them "public" and "private", must to some extent be reflected in his work. Understanding the central importance of Rotrou's use of folk motifs is the key to this. The devices are the means by which Rotrou can satisfy the public without sacrificing his aims as a dramatist. We have pointed out several times in section 2.2 that a particular device has two functions: to involve the audience in the play, and to serve the play itself. Thus at the entertainment level, the motifs seek to draw the spectator into the fictional world enacted on stage and

encourage him to join in with the spirit of the play. But on the level of Rotrou's approach to his art, the devices are just as important. They link his drama to an ancient tradition which has timeless appeal and significance. With this in mind, it becomes clear why the unities of action, time and place are so rarely, if ever, observed in Rotrou's early work. One seldom gets the impression that he was just carelessly disinterested. On the contrary, the impression is one of deliberate avoidance of the unities in favour of exaggerated time and space. Thus the canvas represents anywhere, anytime, and the themes are universal. Rotrou draws away from everything that is local or specialised in the drama of his day, and works towards uncovering a primeval dramatic structure that practically any human audience could respond to. The motifs are the language of this primitive drama. Simple and direct, they crystallise basic problems of "la condition humaine" in powerful images buried deep into the subconscious of all peoples.

Having looked at Rotrou's overall attitude towards drama and the dramatic experience as exemplified in the use of folk images, it is logical to consider next his approach to the technical problems of the stage. In speaking of Rotrou's "dramatic technique", the implication is that there is something about drama which requires special techniques and which sets it apart from other literary forms. In essence, this is the addition of a dynamic visual dimension which permits the spectator to watch apparently independent characters on stage, moving about, acting and reacting in a three-dimensional, self-consistent world. The next chapter will examine Rotrou's awareness of the visual dimension and assess his creative use of it.

NOTES.

1. Possible exceptions to this are Florimonde (identity of Tirsis) and La Diane (identity of Damon). Here Rotrou chooses to "turn the tables" on his audience by fooling them with an illusion of which they have had no warning, (cf. Corneille's technique in L'Illusion Comique) thus extending the dramatic technique of illusion beyond the play to embrace the audience as well.

2. See for example J.D.Hubert, 'Le réel et l'illusoire dans le théâtre de Corneille et dans celui de Rotrou' (Revue des Sciences Humaines, XCV 1958, pages 333-350) where Rotrou's preoccupation with the themes of illusion and reality is discussed.

3. Jacques Scherer, La Dramaturgie Classique en France, Librairie Nizet, Paris 1951, pages 160-165.

4. See for example Raymond Lebègue, 'Le merveilleux magique en France dans le théâtre baroque' (Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre, Vol.15, 1963), and Bronislaw Malinowski, Magic, Science and Religion, Anchor Books, 1954, - the significance of belief in the supernatural and the survival of this belief into modern cultures are discussed.

5. Scherer, ibid., page 163.

6. D.A.Watts, in the introduction to his "édition critique" of Rotrou's Hercule Mourant, Univ. of Exeter, 1971, page XVII.

7. Both Henri Chardon (La Vie de Rotrou mieux connue, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1970) and Léonce Curnier (Etude sur Jean Rotrou, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1971) make it clear that very little is known about Rotrou's religious beliefs or habits, apart from the fact that he seemed to become very devout towards the end of his life, praying for long periods each day.

8. Watts, ibid., page XXII.

9. Jules Jarry, Essai sur Les Oeuvres Dramatiques de Jean Rotrou, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1970, page 49.

10. Michel Foucault, Folie et Déraison, Librairie Plon, Paris 1961, page 45.

11. Foucault, ibid., page 17.

12. Foucault, ibid., page 49.

13. Opinions on this subject seem to differ considerably. H.C.Knutson (The Ironic Game: A Study of Rotrou's Comic Theatre, Univ. of California Press, 1966) succeeds in classifying about twenty of the plays (over half the total dramatic output) as comedies, - see page 19. Jacques Morel, in Jean Rotrou: Dramaturge de l'Ambiguité (Librairie Armand Colin, 1968), disagrees with Rotrou's grouping of the plays and devises his own, laying stress on the pastoral genre - see page 137.

14. The study by Valleabad into the influence of Rojas and Lope de Vega upon the theatre of Rotrou, traces in great detail the extent to which Rotrou "borrowed" from the two Spanish dramatists - cf. F.del Valleabad, Influencia Española en la Literatura Francesa, Juan Rotrou, Avila, 1946.

15. Scherer, ibid., page 139.

16. A.A.Parker, Approach to the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age, The Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Councils (Diamante VI) 1957, page 14.

17. R.J.Nelson, Immanence and Transcendence: The Theatre of Jean Rotrou, Ohio State Univ. Press, 1969, pages 47-52.

18. Scherer, ibid., page 141.

19. Pierre Corneille, Oeuvres Complètes, (Lebègue) éditions du Seuil, 1963, page 843.

20. Garnier's Bradamante, 1582, taken from Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, has often been called the first French tragi-comedy. The heroine is a redoubtable swordswoman who is expected to fight for a husband. The masculinity implicit in sword-fighting introduced, in the person of Bradamante, a new kind of dramatic heroine who displayed both male and female characteristics.

21. Raymond Lebègue, 'Rotrou, Dramaturge Baroque' (Revue d'Histoire Littéraire en France, 1950, pages 379-384).

22. Jean Rousset, La Littérature de l'Age Baroque en France, Librairie José Corti, 1954, pages 181-183.

23. See for example, Otto Rank, The Double: A Psychoanalytical Study, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1971, and Don Juan: Une Etude sur le Double, Paris 1932, and the article 'The Double as Immortal Self' in Beyond Psychology, Dover Publications, pages 62-101.

24. Rank, The Double: A Psychoanalytical Study, passim.

25. Corneille for example speaks of "la nouveauté de ce genre de comédie" (in the 'Examen de Mélite', Oeuvres Complètes, page 28) and Knutson, in The Ironic Game, page 7, states that "a halo of courtly dignity now surrounds the principals of literary comedy".

26. Northrop Frye, A Natural Perspective, Columbia Univ. Press, 1965, pages 58-59.

3. VISUAL TECHNIQUES.

At the risk of stating the obvious, we must emphasise here the significance for the theatre of the dynamic visual dimension which expresses human nature in terms of movement, gesture and expression. The power of the theatre lies predominantly in its ability to communicate silently by means of all that may appeal to the eye. By striking the right aesthetic balance between aural and visual techniques, the dramatist has fine control over his interpretative presentation of humanity. Expansive physical movements and violent gesticulation may tend towards farce and comedy; inhibited movement, on the other hand, coupled with monologue or lengthy dialogue may suggest seriousness and thought; sudden sharp movements and inhibited dialogue create an atmosphere of tension. Manipulating the relationship between the aural and visual dimensions in this way is an essential aspect of dramatic technique, and requires a considerable creative theatrical imagination.

This chapter is concerned with discovering, from the early plays, Rotrou's awareness of the visual medium in drama. In the dramatic tradition of which he was the immediate inheritor, one finds an excess of monologues, lyricism and repetitions, but very little meaningful action. On stage, the plays of "la dramaturgie archaïque" were largely static and simplistic, lacking in sustained dramatic interest. They were clearly "poèmes dramatiques" in the primitive acceptation of the term, rather than plays written with the stage in mind. Where action did occur, it was likely to be vulgar and only loosely related to the play on stage. Lebègue quotes an example of a sixteenth century play during the course of which:

"un acteur en costume du diable se précipita sur une femme

qui lui devait de l'argent".[1]

Rotrou inherited a fundamentally literary dramatic legacy, with action, gesture and visual interpretation occuring sporadically and without systematic purpose in the context of the play. As Scherer remarks:

"La dramaturgie archaïque est plus littéraire que théâtrale".[2]

Rotrou, however, as we hope to show, did possess the much needed stage awareness and practical approach, writing even his very earliest work with the visual potential of the stage in mind. He shows in a number of plays a very clear appreciation of the power of symbolic gesture to affect the audience and create an atmosphere conducive to acceptance of the imagined situation.

Being historically in the position of a theatrical innovator, Rotrou could choose to experiment with the visual scope of a play, and almost through a process of trial and error could expand and develop his visual technique. As a result, two plays written probably in the same year show quite different approaches to the stage. For example, L'Hypocondriaque and La Bague de l'Oubli, c.1628, are the first two to show the contrast between aural and visual. L'Hypocondriaque is full of lengthy monologues and récits, and could be very dull in performance with little to keep the play alive. La Bague de l'Oubli, on the other hand, makes extensive use of the visual dimension, so much so that much of the significance of the play is interpreted visually and the words are not always necessary. There is always plenty of action on stage to hold the audience's attention, and the use of gesture is deliberate and systematic so as to enhance the overall effect of the play. The contrast between these two is characteristic of all the early plays, and is suggestive of the young artist striving towards greater perfection by means of experimenting with techniques

and formal relationships. This in itself suggests that Rotrou was very conscious of dramatic technique and the special potentialities of the theatrical medium.

Throughout the early plays, there emerges a pattern in Rotrou's use of the visual medium which serves as a basis both for further understanding his approach to drama, and for understanding the particular creative way in which he was employing visual effects. There are four ways in which the plays appeal to the eye:

1. through décor,
2. through gesture and movement,
3. through appearance and expression, and
4. through the spectacular and the "merveilleux".

We shall look at each of these in turn to see what use Rotrou makes of them individually, and then consider all four together as indicative of the author's overall approach.

3.1 DECOR.

From the Mémoires of Mahelot[3] we know that Rotrou insisted upon a magnificent décor against which to unfold his drama. Mahelot kept extensive notes of the sets he arranged at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and those for plays by Rotrou were among the most elaborate and eye-catching. The set for Hercule Mourant was one of the most visually impressive that he ever had to design. We read in his notes for the play: "le theatre doit estre superbe".[4] Clearly Rotrou intended the stage décor to be a major attraction for his theatre-going public, and used it to attract and hold their attention. Even if the play flagged momentarily, there would always be something interesting on the stage to look at.

Rotrou seems to have had a highly coordinated and integrated approach to his work. We have already seen in Chapter 2 how the dramatic devices serve two functions; they are directly related to the internal structure of a play, and to the external effect of that play on the audience. Similarly Rotrou uses visual techniques in this two-fold manner, including the inanimate décor. As a result he achieves a certain dramatic economy, and, more importantly, he creates with each play an organic whole which includes the audience and audience reaction as an essential part of the total dramatic experience. The two functions of Rotrou's décor may be described as aesthetic (external) and dramatic (internal). Aesthetically the sets were decorative, imaginative and elaborate, constructed to catch the eye of the spectator and to conceal the bleakness of the stage. Their purpose was to make it easier to forget the confines of the stage and become more completely immersed in the dramatic universe.[5] As with the folk motifs, the décor aimed at capturing the audience's imagination, making them temporarily forget the real world for a brief excursion into a world of make-believe.

As regards the internal structure of a play, the décor is generally used symbolically to aid in the evocation of a mood or atmosphere. Often the mood is gloomy and suggestive of tragedy and pathos. In the Pre-Classical period there sprang up among the public a fashion for "le spectacle pathétique", a sort of morbid fascination with the blacker side of life as gruesomely depicted on stage - while the audience sat back in comfort and watched. Scherer quotes many instances of dramatists responding to the mood of the times and filling their drama with scenes of life in prison, death, murder and human suffering.

"Pour satisfaire ce sentiment et ce précepte, la mise en

scène va fournir plusieurs éléments de spectacle pathétique".[6] Rotrou was no exception, as may be seen especially in the very early plays. In L'Hypocondriaque, Act V sc6, Mahelot notes the need for: "une chambre funèbre avec trois tombeaux et quantité de lumières ardentes".[7] Similarly in La Bague de l'Oubli there is "un échafaud tendu de noir".[8] In Act III scl of La Belle Alphrède we see "une prison" with Rodolphe and Cléandre "les fers aux mains". Thus the scenery and properties are visual aids to the creation of the mood of the scene in progress. Rodolphe's misery is accentuated for the audience by letting them see his manacled hands and the enclosing walls of a prison.

Rotrou's scenery is not only used to enhance a mood. Often it is used to suggest something other than is directly apparent. In this role, it is capable of generating an interplay of subtleties which enrich the meaning of the scene and ultimately of the play. Rodolphe's prison is a symbol of justice and a just society which punishes its criminal offenders. But in this symbolic place of justice, Rodolphe bemoans the cruelty and injustice of fate. Thus the scenery is an idealistic backcloth against which are set in play the ironies of reality. The symbolic role of the scenery in Rotrou's plays is often highly ironic. Nature and natural scenes carry veiled implications whilst superficially evoking a pleasant pastoral atmosphere. The forest is widely used in Rotrou - Cléagénor et Doristée, La Belle Alphrède, Les Occasions Perdues, La Célimène, La Céliane, etc. In addition to its direct representational function, it conjures up images of secrecy, ambiguity, darkness and falsehood. Although the symbolism may seem naive in twentieth-century terms, it does denote a positive attempt on Rotrou's behalf to use scenery constructively and dramatically to create shades of meaning. The symbolic significance

of the scenery would be received mainly subliminally by the audience and would to some extent affect their interpretation of the scene and colour their understanding of the play.

It is interesting to note the wide variety of scenic effects likely to occur in any one play. The early works show little evidence of any of the three unities, but unity of place is the most conspicuously absent. In L'Heureuse Constance we are informed: "la scène se passe tantôt en Hongrie, tantôt en Dalmatie", and in La Belle Alphrède there are at least three different locations: "une prison", "un bois près de Londres" and "sur le bord de la mer". Very often no specific locations are mentioned at all. Rather, a variety of undefined places conveys an impression of anywhere, anytime. The changes of scenery needed to accommodate more than one locality were handled, when Rotrou was at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, by using "décor simultané". This was a kind of multi-purpose scenery, the use of which lasted well into the seventeenth century, with several locations represented by different compartments on stage, each covered by a small curtain which could be drawn back when the location was needed.

The major theoretical objection to "décor simultané" was that it was blatantly incompatible with the classical principle of rational vraisemblance, and "mettait Paris, Rome et Constantinople sur le même théâtre".[9] In terms of strict logic, of course, the objection is well founded. Unfortunately, it carries with it the implicit assumption that the theatre should imitate strict causal reality as veristically as possible. Not only should one action occur fixedly in one place, but its duration should also be equal to real time. Such was the unimaginative attitude of d'Aubignac, for example. However, it is clear that very few writers put theory into practice, especially in

the first half of the seventeenth century, with unity of place being the last theatrical doctrine to be observed, even partially. It seems that neither the public nor the playwrights were totally convinced of its value or necessity. It certainly did result in town, country, prison and palace all being found within a few feet of each other on one small stage. This was clearly unrealistic. But, far from disturbing the audience's innate sense of logic, "décor simultané" was so blatantly invraisemblable that it delighted the audience's imagination and, tacitly accepted as a convention, encouraged them to indulge even more whole-heartedly in fantasy. That d'Aubignace may have lacked imagination does not mean that all his contemporaries were equally debilitated. The concept of "décor simultané" was rooted in the assumption that spectators were endowed with vigorous imaginative powers, and it was these that Rotrou was especially concerned to stimulate. In this respect, "décor simultané" was more of a help than a hindrance to Rotrou's overall dramatic aims.

If a criticism is to be levelled against the wide variety of localities found in Rotrou's plays, it cannot therefore be on the grounds of vraisemblance. But it could be on the grounds of over-crowding. Plays with "dualité de lieux" could presumably be quite easily accommodated in "décor simultané", with only two different compartments on stage, whereas for plays with three, four or more different localities, the stage would have to be divided up into a larger number of smaller compartments all jostling each other. As a result, the acting area being used at any one time might be very small, cramping the actors' movements, making action very restricted, and leaving large portions of the stage unused. Perhaps for such practical reasons Rotrou gradually used less diversified localities, and in his later plays (cf. Chapter 6) he adopted the same kind of modified approach as

Corneille:[10]

> "J'accorderais très volontiers que ce qu'on ferait passer en une seule ville aurait l'unité de lieu".

A generalised large set would represent, for example, part of a palace (eg. Don Bernard de Cabrère) with compartments representing various rooms of the same palace where different scenes would take place.

In the early plays, however, diversity of location is the rule. Despite the practical difficulties this presented on stage, it is possible to see why Rotrou favoured such a large number of widely diverse localities in one play. In Chapter 2 we have argued that Rotrou seems to have deliberately avoided specific times and places in order to give a sense of timelessness to his drama. The multiplicity of localities that he uses also achieves this universalising effect. Sarrasin, in his Discours de la Tragédie, sums this up exactly when speaking of certain early seventeenth-century writers:[11]

> "Leurs lyres, aussi bien que celles d'Orphée et d'Amphion, eurent le privilège de bâtir des villes et de faire suivre des rochers et des forêts, et leur théâtre fut comme ces cartes de géographie qui dans leur petitesse représentent néanmoins toute l'étendue de la terre".

Rotrou's décor evokes a sense of infinite space - "toute l'étendue de la terre" - against which are enacted the timeless themes of life, archetypal human situations crystallised in universal folk motifs.

3.2 GESTURE AND MOVEMENT.

The most significant evidence that Rotrou wrote with the stage in mind is to be found in his systematic use of gesture and movement. He attempts to coordinate actions with words, and uses the former as an extra dimension through which to express his meaning. In keeping with the concept of drama as an artificial, symbolic medium where fantasy

and imagination reign supreme, movement and gesture in the early plays are always used in a highly stylised and exaggerated fashion, and are not what today we would recognise as realistic. Gestures tend to be very basic and symbolic - kneeling to beg for mercy, crying, praying, embracing - and action too is often of an equally fundamental nature, like fighting for self-preservation and dancing to express happiness. With these exaggerated, larger-than-life movements, it becomes possible to express human feelings and situations in a very powerful way.

Since this section of Chapter 3 covers a number of ideas which could all be contained under the general heading of "movement", we shall break it down into three principle sub-sections: Gesture, Properties, and Activity, each of which will be examined in detail.

(1) Gesture.

By gesture is meant a small but significant movement made by a part of the body in a fairly confined space. There are many examples of Rotrou's use of stylised gesture. He develops a "set piece", perhaps for as long as an entire scene, and loads the symbolic gestures with so much significance that they, rather than the spoken word, bear the full weight of the scene. In addition, this shift from words to gestures is paralleled by a shift in the dramatic focus, from the particular happenings of X and Y to a generalised view of X and Y as two pieces in a human jigsaw of meaning which the play is attempting, at one level, to explore. The two examples we shall consider here in detail are from La Bague de l'Oubli, Act II sc6, and Hercule Mourant, Act V sc3. They show a cultivation of the art of the visual which is close to mime, and are strong evidence that Rotrou's

plays, from the very earliest onwards, were dramatically and dynamically conceived.

Léandre in La Bague de l'Oubli wishes to marry Léonor, sister to King Alphonse, a harsh and hypocritical monarch. He refuses to allow his sister to marry a commoner like Léandre whilst having indiscriminate affairs himself. His current passion for Liliane drives him to corruption and injustice and nearly to murder. In desperation, Léandre goes to seek the aid of a magician who gives him a magic ring with special powers over its wearer, promising that this should help the situation. Léandre must substitute this ring for the one which the king normally wears, and the time to do so is when the king washes and naturally removes his jewellry. Act II sc6 is the substitution scene. The shift from verbal to visual mentioned above is very marked here. The first half of the scene is completely static, with Alphonse revealing his harshness again in a brief conversation with Fabrice. The dialogue conveys a certain ammount of factual information and provides further confirmation of the king's tyranny. The dramatic focus is at its most superficial level, directed at the specific political manoeuvres of Alphonse to secure his liaison with Liliane, and all the information content of this half of the scene is conveyed solely through the spoken word.

At the end of his conversation with Fabrice, the King commands: "Qu'on apporte à laver". This marks the transition into the second half of the scene. There is a sudden proliferation of stage directions in the text giving precise details of the movements Rotrou desired. The king removes his ring and begins washing; "lavant, ayant mis l'anneau sur le bassin". Léandre takes the ring and substitutes the magic one which the king replaces on his finger; "Léandre, prenant l'anneau; Léandre,

lui ayant rendu l'anneau enchanté". Within seconds the magic begins to work and the king is seen, head in hands, suffering its effects; "Le roi, s'appuyant sur le bras". Symbolically, the movements are the mime of a religious ceremony - the relinquishing of old ways, ritual cleansing, the putting on of fresh hope, and baptism into a new life. One imagines that the definitive gestures would be performed very slowly and deliberately to emphasise the ritualistic mood of the scene, and to transpose the action from the level of every day life to a higher level of mystic significance. Each individual action is accompanied by a short four-lined stanza of octosyllabics which breaks up the gestures and creates a time-span between them. This time-span allows for the movements to be slow and ceremonious, and the quatrains serve as intoned background incantations which enrich the mystical atmosphere.

Words like "mystical" and "ritual significance" are used here deliberately, since we wish to avoid any specifically Christian overtones. The atmosphere evoked in this scene is the primal religious experience, the attuning of the human spirit to the mystic workings of the Numen. There is no exclusively Catholic or even Christian doctrine being propounded. Rotrou is again avoiding the specific and localised in an attempt to dramatise the universally significant. The supernatural experience which Alphonse undergoes is close to primitive tribal magic which uses ritual acts to "tune in" to unseen cosmic forces. The use of the quatrain gives us a clue to this. Léandre picks up and repeats the king's words, changing them only slightly to refer to the ring, so that the almost word for word repetition increases the incantatory effect and acts as a verbal "doppelgänger", with the slight differences sounding ominous and magical. It is as if Léandre is infusing Alphonse's symbolic acts with the power of a magic spell:

Le Roi

"Je tiens cet objet précieux,
Je ne répandrai plus de larmes,
Et, malgré tous mes envieux,
Je serai maître de ses charmes".

"cet objet" and "ses charmes" here refer to Liliane, but ironically suggest the ring.

Léandre

"Il tient cet anneau précieux,
Je ne répandrai plus de larmes,
Et, malgré tous mes envieux,
Je serai maître par ses charmes".

"ses charmes" here refers specifically to the ring.

Although the quatrains are important to the scene, its meaning is conveyed quite clearly through the stylised gestures, and the words are of secondary and background interest. The second half of this scene is primarily a mime, with the words intoning behind the action to create an atmosphere. The dramatic focus is on the human problem of interacting with the supernatural, in contrast with the very specific focus in the first half of the scene, on the problems of one man. Act II sc6 of La Bague de l'Oubli is an excellent early example of the deliberate and systematic use of visual techniques not only to express but to add to the meaning of a play by introducing a new level of significance on which to interpret it. Scene 6 is also very important in the context of the whole play, since from that scene onwards the presence or absence of the ring on Alphonse's finger signifies his old or new self. Throughout the play, Rotrou maintains the strong visual importance of the ring, using it as a dramatic key to signify change.

The second detailed example is from Hercule Mourant, Act V sc3. Hercule has died from the poison inadvertently administered by Déjanire, but his cruel orders against Iole and her lover Arcas must still be carried out. Arcas must be executed with Iole present to watch his suffering. Scene 3 opens with Arcas being tied to his tomb ("on lie Arcas au tombeau") and Iole pleading for mercy. Philoctète

prepares to carry out the execution ("à genoux et prêt à tirer") but is prevented by Iole throwing herself upon him ("se jetant sur lui"). In her despair she tries to commit suicide ("tirant un poignard de son sein"), but the tragedies are averted by the return of the divinised Hercule to administer mercy and forgiveness, (sc4). Here again we have an example of the humanly significant acts in this scene being expressed through unmistakeable gestures, with the words filling in the background detail. For Philoctète, it is a ritual sacrifice to the orders of a dead ruler, and the nature and number of the stage directions make it clear that Rotrou wished to stress the idea of ritual sacrifice. Again Rotrou depicts a number of people going through humanly meaningful acts of universal significance, connected with life, death, murder, fear - and translates them into a kind of deliberate, stylised mime. The gestures, being so basic, would be easily understandable to the audience who would react more strongly to them than to the words, the latter being simply a repetition of previous sentiments and attitudes already amply expressed in earlier scenes. Thus the dramatic power of the scene, for the audience, lies in the creative use of visual techniques to express, silently, the human anguish.

Other examples could be quoted - eg. Hercule Mourant, Act II scl & 2, where scene 2 is a visual confirmation of scene 1; La Diane, Act IV sc9 and Act V sc9 - symbolic gestures of repentance; Les Occasions Perdues, Act IV sc5, especially the use of dramatic silences, etc. They are all examples of Rotrou's skilful visual stage craft.

(2) Properties.

Here we shall be looking at the ways in which Rotrou's characters make use of a number of stage properties and the actions associated with them

(eg. doors and knocking on doors) to create an exaggerated and visually extended gesture, linked in some way to the play's thematic content. The overall effect is often ironic, and the irony springs essentially from a visual rather than aural base. The irony itself enriches the audience's appreciation of the play, and can be a source of wry humour. Rotrou uses the "prop" as a means of keying in to this. The most popular device seems to be the letter, used in a great many plays, sometimes as a central visual motif (Les Occasions Perdues) and at other times occupying a less prominent position (L'Heureuse Constance). Other "props" used are, for example: doors in La Diane and La Céliane; a bouquet of flowers in Agésilan de Colchos; a ring in La Bague de l'Oubli and L'Innocente Infidélité.

Letters play a significant part in Les Occasions Perdues. Letter scenes occur only three times, Act II sc3, Act IV sc4 and Act V sc3, but these are all important scenes which instigate the confusion and misunderstandings at the heart of the action. In Act II sc3, Rotrou exploits dramatic irony to the extent of poking fun at himself and his emphasis on the visual dimension. The audience knows (from Act II sc2) that Hélène intends to woo Clorimand through her companion Isabelle, using the latter as a disguise to conceal her own identity. In scene 3 a letter arrives for Clorimand, signed "Isabelle", suggesting a rendezvous for that night. Clorimand is delighted, since he is attracted to Isabelle and knows that his friend Cléonte, who is passionately in love with Hélène, would not think twice about eradicating any potential rival. The letter is very much the centre of attention from the moment it is brought to Clorimand, who makes a great show of reading it out loud while Cléonte grows more and more suspicious of its contents and authorship. He accuses Clorimand of substituting the name of Isabelle to cover up the fact that it is

really from Hélène, and Clorimand is forced to show him the letter in order to convince him of the truth. Cléonte says suspiciously: "Je ne puis croire ici que mes yeux seulement", so Clorimand passes him the letter with the advice:

> "Jugez donc par vos yeux si je suis véritable,
> Si de ces trahisons mon esprit est capable".

Rotrou's emphasis on eyes and seeing as a source of truth appears to lend support to his own principle of developing the visual dimension of drama as a means of expression. The letter, however, represents the potential illusions in life which can fool any of our senses. Reality and understanding need not necessarily reside in what the eye can see, any more than they reside in what the ear can hear. Unbeknown to either man, the letter is of course from Hélène. In this scene Rotrou introduces the letter as a dramatic property intimately linked to the themes of the play, and accustoms his audience to associate its appearance with confusion, misunderstanding and the workings of illusion. It is a visual key used to evoke a specific thematic idea. In Act IV sc4 and Act V sc3, Rotrou returns to letters as the symbols of confusion, and uses this visual motif to crystallise his ideas on the paradoxes of illusion. In Act V sc3 the ambiguities in the letter's reference to "Cher Espagnol" cause the Spanish king to believe its contents to be addressed to himself, whereas Hélène intended them for the Spaniard Clorimand. However, in the dénouement, scene 9, Hélène agrees to marry the king, so that scene 3 comes to be seen as paradoxically predictive of the future.

Doubt and confusion are thrown into the mind of Orante (La Diane, Act I sc3) by a number of letters which cause her to change her plans of marriage and so set in motion a new train of events upon which the play itself is based. Letters in this play are continually being passed to and fro, and each time their appearance heralds a dramatic peripeteia

giving new impetus to the play. But more important, visually, to La Diane is the role played by doors. The characters are always coming and going through doors for all manner of reasons. Sometimes the stage directions merely indicate an exit or entrance (eg. Act I sc2: "sortant de la maison"), whereas at other times particular attention is drawn to the door itself (eg. Act I sc4: "Il frappe à la porte de Lysimant"). The contrast is stressed, in nearly every scene, between indoors and outdoors, between the private world of the house to which one may retreat, and the public world outside where one is forced into an encounter with others. The door acts as a symbolic barrier between these two worlds - a barrier it is necessary to negociate in order to pass from one to the other. The negociation is conducted visually: "Il frappe à la porte"; "Elle frappe à la porte" etc., with indications from other characters that the action was fairly energetic and determined: "Vous frappez hardiment". No-one is allowed to retreat behind a closed door but is forced to open up and confront life. As an extension of this idea, the door comes to be seen as symbolic of that which is hidden and secretive, masking the truth (eg. La Céliane, Act V sc8).

Rotrou uses properties in a deliberate and stylised way to create a kind of extended gesture. In other words, a character manipulates an inanimate stage property (a door or a letter) in such a way as to invest it with human significance. This physical interaction with elements of the décor helps to combine all aspects of the drama into an organic whole, with all the parts interacting and interdependent.

(3) Activity.

By "activity" is meant expansive physical movement, such as would be

expected from fighting or dancing on stage, as opposed to the confined movement associated with small individual gestures. In contrast with relatively static plays like L'Hypocondriaque, some of the early plays are full of action which could cover all the available stage. It is not until later in his career that Rotrou fully develops the technique of exposition in terms of action - the earliest examples being Agésilan de Colchos and Laure Persécutée - but nonetheless his opening acts are generally lively with plenty of variety in tempo. Cléagénor et Doristée opens with a monologue (sc1) and proceeds to a dialogue (sc2), these two scenes really constituting the exposition. Scene 3, in contrast, moves along dynamically with the emphasis on action to convey meaning. Doristée is nearly raped but is rescued by Cléagénor who fights her attacker and kills him. They enjoy a brief but happy reunion until, when Cléagénor goes off to get water, a band of robbers appear who march Doristée off with them.

A similarly "busy" act is found at the beginning of La Belle Alphrède. Alphrède herself is disguised "en cavalier" and engages in a number of sword fights against the attacking Arabs, only to be finally captured and dragged off by them. The act is full of references to fighting and equally full of stage directions choreographing the fights and the movements of the swords: "se battant"; "tombant mort"; "l'épée nue à la main"; "il jette son épée"; "laissant tomber son épée" etc. This is evidently a very boisterous, fast moving act, designed to open the play with a bang. It is vivid and full of movement and most appropriate for the play as a whole, which maintains this fast pace of events and high degree of activity throughout. In Act III sc5 & 6 there is another sword fight, really another version of Act I, and Act V sc5 is taken up by a dance depicting in its movements yet another fight. The mock heroics of this play, stylised

to the point of forming a ballet sequence in Act V, may be seen as the first step along the path leading eventually to figures like Matamore and Rosaron, in whom the chivalric code of heroism is reduced to the noisy bragging of a coward (eg. Act II sc2 of Agésilan de Colchos). Although fighting and even drawn swords on stage disappear later in the century under the influence of bienséance, their frequent inclusion in Rotrou's early drama attests to the enduring popularity of this exciting and visually dynamic form of entertainment well into the seventeenth century. Although the noble chivalric image tended to be reduced to amatory squabbles and male jealousy (eg. La Céliane, Act I sc2 and Act III sc3), the interest, for the audience, lay in the action, and in the fact that, visually, there was never a dull moment.

Interestingly enough, the plays which rely on stylised gestures (like La Bague de l'Oubli) make no use at all of more expansive movements, and vice versa, there is so much happening in a play like La Belle Alphrède that there is no time for the small condensed movements of gesture. They would never be noticed. Visually, La Belle Alphrède is like the wide-screen epics of modern cinema, whereas La Bague de l'Oubli concentrates on detailed close-ups. There is another difference in the use of gesture which reveals the experimental nature of Rotrou's dramatic technique in the early plays. Both types of action are expressive of fundamental human feelings and attitudes: fighting is, in essence, the instinct for self-preservation and therefore extremely basic to the human animal; similarly, embracing, praying and even washing are basic human actions. However, with the latter, Rotrou concentrates on the humanly significant meaning lying behind the gesture, and uses the visible act of washing or kneeling as a symbol for the underlying concept. In this way, the

gesture becomes a visual key for the audience to anticipate certain associated events or attitudes. Activity, however, is not used in such a symbolic way, but rather for its own sake. The important thing is that the play be lively, action-packed and entertaining, and that the audience be, from the very beginning, visually and dynamically "in medias res". The two different approaches indicate an experimental attitude towards the visual medium in the early plays, and perhaps an uncertainty and hesitation in Rotrou as to the role of the visual elements in drama.

3.3 APPEARANCE AND EXPRESSION.

As a result of the popular device of disguise, it frequently happens that a character appears, for a few scenes or acts, dressed as someone else. When this involves a change from female to male (Floronde in L'Heureux Naufrage disguises herself as Lysanor) or from male to female (Agésilan in his play dresses as Daraïde), a considerable difference in appearance must occur. The character must look as well as claim to be different. In this respect clothes will be seen to "make the man" and the visual key to identity will be the attire of the moment. As we noted with the use of letters, stress is placed on that which can be seen, the outward appearance, and this is offered as a sign of reality, whilst, through dramatic irony, the audience understands that the visible is an illusion masking truth. It is appropriate for such a theme that Rotrou develop and exaggerate the visual effects in order to multiply the inherent ironies.

There are very many examples of disguise (see Chapter 2) calling for a variety of effects. Céliane in her play dresses up as a gardener carrying a basket of flowers, Act IV sc3; Angélique has to disguise

herself as a holy pilgrim in La Pèlerine Amoureuse; Diane in her play disguises herself twice, firstly as another female, Célirée, and then as her own brother, Lysandre; Agésilan successfully poses as a woman; roles are reversed, the social hierarchy is inverted, and everything presents its opposite - always with the emphasis on appearance and dress. The extent to which disguise is used testifies to its popularity and also to the degree of manipulation of visual effects which Rotrou wrote into each play.

A more subtle version of disguise is change of expression. In a play like La Bague de l'Oubli, Rotrou specifically indicates in the text that a change of expression occurs when the king, or anyone else, puts on the magic ring. In accordance with the king's general temperament, he would presumably wear a sour and grim expression at the beginning of the play, changing to serenity and calm on wearing the ring. Certainly the other characters notice the change which comes over Alphonse. Léandre, Act III sc7, remarks: "Voyez quel prompt effet a changé son visage", and the stage directions indicate this each time the ring is worn (eg. "avec de contenances toutes changées" etc.) These are further aspects of the functional dramatic role of the visual medium, and, being spatially confined to areas of the body, are closely allied to gesture. Stress on facial expressions tends to occur only in plays which equally stress specific gestures. Both, of course, have a predominantly dramatic role in the context of the play, rather than just serving as peripheral stage adornments to make the play more interesting to watch.

3.4 THE SPECTACULAR AND THE MERVEILLEUX.

We have already referred in the preceeding chapter to the immense

popularity of stage spectacle in the early seventeenth century. Rotrou's plays in performance were likely to go a long way towards satisfying this "passion pour le spectacle" by virtue of their high visual content. However, Rotrou avoids as much as possible the mechanically dazzling effects associated with "pièces à machines" in favour of a less technological drama, where magicians walk on stage and the marvels arrive in a human rather than mechanical way. An exception to this rule is the dénouement of Hercule Mourant where the divinised Hercule descends from Heaven to his people beneath. The actor playing this part presumably had to be lowered down onto the stage by means of some mechanical device, and then hauled up again at the end of his speech - "Hercule, descendant du ciel" and "Il remonte au ciel", are the stage directions from the text. Scherer remarks[12] that this was one of the most popular plays of its time from the point of view of visual spectacle:

> "Rotrou donne avec son Hercule Mourant un des spectacles merveilleux les plus appréciés de son temps".

Such enthusiasm as clearly existed in the early seventeenth century for this type of visual spectacular is suggestive of a somewhat unsubtle popular taste in drama, and equally of a naive understanding of the dramatic potential to be found in visual techniques.

Rotrou's preference for less ostentatious and more discriminating techniques (especially the development of gesture and condensed movements) may have played an important part in preparing the public for the concentrated effects of the classical theatre, where the activities of the "wide screen" were reported, not seen, and the drama depicted human feelings and tensions such as could be conveyed in a sudden despairing gesture or a look of contempt. Although Rotrou does make some concessions to his audience, and has, for example, "trois tombeaux" on stage in L'Hypocondriaque and "un échafaud tendu de noir"

in La Bague de l'Oubli, such spectacular effects by no means predominate in his theatre. If one looks at a cross-section of the early plays, the major emphasis is on the small gesture or movement which is invested with a high degree of symbolic significance.

3.5 CONCLUSIONS.

In this chapter we have attempted, with reference to the early works, to assess Rotrou's awareness of the visual medium of the stage. To what extent do the plays indicate that Rotrou wrote with the stage in mind, and that his drama was visually and dynamically conceived?

Firstly, it is obvious from the magnificent décor required, that Rotrou intended to make the stage as colourful and interesting as possible to look at. His aim was to transform the bare stage into an aesthetically pleasing dramatic medium. He demanded rich and imaginative sets which would encourage the audience into imaginative flights of fantasy and help them become more readily engrossed in the drama. Against these rich backgrounds was set the action of the play, with the actors contributing to the overall eye-appeal of the stage. Disguises were frequent, fights and struggles animated the stage, a multiplicity of events ensured constant variety and changes of tempo, magic and supernatural marvels were seen to occur. Visual techniques of all kinds were employed in an attempt to capture and hold the audience's attention. The eye as well as the ear must be kept amused. In this respect, Rotrou was writing with the audience in mind, and using visual techniques to increase the entertainment value of his drama. As the regular playwright for the Hôtel de Bourgogne over a number of years, he would be very conscious of his responsibility, not only to the acting troupe, but also to the audiences coming to be entertained.

For this reason he was to a certain extent compelled to satisfy public demand and provide what his audience wanted. In response to the demand for spectacle, he exploited the visual scope of the stage extensively and imaginatively to provide some of the most visually spectacular plays of his time.

However, Rotrou did not compromise totally with his public. He shows signs of having been aware, even as a very inexperienced dramatist, of the dramatic possibilities to be gained from creative and systematic use of visual techniques. In this chapter we have stressed the predominantly creative and dramatic ways in which gesture, expression and even inanimate scenery are used. As well as entertaining the public eye with aesthetics and action, Rotrou attempts a systematic visual drama, skilfully coordinated with the spoken word. The eye is used to receive and decode information, it is encouraged to be an active participator instead of a passive receptor of pleasurable impressions. As an alternative channel of information, it is open to contradictions, and Rotrou uses the visual to conflict with the aural in order to dramatise his ideas on the paradoxes of illusion. The main dramatic function performed is symbolic. The decisive gestures and expressions are symbols of some underlying concept which recurs throughout the play, always heralded by the appearance of the appropriate symbol which acts as a visual leitmotif. In this way Rotrou introduces shades of meaning and ambiguities which enrich the texture of the play, and is able to develop a counter-theme or idea which runs parallel to the expressed idea and is conveyed only through the visual medium. Thus aurally we appear to be concerned, for example, with the sexual ambitions of Alphonse and his unpredictable temperament, whilst, visually, the focus changes to show us Man being slowly influenced by beneficent cosmic forces to become a spiritually regenerate creature. Mime is used to embody the general

and significant, leaving to diction the task of upholding the specific story line. The two are combined so as to create a harmonious and self-consistent whole.

The only playwright previous to Rotrou to display what one might call "theatrical professionalism" was Alexandre Hardy, Rotrou's predecessor at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. His legacy to French drama has been acknowledged by Corneille[13] and in recent times by Brereton in his French Tragic Drama in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.[14] Brereton considers that:[15]

> "More than anyone else in France, Hardy established the conception of a play as the representation of a story which unfolds before one's eyes and whose end is not known before one reaches it".

Hardy's plays are characterised by action, but an action which lacks the multi-level significance of Rotrou's drama and the symbolic complexity of aural/visual interplay which we find there. By experimenting and developing visual techniques as he does, Rotrou is making a significant contribution to the role of visual art in drama, lifting it from the relatively arbitrary place it occupied in "la dramaturgie archaïque" to a new level of integrated dramatic purpose. The dramatic experience as such is expanded and enriched. Rotrou shows himself to have been a practical man of the theatre, seeing in his mind's eye the visual scope of the stage and writing plays to be acted, not read. Through a controlled mixture of mime and diction, Rotrou helps define drama as an independent art form quite different from literature and needing its own techniques. In appreciating this fact so thoroughly, Rotrou is re-establishing a link with the past when drama was a thing of the people who would engage, through words and significant gestures, in a spontaneous enactment of some religiously or humanly meaningful ceremony. In this "natural" drama the mime, the sequence of significant acts, was as important as the spoken word; the drama was a dynamic,

living thing, not an intellectual creation; the theatre was the universe. Northrop Frye, in A Natural Perspective,[16] attempts to explain the nature of this original primitive drama:

> "Ritual acts based on what is loosely called sympathetic magic, such as pouring water on the ground as a rain charm, resemble drama in being a sequence of significant acts. Such acts are normally accompanied by a story or myth which establishes an inter-related significance among them. Literature, in the form of drama, appears when the myth encloses and contains the ritual. This changes the agents of ritual into the actors of a myth. The myth sets up a powerful pull away from the magic: the ritual acts are now performed for the sake of presenting the myth rather than altering the course of nature."

Rotrou's overall approach to visual art in the theatre links his drama to this age-old experience. His plays, in spirit and technique, are very close to the unsophisticated but direct traditions of folk drama, and are an attempt to recover that original spontaneity and reintroduce it to the Parisian stage.

At the same time, one cannot forget that Rotrou's early plays immediately preceded the beginnings of Classicism in France. It seems not unlikely, therefore, that they may have played some part in the maturing of French drama from its unformed youth in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the classical mastery of form that we associate with writers like Corneille, Molière and Racine. It is our contention that Rotrou's particular emphasis away from the unsubtle, ostentatious visual panorama of effects, so popular at the time, towards small, significant, spatially confined movements, served to accustom the public to the concentrated effects of Classicism. The way in which Rotrou uses definitive gestures to create an atmosphere or mood, or to reveal some highly meaningful human trait, is very much akin to the process of exposing tensions and psychological facets of personality under the "close-up" scrutiny of classical form.

Thus far, two major aspects of Rotrou's dramatic technique have been

revealed. Firstly, he always writes or translates plays whose basic elements of composition are popular folk motifs, drawn ultimately from folk belief or mythology. Secondly, he makes extensive creative use of the visual dimension of the stage, both aesthetically and dramatically, so that the folk devices are presented with great immediacy. It is now appropriate to consider the internal structure of Rotrou's plays, to try and establish: a) if there is a consistent structure, and b) the typical characteristics of that structure. This will form the contents of Chapter Four.

NOTES.

1. Raymond Lebègue, La Tragédie Religieuse en France, Librairie Honoré Champion, Paris, 1929, gives some amusing examples of the sixteenth-century "ad hoc" attitude towards drama. This particular incident is given as evidence of the gradual decline of mystery plays in the sixteenth century due, in part, to the introduction of an unprecedented element of vulgarity: "l'attitude des acteurs et du public était souvent une occasion de scandale. La conduite de certains acteurs contrastait grandement avec celle des saints dont ils tenaient le rôle." (page 53)

2. Jacques Scherer, La Dramaturgie Classique en France, Librairie Nizet, Paris 1951, page 427.

3. H.Carrington Lancaster, Le Mémoire de Mahelot, Laurent et autres décorateurs de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne et de la Comédie Française au XVII^{e} Siècle, Paris, 1920.

4. Carrington Lancaster, ibid., page 102.

5. The Abbé d'Aubignac, in La Pratique du Théâtre, (édition Pierre Martino, 1927, page XVII) complained of "ce cadre étroit qui enserre le tableau et qui empêche tout dépassement." He apparently could never forget the confines of the stage and the consequent artificiality of the world it enclosed.

6. Scherer, ibid., page 167.

7. Carrington Lancaster, ibid., page 82.

8. Carrington Lancaster, ibid., page 69.

9. Pierre Corneille, Oeuvres Complètes, (Lebègue) éditions du Seuil, 1963. The quotation comes from the 'Examen de Mélite', page 28.

10. Corneille, ibid., 'Les Trois Discours' page 845.

11. Sarrasin, Discours de la Tragédie (in Oeuvres, Paris, 1658), pages 327-328.

12. Scherer, ibid., page 163.

13. In his Examen de Mélite.

14. Geoffrey Brereton, French Tragic Drama in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, Methuen, London, 1973.

15. Brereton, ibid., page 88.

16. Northrop Frye, A Natural Perspective, Columbia Univ. Press 1965, page 59.

4. STRUCTURAL UNITY.

Classical drama, in seeking to reveal feelings and delineate motives, achieves a remarkable degree of perceptive insight into human psychology, due in part to the nature of classical form itself. With the aid of certain highly restricting rules, especially the three unities, classical writers were able to concentrate upon an emotionally charged moment in time, and create an atmosphere of tension which would expose the humanly significant act. (For example, the Horatian "in medias res" combined with unity of time to present, not a panorama as in Rotrou, but a critical moment, a few hours of dramatic tension.) The classical approach used a highly concentrated dramatic focus directed at a few specific individuals imbued with a high degree of psychological realism and individuality. The restrictive nature of classical structure facilitated this "spotlighting" technique.

In contrast to the close-up focus of Classicism, Rotrou's drama stands back and looks at man generally and symbolically, as but one meaningful piece in a wider mosaic of existence. Rather than focusing on the psychologically significant, Rotrou looks at the cosmic pattern of life and picks out the symbolically significant. Hence, for his approach to drama, the tightly-knit structures of Classicism would not only be inappropriate but deleterious. Rotrou's plays need a form which incorporates within its structure a sense of freedom, space and movement, in order to enhance the timeless quality of the drama as well as to allow the Providential pattern to emerge. Also, in order not to mar in any way its basically simplistic spirit, the structure must be as unobtrusive as possible. We have already argued (chapters 2 & 3) that Rotrou attempts to recapture the natural spirit of primitive drama, with emphasis on spontaneity, imaginative faith and active participation from

the audience, simplicity and directness, and above all, a totality of experience. Structure must not be allowed to exert too confining an influence over this, but must work unobtrusively to unify the play. Whereas classical structure tends to be oppressively apparent and, as such, adds to the dramatic effect, Rotrou's skill lies in knowing how to subordinate structure to create a greater sense of freedom and spontaneity.

Unfortunately structure where the French theatre is concerned has tended for many critics to become synonymous with classical structure. Historically this has affected Rotrou adversely, and has tended to preclude any unprejudiced attempt to find a more subtle unifying principle in his work. Recently, however, the futility of trying to apply classical standards where no such standards were intended has become more accepted, and attempts have been made to justify Rotrou's dramatic structure along other lines. One of the more interesting approaches has come from Rousset[1] who sees in some of Rotrou's plays examples of the cult of the Baroque. While we are not at all sure that "Baroque" can be accepted as an explanation of all the characteristic aspects of Rotrou's work, the central idea of movement, stressed by Rousset, warrants consideration.

The baroque concept of terrestrial instability, affecting every aspect of life both practically and intellectually, is one which suggests the idea of movement, and Rousset looks to some of Rotrou's plays for further evidence to support his contention that creative representation of movement was the predominant artistic feature of the baroque era (c.1580-1670). He also points to the apparent paradox underlying the idea of a formal artistic structure expressing movement, since structure suggests stability and rigidity while movement involves

flexibility and change. Rousset overcomes this problem with the curiously enigmatic pronouncement that:[2]

> "une oeuvre baroque est à la fois l'oeuvre et la création de cette oeuvre",

and that, therefore, the structure may be described as:[3]

> "l'unité mouvante d'un ensemble multiforme en voie de métamorphose."

His idea becomes more readily comprehensible when one considers music. Music is a moving, flowing artistic medium where structural form grows and becomes apparent only as the notes unfold to the ear. It is the process of movement, from one note to another, and from one melody to another, which defines the form and reveals the meaning. This is a dynamic, organic process, and one to which we shall refer in talking about the structure of Rotrou's plays.

In this chapter we hope to show that structural unity in the early plays of Rotrou is achieved through a complex interweaving of contrasts. Every aspect of the drama is presented along with its opposite -imagery, pace of scene, character-type, attitude, theme, language - with a resultant structural symmetry which is at times almost geometric and which provides the overall unifying influence, bringing together all the disparate and apparently unrelated elements of the play into one conceptual but essentially dynamic framework. The dynamism results directly from the juxtaposition of opposites. A static dialogue scene will be followed immediately by one full of action, to be followed again by a period of reflective seriousness. This jerky stop-go-stop procedure applies to every aspect of a play and creates an impression of movement akin to rhythm. Each play seems to have its own underlying rhythmic beat. A virtuous character always confronts a reprobate, the image of light is always contrasted with that of darkness, beauty is coupled with ugliness, constancy with inconstancy, illusion with reality,

action with passivity, so that A always predicts the necessary appearance of B and the audience can virtually learn the "melodies". Into this musical structure contrastive harmonies and fugue variations are introduced. A basic theme, like the paradoxes of illusion and reality, will modulate into variations such as constancy and inconstancy, or kindness and cruelty, and these will be explored - again always through juxtaposition of contrasts - as fugal variations of the main melody. While not in any way trying to suggest that Rotrou was a frustrated musician, we would suggest that the structure of his plays may be more readily appreciated with reference to musical composition than to the strictly causal logic of classical dramaturgy.

Just as, in music, form and structure are so subordinated as to leave us with the impression that the music can wander wherever the melodies take it, and can have imaginative freedom in space and time, so the structure of Rotrou's plays is a complex interweaving of melodies which create a sense of space (of panorama rather than of a critical moment in time) and movement. Such unobtrusive structure is ideally suited to Rotrou's ritual drama. The rigidity of classical rules provides just as confining a "cadre étroit" as the actual dimensions of the stage (which d'Aubignac found so difficult to forget), with the overall result of intensifying for the audience the claustrophobic effect of tension and crisis. Rotrou's structural principle of dynamic contrasts, on the other hand, increases the imaginative freedom of the audience by leaving them consciously unaware of any structural limitations imposed upon the drama.

In order to appreciate the unifying effect of Rotrou's structural principle of dynamic contrasts, it is necessary to look at the variety of types of contrast found in the plays, and the ways in which they

interweave to create a unifying pattern within the body of the drama. Understanding this major structural principle tells us something more about Rotrou's approach to drama and the way his plays work on stage.

4.1 TYPES OF DYNAMIC CONTRAST.

a. Contrastive scenes.

Either within a scene or between scenes, the predominant contrast is between action and absence of action, the former being either a sudden series of dramatic peripeteiae or a high degree of movement about the stage (fighting, for example). The latter, absence of such action, produces contrastive periods of calm where the emphasis is on serious thought (monologues or philosophically inclined dialogues) or at least general conversation requiring no movement. As may be imagined, the action phases are often directly related to extensive use of visual techniques, whereas the passive phases rely solely upon monologue or dialogue. This particular type of contrast may be described as the movement from dynamic to reflective to dynamic (active/passive/active), or vice versa, the sense of movement coming from the immediate juxtaposition of opposites, creating a stop-go rhythm which is maintained throughout the five acts. Thus the juxtaposition of contrasting scenes is the major feature responsible for setting the underlying "pace" of a play.

There are many examples of this active/passive juxtaposition, and in addition to creating pace or tempo, they manifest a number of different dramatic effects. Act II sc2 of L'Hypocondriaque uses a preponderance of words and a minimum of action to increase the tension of the situation. Lisidor vainly tries to conquer the affections of Cléonice, and in a

volley of two-line stichomythic responses, he uses rhetoric and euphemism to threaten her with physical violence. She in turn pays him back with an equally rhetorical outburst in a verbal attempt to ward off any physical assault. The purely verbal situation creates a heavy atmosphere of suspense and tension which is suddenly relieved by the timely arrival of Cloridan, who immediately fights and kills Lisidor. The movement from static to active affords an effect of release.

In La Bague de l'Oubli, Act I sc6 & 7, contrast is used to reveal a specific trait in the king's character which is nowhere explicitly stated. The movement from static to active is this time found in the structure of the alexandrine. In scene 6 Alphonse speaks in a suitably regal and ponderous tone about his sister's royal duty to preserve her dignity and marry only a man of rank:

> "Je vous ai toujours crue, et plus noble et mieux née
> Que d'aspirer au joug d'un honteux hyménée".

Here, Alphonse presents himself as king, noble, authoritative and with a sense of the fitness of things. In scene 7, Fabrice arrives to tell the king that his mistress awaits him. Under the emotional reaction to this news, Alphonse abandons his pose of regal solemnity and reveals his more basic, lustful character. The movement from regal mask to inner reality is achieved through altering the structure of the alexandrine. The regular, continuous lines of scene 6 are expressive of dignity, whereas in scene 7 we find broken lines conveying excitement and impetuosity:

> "Agréable transport!"
> "O céleste discours! Réponse favorable!"
> "Allons, marchons, courons".

Even the vocabulary chosen reinforces the contrast between static and active: sc6 "jugement bien sain"; sc7 "allons, marchons, courons". Thus

the same active/passive contrast of scenes is found in this example as in the former, but it is engineered in a different way (in the structure of the alexandrine) and performs a different dramatic function (revelation of character). Also in this play, as a direct result of the plot, one finds a number of juxtaposed contrasting scenes corresponding to whether or not Alphonse is wearing the magic ring. (He manifests diametrically opposed attitudes which tend to occur in successive scenes).

More than just one contrast may be revealed, as in La Diane, Act II sc3 & 4, where the passive/active opposition (monologue vs. dialogue with intermittent door slamming) is accompanied by a thematic contrast. In the monologue of scene 3, Lysimant is free to speak the truth, but in conversation with Orante it is to his advantage to lie. The thematic question of the borderline between appearances and reality is brought into focus by opposing the two concepts in successive and contrasting scenes.

Act I sc2 of Les Occasions Perdues is an example of the passive/active/passive progression occuring in one scene. The scene opens with a pastoral evocation of the beauties of nature, to be followed by a sword fight, to be followed again by a long récit. The use of contrast within one scene happens frequently in Rotrou and gives each scene a balanced and symmetrical shape. Each scene thus engineered is, structurally, a complete and self-contained unit, with its own beginning, middle and end (eg. Cléagénor et Doristée, Act I sc3). In this respect, the structure of the scene is a miniature of the play as a whole, itself a movement from an initial status quo, through action and confusion, to a settled conclusion. The technique of dynamic contrasts is thus a hierarchical principle, operating at all levels of dramatic

structure to create an organised and coherent whole.

The opening two scenes of L'Heureuse Constance exploit the passive/active contrast to a number of levels of significance, with the result that, in retrospect, they come to be seen as representative of the whole play. The highly philosophical scene 1 shows us Man the thinker, civilised and spiritual. Set in opposition to this is Man the animal (sc 2), with animal instincts and physical, earthly desires. At one level, L'Heureuse Constance is a dramatic enquiry into the human dichotomy between the spirit and the flesh, and in the opening two scenes this dichotomy is crystallised for us. The king's reflective seriousness (sc1) vanishes at the sight of a pretty girl (sc2) who arouses in him the male instinct for the chase. Philosophic and spiritual values are thus associated with calm passivity and subjugation of bodily involvement, whereas man's animal instincts are related to action. The passive/active contrast in the structure of these two scenes is thus used to symbolise the two primary and opposed facets of human nature. Dramatic structure is an integral part of thematic purpose.

b. Juxtaposition of character types.

Contrasting character pairs of many types are to be found in Rotrou: kings and gentry; rich and poor; philosopher and fool; master and slave; virtuous and immoral; cruel and benevolent. Sometimes, as in the obvious case of Alphonse (La Bague de l'Oubli), the contrast occurs within one person who will display two opposing personalities. As an indication of the importance Rotrou attached to the principle of contrasts, we find that in each of these opposing pairs the difference is always as extreme as possible, with the result that we seem to be dealing with archetypes rather than three-dimensional flesh and blood

characters. Pushed to such extremes of opposition, for the sake of emphasising the contrast between them, Rotrou's characters in these early plays are very reminiscent of the vice and virtue figures of Mediaeval drama.[4] Psychological verisimilitude is sacrificed, not only to the demands of plot and action,[5] but equally to the demands of structure.

An excellent example of dedication to the principle of dynamic contrasts is found in Les Ménechmes where, in translating from the original, Rotrou has completely altered the character of Ménechme Sosicle in order that it may better fit his dramatic scheme. In the original Plautus, Ménechme Sosicle is scarcely distinguishable from his brother, both men being morally lax and fond of casual sexual escapades. Rotrou turns Ménechme Sosicle into the paragon of virtue, self-abnegating brotherly love, devotion to duty, and nobility of spirit. He becomes, in fact, readily identifiable as the "virtue" figure in the play, set in direct opposition to his brother who is then the one "vice" figure. Erotie, in Rotrou, becomes an honourable widow instead of a common prostitute, and all the characters are pushed to extremes. These "types" are then set in contrast with each other, with a number of possible permutations: the contrasting types of hunger shared by Ergaste and his master are underlined through juxtaposition; the master/slave relationship is explored; the brothers' moral values are contrasted. The contribution made to this play by its leading characters is rendered principally in terms of a highly stylised and creative manipulation of contrasting perspectives. Rotrou's structural principle is fundamental to this play, not only with regard to organising it into a coherent whole, but also in terms of dramatic purpose - the presentation of themes and ideas. All the major effects of the play are achieved through the use of contrasts.

Highly contrastive pairs are an obvious potential source of humour, and lie at the heart of Rotrou's comic technique. Knutson has written an excellent study of this topic and describes Rotrou's approach to humour as "a play of opposing perspectives within the dramatic fiction".[6] Rotrou's primary comic tool is irony which "has no point unless it is true, in some degree, in both senses".[7] Thus the opposition of polarised characters is a dramatisation of the process of irony - presenting extreme versions of the argument, both sides of which are in some (comic) sense seen to be true. This popular concept of humour is thought to have been "la première formule de la comédie baroque, qui juxtaposait des maîtres passionnés et sérieux d'un côté et des valets goinfres et ridicules de l'autre."[8] From the opposition of these polarised extremes (eg. Ergaste and Ménechme, or Lélie and Ergaste in La Soeur) one comes to realise that there is something to be said for both sides, but that the ideal lies somewhere in between the two.

If Rotrou's approach to comedy is through irony, itself a process of contrast (often the ideal as opposed to the real), then by exaggerating the characters to such polarised extremes he is able to intensify the ironic effects. This is a dynamic process, since moving backwards and forwards from one extreme to its opposite, Rotrou is tacitly inviting us to make one further intuitive move to a point somewhere in between the two where, he implies, common sense is to be found. Rotrou's philosophy begins to emerge at this point. Whether we have the extremes of action/inaction, virtue/immorality, serious/comic, reality/illusion - whatever the dichotomy may be (but most especially in the region of character types), it is extremism itself which emerges as the undesirable quality. By implication, therefore, the proper course for man (a creature mid-way between Heaven and Hell) lies always in the mid-way area between two possible extremes. Rotrou's structural principle, which

unifies his drama, embodies by implication a philosophic principle with which to organise one's approach to life. This will be dealt with at greater length in chapter 7.

c. Contrastive Attitudes.

When Rotrou considers a moral or ethical question concerning some aspect of social behaviour, he will often hint at the desirable happy medium by dramatising contrastive extremes. One issue to which he returns in more than one play is the position of women in society and the question of their moral rights and duties. In L'Heureuse Constance, the unhappy Rosélie finds herself either used as a pawn in her brother's political ambitions or else adored as some kind of divine object by her would-be suitor, Paris. Neither man really sees her as anything but an object. To Timandre she is a family responsibility who must, according to duty, obey him as head of the household. She has no rights as an individual and her personal feelings are of no account. But, paradoxically, she is in the same invidious position with Paris to whom she is not a real person but the idealised object of his passion. To the former she is nothing but a convenient pawn to be used; to the latter she is everything, a divine object to be worshipped. These contrastive extremes run concurrently throughout the play and are frequently compared in successive scenes. In Act I sc3 Rosélie bitterly acknowledges her subjugation to Timandre:

> "Selon votre désir, disposez de mon âme,
> Vous seul la pouvez rendre ou de glace ou de flamme;
> Vous savez que je suis incapable de choix,
> Puisque l'obéissance est aveugle et sans voix."

In the next scene, Act II sc1, Paris speaks of the same woman:

> "Eh bien, vous avez vu ce miracle d'amour" &
> "J'adore Rosélie...." &
> "Que cette déité...."

The two polarised attitudes towards woman, whilst being so diametrically

opposed, are strangely alike. Both fail to see Rosélie as a human being. By presenting both extremes and contrasting them continually in juxtaposed scenes, Rotrou is presenting an ironic parody of the neo-platonic "amour courtois" on the one hand, and male-dominated cave-man primitivism on the other. Through the techniques of contrast both "ideals" are seen to be far from ideal and positively harmful. The audience has no choice but to infer that the desirable attitude lies somewhere in between.

The same technique is used to explore a number of moral and social problems. Some examples are: the perennial "generation gap" problem in La Diane, where Rotrou looks at both the parents' and the child's point of view; in L'Heureuse Constance, in addition to exploring women's rights, Rotrou also views the uses and abuses of sovereign power;[9] in a number of plays, including Hercule Mourant and Les Ménechmes, Rotrou considers the social position of the married woman whose husband is unfaithful.

These contrastive attitudes, however, seldom occupy a very prominent place in the drama. Rather, they are subsidiary issues which arise as a result of one of the major themes being presented. Rotrou's thematic preoccupations are themselves always expressed in terms of contrast - reality and illusion being among the first of these. When Rotrou dramatises constancy, for example, its opposite, inconstancy, is equally dramatised to provide the necessary structural contrasts and a sense of balance. Arising directly from this we find small cameos, like the ill-used married woman, which serve to illustrate the problem and also allow Rotrou to branch off and look at other related questions. Thus, in L'Heureuse Constance, the major theme of constancy/inconstancy leads Rotrou to examine, firstly, the constancy of Alcandre's love for

Rosélie, and secondly, (and somewhat tangentially), the extreme attitudes taken by other men towards Rosélie. Rotrou's particular development of the major theme in terms of contrast allows him to pursue the minor theme, of society's attitude towards women, also in terms of contrast. Here we have a further instance of the hierarchical nature of Rotrou's structural technique.

d. Stylistic Contrasts.

Lebègue describes Rotrou's style as fundamentally "précieux", in that he startles the audience linguistically "en exprimant une idée banale sous une forme neuve et inattendue."[10] Again we have a reference to an aspect of Rotrou's drama which depends on contrast. He can exploit the abundant paradoxes, ambiguities and contradictions inherent in preciosity and develop a rich and poetic style. (For example, a lover's eyes become "des meurtriers innocents").

Rotrou explores the banal metaphors of the sun or the eyes from all possible contrastive angles, moving from one idea to another until he has built up a total poetic and imaginative concept. In this way he can imply certain nuances of meaning each time the metaphor is used. For example, the sun: woman is human and physical ("ce soleil dans mon lit") or divine and to be worshipped (Laure is thus referred to as "soleil"); the sun in the literal and physical universe provides light and heat, just as in the abstract and conceptual universe it may signify the light of understanding; the sun is the home of a mythological deity, but on the other hand is just another feature of the natural world. The sun as metaphor is like a musical melody, wandering through a variety of harmonic variations and continually reappearing in contrastive forms to provide both the pleasure of the familiar and the surprise of the new.

Such rich and extensive development of metaphor suspends the operation of our reason as stylistic contrasts expand imaginatively into space and time.[11]

In Les Occasions Perdues the images of light and dark run throughout the play and form a complex web of inter-related meanings. The play is divided, temporally and symbolically, into day and night. Forceful repetitions and references create a dramatic insistence upon whether it is light or dark. Light, daytime, the presence of the sun, are consubstantial with the eyes, sight, truth, reality, security, and understanding; the darkness of night brings impaired sight, moral and physical blindness, stupidity, self-deception, illusion, evil. When any one of these concepts is mentioned, all are implied. Thus the action of the play is imbued with rich significanoe. Clorimand, in Act II sc2, insists that Cléonte read the letter for himself so that he may believe the truth of his own eyes. Ironically, the letter contains a deliberate illusion. Act III sc2 takes place at night, where the darkness hides the true identity of Clorimand's mistress. He bemoans the lack of light which prevents him from seeing Isabelle; in fact it prevents him from discovering Hélène. The nature of illusion in this play is dictated by the presence or absence of light. During the day deliberate illusions are planned (Act II sc3); at night man is the involuntary victim of illusion (Act III sc3). However, it is through the events of the night that the gods are able to unravel man's confusion and restore his tranquillity of mind, thus accomplishing good through apparent misfortune. Out of the darkness comes light:

> "Quel heur inespéré! quelles métamorphoses!
> Que cette obscure nuit fait voir de belles choses". (Act V sc9)

The metamorphosis has really been accomplished in purely poetic terms and the play persuades us by means of poetic rather than rational logic. A pattern is woven, with nearly every scene in the play contributing a

further strand to the web of contrasts and meanings surrounding the concept of Light, creating finally an imaginative whole where each part can be traced in its relationship to all the others.

The alexandrine line is also subjected to this process of antithesis. We have already mentioned (4.1a) the use of regular lines in one scene and broken lines in the next to create the contrast of passive/active. Within a single scene, and more particularly within one speech, antithetical alexandrines convey the same kinds of inuendo and shades of meaning, on a lower level, as are found on a higher level in contrastive scenes, characters or images. Here we are dealing with the most basic constituent feature in the structural hierarchy. In the opening scene of La Diane, the heroine bemoans her unfaithful lover:

> "De l'objet inconstant que j'aime et qui me laisse", &
> "Qui m'a longtemps voulue, et qui ne me veut plus".

These lines perfectly sum up the paradoxes of human love which the play sets out to explore. In Hercule Mourant the enigma of death is captured by Alcmène, who holds the ashes of the dead Hercule and says:

> "Ceci fut la terreur de la terre et de l'onde,
> Et je porte celui qui soutint tout le monde." (Act V sc2)

There is both pathos and irony in these two lines which convey so magnificently the power of the flesh in life and its frailty in death. Thus even in individual lines one finds Rotrou using the same contrastive principle in the same imaginative (and essentially poetic) way.

e. Parallelism.

So far we have looked only at those contrasts which are total: the nature of a whole scene in comparison with another, or one type of character contrasted with its complete opposite. Superimposed upon this structural process is one of parallel scenes or events where, for

example, a specific situation between two people is duplicated in a later scene between different characters. The effect is of seeing a mirror image of what went before. In a play like La Diane, the process is repeated several times so that the reflections stretch out, one after the other, receding into the distance. It is like the nest of diminishing images produced by opposing mirrors, such as one might experience at a fair ground. However, unlike a mirror image which is a total reduplication, parallelism in Rotrou involves a significant change in one factor whilst the others remain constant. For example, Act I scl of L'Hypocondriaque features a man and a woman, Cloridan and Perside, in a lovers' lament caused by their imminent parting. Scene 2 repeats the situation in all respects apart from attitude - Cléonice wants Lisidor to leave her. Both scenes concern an intimate relationship between two people, and both concentrate on the man and the suffering that love causes him, but in scene 1 Cloridan is sad because he must leave his mistress, and in scene 2 Lisidor is sad because his mistress is telling him to go. The misery of love is viewed from two opposing positions.

Parallelism is thus another means of using contrast creatively; scenes, situations, and even specific lines used in this way are at the one time both "equal" and "opposite". Despite the example already quoted from L'Hypocondriaque, it is unusual for this technique to be used in consecutive scenes. It gains in impact and dramatic significance from being used in a discontinuous fashion across a number of scenes or acts. In Act V sc3 of Cléagénor et Doristée, Théandre tricks Doristée into believing that Cléagénor is dead when he is really alive. In scene 6 he plays the same trick on Cléagénor. The trick, situation and effects are the same in both scenes, the only difference being that in the second case Théandre is not lying out of evil intent. Types of motivation are

contrasted by reduplicating the situation and allowing different emotional factors to predominate. Scene 6 is an echo of scene 3 and takes the audience back to an earlier stage in the drama. The echoing effect is very important; it establishes dramatic continuity across the expanse of a number of scenes (or even acts) instead of relying upon continuity from successive scenes. Simple linear progression is rejected in favour of a more complex dramatic progression of discontiguous relationships. In Act III sc5 of La Bague de l'Oubli, Liliane wears the magic ring and treats the king with disdain; in scene 1 Alphonse had treated her in exactly the same way for the same reason. Dramatic continuity is here preserved across four intervening scenes, built upon the assumption of continuity of memory in the audience. Both dramatically and aesthetically, scenes past are revived and restated in scenes present; the drama is cyclic rather than unilinear.

La Diane has a discontinuous exposition which stretches over four acts. The opening scene of Acts I, II, III and V is a monologue introducing a new character who has travelled from country to town in pursuit of a loved one. In each monologue we learn progressively more of the background situation which led up to the action of the play. The method of opening each of these four acts is the same, the situations are the same, the purposes and feelings the same. The contrastive difference lies in the relationship to the loved one. Diane, in Act I, is seeking her unfaithful lover, whereas Damon, in Act II, is looking for his foster child. With the opening of each act the audience is reminded directly and deliberately of earlier instances in the play. This is the multiple image effect. The same situation is presented over and over again, and each time is viewed from a slightly different angle.

Direct contrast and parallelism including contrast work together to form a closely woven structural patterning which is complex but aesthetically satisfying. Act III scl & 2 of Les Occasions Perdues present the contrast of reality and illusion. In scene 1, in a monologue, Hélène anticipates the coming meeting with Clorimand and reflects upon the reality of her situation. Because of her rank she is forced to woo her lover under an assumed persona. Scene 2 presents the meeting which takes place at night under the cover of darkness. Honesty vanishes and all is illusion as Hélène pretends to be someone else and Clorimand is completely duped. This entire episode is repeated in Act V sc5 & 6, this time between Isabelle and Adraste, with the same contrast of reality and illusion between the two scenes. The latter episode is a parallel of the former, with a monologue scene followed by a nocturnal rendezvous with the unsuspecting male lover - but there is an important difference. Act V contrasts with Act III in that, contrary to our expectations, it is Isabelle and not Adraste who becomes the victim of illusion. The contrasts and complexities are thus compounded, dramatically the tables are turned, and again a certain human situation is viewed from a number of angles. Contrastive techniques are Rotrou's means of exploring various aspects of his subject in a dynamic and lively way. The audience is entertained by the continual changes and surprises which result from contrast, whilst Rotrou has the structural flexibility necessary to subject his ideas about human nature to poetic rather than rational examination. In terms of overall dramatic structure, as well as style in a narrower sense, it is true to say that:[12]

> "de tous les dramaturges de la première moitié du dix-septième siècle, c'est Rotrou qui a révélé le talent le plus poétique."

4.2 CONCLUSIONS.

Structural unity throughout all of Rotrou's early plays is achieved by a complex pattern of inter-related contrasts operative at every dramatic level. The technique is found to be hierarchical, beginning with the play as a whole which will explore certain themes contrastively, down to contrastive acts, scenes, characters, images and even individual lines. The interdependence of each of these levels is assured by contrastive relationships between them, and is responsible for the tight structural cohesion found in the plays. Each play is an organic whole, with its parts intricately related to each other and developing from each other as a direct result of this structural principle. An idea, explored in terms of contrast, will modulate into a tangential but related idea which is in turn subjected to examination by contrast. The process,repeated at all levels, ensures an integrated structure.

In this chapter we have dealt with some of the major contrasts, although it is an easy matter to find others which will be seen to adhere to the same overall structural scheme. The disguise motif is an obvious example, involving ususally a change of sex. So all-pervasive is this technique that the drama is a continual succession of changes and surprises. Contrast and change create a sense of movement, of fluidity within form which helps to carry the drama along and to create a feeling of expansiveness. Instead of the drama being enclosed and restricted by its structural shape, it seems to overflow into unlimited space and time, rather like Baroque painting whose sinuous lines seem to invite the eye to step beyond the bounds of the canvas into infinity. Such effects are well suited to Rotrou's approach to drama. In trying to recapture the primitive dramatic experience, Rotrou develops

a moving, expansive structure which accords well with the wide horizons and timeless themes of his dramatic vision. Structure is another means by which Rotrou invites his audience to wander in imagination through the limitless realms of make-believe.

Because of the direct opposition of contrasts, dramatic progression in these early plays is non-linear and discontinuous. (Logical, causal progression as in classical structure is unilinear and depends upon the sequential development of A → B → C → D etc.) In Rotrou's work linearity is absent. Instead, two related types of progression operate together to produce what we have called a cyclic rather than a linear drama. Firstly, the direct opposition of contrasts. This is found mainly in the immediate juxtaposition of scenes of opposing types: action/inaction; serious/comic and so forth, producing an effect of movement (rhythm or beat) and offering shades of meaning which become apparent only because of the contrast. This is what Morel calls "une esthétique du discontinu" which he describes as:[13]

> "la relation intellectuelle entretenue par deux scènes sans doute plaisantes chacune par elle-même, mais dont le seul voisinage fait apparaître la signification réelle."

Secondly, the use of parallelism. Scenes, situations, and even phrases will be repeated at different stages throughout a play, creating a kind of dramatic echo or mirror image of what went before. Dramatic continuity is thus more complex than the relatively straightforward logical sequence of A → B → C, and depends upon a cross-correlation spanning a number of scenes or acts. Dramatically, this puts an exaggerated emphasis on past events and scenes which are recalled and restated, perhaps with a slight change each time, thus attesting to the eternal infusion of the past into the present. Aesthetically this is a very imaginative process, where reality and human experience are subjected to poetic rather than logical examination. Consequently

"liaison de scène" may be seen as inappropriate and contrary to Rotrou's aims: he wants contrast and not continuity. His technique is dynamic and ensures continual surprises and variety for the audience, while philosophically it may well be that structure reflects the underlying metaphysic of the plays.

Very little is known about Rotrou as a man, and almost nothing about his thoughts, beliefs or aims in drama. Consequently it has been left to history to infer and impute, and most of the conclusions about the nature of his drama have involved superimposing upon the plays preconceived viewpoints drawn from what is known of the intellectual climate of the seventeenth century. This thesis, however, suggests that the actual structure of the plays reveals something of their philosophic content. We have shown that the structure of the early plays is characterised by a complex system of inter-related contrasts, and it is significant that these contrasts are generally extremes, polarisations of character or attitude. When adapting source material, it is noticeable that Rotrou always changes any character differences from their original mild form to one that is as extreme as possible. (For example, in La Laure Persécutée, Laure - with respect to Orantée - is changed from a married woman and mother to a virgin maid, and similarly in Les Ménechmes, Ménechme Sosicle is changed from a sexual adventurer to a paragon of virtue and thus the complete opposite of his brother). Everywhere in Rotrou's drama these extremes abound, with one extreme contrasted with another in such a way as to highlight the absurdity and irony (and even danger) of such polarised positions. Through contrast, extremism always emerges in an unfavorable light as an unsatisfactory approach to life, and thus Rotrou leaves the audience no other choice but to infer that the right attitude should be the happy medium, lying somewhere in between two extremes. Notice that,

ironically, even here Rotrou is using contrast: moral attitude emerges, by implication, as the direct opposite of dramatic structure. The only "characters" who ever succeed in the realms of the absolute are the gods, the fates, or whatever supernatural agencies are being evoked. So again, by implication, the right course for man is the via media. Man has thus a positive but necessarily humble role to play, acknowledging both his abilities and limitations, and so acknowledging also, by the same token, the superior forces of the divine.

Man himself is a paradox, a creature of contrasts - the flesh and the spirit in conflict within the one body - and so by nature neither one extreme nor the other. In order to subdue the conflict and live a harmonious existence, neither "half" of man can be allowed to dominate and so aggravate the other. Moderation is the only harmonious course, and this is symbolised in Rotrou's constant final motif of marriage, an institution both spiritually and physically recommended. The structural system of contrasts is by implication a plea for moderation.

So far we have looked only at Rotrou's early work to try and establish techniques and attitudes towards drama. In the next chapter we shall see to what extent the conclusions of this and preceeding chapters are confirmed by and relevant to the work of Rotrou's mature years.

NOTES.

1. Jean Rousset, La Littérature de l'Age Baroque en France, Librairie José Corti, 1954.

2. Rousset, ibid., page 232.

3. Rousset, ibid., pages 181 and 232.

4. K. Loukovitch, La Tragédie Religieuse Classique en France, Paris 1933.

5. A.A.Parker, Approach to the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age, The Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Councils, (Diamante VI), 1957, page 6.

6. H.C.Knutson, The Ironic Game: A Study of Rotrou's Comic Theatre, Univ. of California Press, 1966, page 2.

7. Knutson, ibid., page 23.

8. Knutson, ibid., page 21.

9. There is probably some topical interest here. The conflict between sovereignty and Christian morality had risen to the surface in the 1630's as a result of Richelieu's deliberate policy of intensifying the royal power throughout France, cf. D.P.O'Connell, Richelieu, London, 1968.

10. Raymond Lebègue, 'Rotrou: Dramaturge Baroque' (Revue d'Histoire Littéraire en France, Vol.50, 1950, pages 379-384), see page 383.

11. Jarry, in his Essai sur les Oeuvres Dramatiques de Jean Rotrou, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1970, comments upon this imaginative element in Rotrou by comparing his technique with that of Corneille. (He in fact compares St.Genest with Polyeucte). Corneille he describes as "plus sévère et abstrait. Il se préoccupe de l'enchaînement des idées et de leur déduction logique. Il s'adresse à la raison". Rotrou, on the other hand, "cède aux mouvements de l'imagination, raisonne moins et peint davantage; ses métaphores sont plus fréquentes et plus colorées." (page 286)

12. Lebègue, ibid., page 384.

13. Jacques Morel, Jean Rotrou: Dramaturge de l'Ambiguité, Librairie Armand Colin, 1968, page 186.

5. DRAMATIC CONTINUITY.

The three previous chapters have examined the structure of Rotrou's earliest plays. We shall now consider the later plays[1] in an attempt to discover any constant structural principles or artistic precepts underlying them all. This would encourage us to regard Rotrou's entire dramatic output as a canon - a unified theatre of highly individual plays, each reflecting different cultural influences and illustrating different stages in the development of the author's technical skill, but all evincing a consistent and enduring vision of drama and the dramatic experience. We suggest that a proper understanding of Rotrou's particular dramatic vision can be reached only after an initial appreciation of the significant levels of coherence to be found throughout his work (which, it must be remembered, does cover a period of over twenty years, during which the theatre in France underwent a number of not inconsiderable changes.) It is from an examination of the individual plays, and the exact nature of the similarities between them, that an idea of the drama as a whole, and certain conclusions about the artistic principles and philosophy underlying it, begin to emerge.

Three things were found to characterise Rotrou's early plays: the repeated use of symbolic folk motifs as the basic building blocks of the drama, a highly functional but imaginative attitude towards the visual medium as an integral part of the dramatic experience, and structural coherence from the dynamic interplay of contrasts. It is interesting to discover that all three occur also in all the later plays, where they are just as fundamentally important - even in the very last plays which are generally considered the most classically regular. In this chapter we shall look at the work of Rotrou's mature years, and,

in the light of our observations from the early plays, examine the dramatic continuity to be found throughout the whole of Rotrou's theatre.

5.1 FOLK MOTIFS.

Having discussed the significance, for the early plays, of Rotrou's use of themes and images from folklore, it is important to restate here that their appearance in his drama is primarily an affirmation of the non-rational universe. In their various ways, the motifs all proclaim the deep mystery of being which the human mind cannot rationalise away but must recognise and accept in order to participate fully in life. The doubles motif suggests an alternate state of consciousness; fairytale heroines and magicians delight our imagination simply because they defy reason; the madman is a glimpse into an alternative moral universe; the mask of disguise reminds us how ephemeral is that which we proudly call our individual identity; the "happy-ever-after" ending is man's eternal search for Paradise.

All the motifs used in the early plays appear, in different combinations and permutations, in Rotrou's work published after 1640, and are a continuing assertion of cosmic mystery. However, in Post-Renaissance France, at the dawn of the Age of Reason, Rotrou must have sensed a certain intellectual opposition. He could see the doctrine of Classicism growing from the application of reason to drama, and Corneille (for all that Rotrou admired his skill as a dramatist) presenting the New Man to the theatre - the self-sufficient hero whose destiny lay squarely in his own hands. Consequently, possibly in deference to those who sought a logical explanation for everything, Rotrou gradually began to tone down his explicit dramatisation of

"le merveilleux". By combining subtle suggestions of magic with outwardly reasonable happenings, he could succeed in not offending the rational intellectuals, whilst at heart continuing to present the same view of the universe and appealing to the same intuitive members of his audience.

> "On s'installe donc dans l'invraisemblable, on s'en fait gloire, on en fait jouir le spectateur. Puis on l'explique rationellement, on donne de la vraisemblance à ce qui semblait d'abord n'en pas avoir." (2)

A good example of this "toning down" in Rotrou's explicit use of folklore is his manipulation of the invraisemblable motif of disguise. Formerly the predominant version of this motif was a woman disguised as a man (or vice versa) who always succeeded in fooling everybody about her identity, regardless of how unlikely the situation (see pg 13). In later plays, however, this unsubtle representation virtually disappears. Although we may still find it in plays like La Laure Persécutée, La Belle Alphrède and Les Deux Pucelles, all published in 1639, from 1640 onwards it makes only one appearance (Florimonde, Tirsis).

Instead we find Rotrou making increasing use of "within sex" disguise: a man disguised as another man, or a woman as another woman. This is superficially more credible and lends itself to rational explanation. When Tyndare pretends to be his master Philocrate in order to escape from prison (Les Captifs), we can explain away his success, if we must, in terms of the intimacy of the two men, their thorough knowledge of one another, and the fact that, after years in Philocrate's service, it would be surprising if Tyndare could not do a passable imitation of his master. But for all this, the device is still the same, and we see again Rotrou exploring the tenuous borderline between illusion

and reality, using illusion as a positive vehicle in the revelation of truth. Significantly, Tyndare refers to his disguise as illusion and role playing (Act II sc4: "La pièce a commencé, ma scène se prépare"), and it is a paradoxical result of his indulgence in unreality that he discovers his true identity and birthright (Act V sc2). Here we are far from the rational universe.

Similarly, in Clarice, we have a perfectly plausible explanation for the fact that no-one recognises the former noble, Léandre, in the servant Hortense:

> "Non, car mon nom changé, le poil qui m'est venu,
> Et les travaux soufferts pendant ce long servage,
> N'ont presque rien laissé de mon premier visage. Act I sc2
> Toi-même sais qu'hier, rencontré sur mes pas,
> Tu voulais passer outre et ne me connus pas."

Here Rotrou even goes to the lengths of providing the rationalisation for the audience, to save them the trouble. In La Soeur the situation is doubled: Sophie pretends to be Aurélie but discovers that she is really Eroxène. Even with this entanglement, Rotrou attempts to provide plausible explanations for both the disguises (Act I sc3 and Act V scl). Finally, in St.Genest, we have the ultimate justification: a theatrical performance, which everyone knows to be an illusion anyway. But in all these cases, however credible is the reason for disguise, the actual process of pretending to be someone else and the results from so doing are seen to be quite outside the logical universe:

> "Il arrive que le déguisement livre son secret à sa manière, c'est-à-dire, par le déguisement: c'est en se travestissant qu'on devient soi-même; c'est le personnage qui est la personne; c'est le masque qui est la vérité. Dans le monde du trompe-l'oeil, il faut le détour de la feinte pour atteindre la réalité." (3)

The disguise motif maintains its function and significance throughout Rotrou's drama, but now achieves its effect with less ostentation. We no longer see deliberate exaggeration of the invraisemblable, such as characterised all the disguise situations in the early years, but

exactly the same fantasy world is nonetheless evoked and the same imaginative response is required.

For obvious reasons, magic is used in a similarly more subtle fashion in the later plays. The supernatural marvels of fairytale are a blatant defiance of all that is reasonable, and cannot be adequately accounted for by the rational mind. Hence we no longer find an abundance of magic rings, magic potions, mystic formulae or magicians, all of whose activities could miraculously transform chaos into order. Instead, a new character is introduced late into the action of a play accompanied by a perfectly plausible reason for his sudden appearance (generally in the form of a lengthy récit), and -hey presto, chaos is miraculously transformed into order. The implication is magic, the effects are magical, and the result, in terms of the action of the play, is a thoroughly "deus ex machina" reversal of the situation. Again, as with disguise, plausible reasons are provided for the introduction of the motif, but the ensuing effects are frimly rooted in the world of fantasy.

Such unclassical dénouements can be seen in the following plays: Antigone - the prognostications of the seer Teiresias in Act V; Les Captifs - the revelations of the criminal Stalagme in Act V sc2; Iphigénie - the sudden manifestation of the goddess Diana to the mortals in Act V sc3; Clarice - the late arrival of Anselme in Act V sc3 to tell of a death-bed repentance removing all obstacles to the happiness of Léandre and Clarice; Célie - the appearance in Act V of Don Rodrigue to interpret the divine laws and dispense justice fairly; etc. All examples involve a new character introduced late into the play (although not necessarily as late as Act V), whose appearance and message are painted with a thin film of plausibility, but basically

represent the intervention of the miraculous into human affairs in order to guide them into the framework of traditional folk patterns. In the early plays we encountered explicit magic; in the later plays we more ofter find the subtle intervention of the covert magician.

In addition to this superficial rationalising of folk motifs in the later plays, we also see a closer correlation and interdependence of individual motifs. Since the covert magician is now quite often an ordinary person associated in some way with the major characters in a play, we find a closer link between this and the motif of the dominant female. In the early plays it was observed that the dominant female was both human and divine, a multi-dimensional figure who suffered the same mortal woes as her fellows, but equally moved among them like a fairy godmother curing all ills and securing their happiness (see pg 27). Now, with the modification of the "merveilleux", she is even more markedly a multi-dimensional figure, dominant in the sense of governing all events, and magical in the sense of bringing about the dénouement in just the same way as the covert magician. For example, Lydie in La Soeur is the confidente of Eroxène, and a servant girl taking, one would imagine, a relatively minor role. But La Soeur was published in 1646 at a time when the role of the confident in French drama was well-established, and so we see Lydie, a mere servant, as the dominant female of the play. Nevertheless, she is only a servant and of lower social rank than her mistress. At no time do we forget this, and the exaggeratedly unsophisticated wooing episode (Act V sc6) is a comic reminder that she is indeed very simple and ordinary. However, Lydie alone holds the key to the dénouement, and in Act V scl she steps into the role of covert magician to reveal the secret of Eroxène's true identity.

A similar mingling of these two motifs can be seen in, for example, Iphigénie (the special relationship between Iphigénie and Diana) and Célie (the symbolic significance of the double title: Célie ou Le Vice-Roi de Naples, and the influence of these two characters upon the action of the play). Also, as we have seen, the covert magician often brings news about someone's true identity, and thus the "discovered parentage" motif is introduced amid the others. Sophie disguised as Aurélie in La Soeur turns out, as a result of Lydie's revelations, to be the real Eroxène (and so discovered parentage becomes intimately linked with an aspect of the disguise motif - involuntary disguise); Laure (La Laure Persécutée) is not really a humble peasant girl but a princess; Tyndare (Les Captifs)is not a lowly slave but an Etolian nobleman and the son of Hégée. It is often the case in Rotrou's drama that the complexity of the action is a direct result of the degree of interdependence of the constituent motifs.

The inherent relationship between the doubles motif and that of madness (as seen in the early plays) is deepened and enriched in the later drama through being linked with a number of others - for example, disguise and corrupt sovereignty. The different manifestations of the doubles theme can be discovered in: Crisante, Iphigénie, Bélisaire, Célie, Don Bernard de Cabrère, Venceslas, and Cosroès. As we found in the early plays, underlying each occurence of the doubles motif is the suggestion of man's dual nature: body and soul (see pg 34). Rotrou's response to the newly emerging rational, scientific man of the seventeenth century is to increase his dramatisation of the double - that powerful symbol, found in folk belief and legend throughout the world, affirming the coexistence and interdependence of the physical and spiritual worlds. If we look at Rotrou's dramatisation of the double in one of the above plays, for example Cosroès, we shall discover the significance of its

use and the way in which it is inextricably linked with a number of other motifs.

Throughout Cosroès our attention is drawn to a number of similarities, if not direct parallels, between Siroès and his father. The people are encouraging Siroès to commit the same "crime" as Cosroès himself committed in the past (Act II sc4); Siroès is completely dominated by his wife (Act III sc4) just as Cosroès is dominated by Sira; the problem of reconciling the irreconcilable (Act IV sc2, Act V sc5) is one that Siroès must face as his father faced it before him. In many ways we come to see that Siroès is so like his father as to be virtually indistinguishable from him. He is Cosroès in embryo, a reincarnation of his father and thus doomed to follow in his path. Whereas Bélisaire, for example, was seen as the alter ego of Justinien, his better half ("un second moi-même": Bélisaire, Act I sc6 & Act II sc4), incorporating all the qualities lacking in Justinien himself, Siroès in comparison is identical to Cosroès, a duplicate ego housed in a new human frame but reflecting and repeating the original pattern of doom. In Act V sc8, as Siroès rushes off to try and save his father, we see in his despair the beginnings of the madness suffered by Cosroès in later life. The wheel has come full circle, and in every respect history has been repeated. In Cosroès the doubles motif is used primarily to evoke this idea of the cyclic wheel of history, spinning the same patterns throughout time and repeatedly presenting humanity with the same lessons which it invariably fails to learn. The historical stagnation from which man is unable to lift himself is what constitutes the tragedy of the play.

There is nothing to be gained in looking for a psychological drama in Cosroès. As in all Rotrou's plays, the characters are emblematic,

representations of abstract concepts or facets of human nature. Siroès embodies the conflict in man between instinctive feeling and cold ambition. Narsée dramatises natural feelings just as Cosroès illustrates the results of ruthless ambition, and the two of them are external manifestations of the conflict within Siroès. Sira represents demonic lust for power which consumes itself in its own evil. The Cosroès/Siroès double overshadows all other symbols in the play, just as the inevitable doom which it represents overshadows the feeble efforts of each character to assert himself against it. The play is the working out of all these symbols into a pattern of meaning quite unrelated to causal laws but which is aesthetically and intuitively true.

Because of the strange doubles link binding Siroès to his father, the fear is ever-present that he too will commit the unnatural crime of patricide and be punished with madness; Cosroès is the constant reminder of this (Act II sc1). The doubles motif is thus used to imply the inevitability of madness; the relationship between the two motifs is illustrated in the relationship between father and son. From fear of committing unnatural acts, Siroès is tempted to follow his family feelings and is readily persuaded by Narsée (Act III sc4) to show mercy to her mother Sira. Narsée represents the argument from nature, that Natural Laws are absolute and that the bonds of blood and humanity are defied at one's peril. However, in Act IV sc1 (the very next scene), Siroès learns with bitter irony that Narsée is in no way related to Sira, but is really the daughter of Palmiras, substituted as a baby for the real Narsée to conceal from Sira the death of her own child. The juxtaposition of these two scenes, and the irony of Narsée's flesh and blood pleas for a mother in no way related to her, serve to undermine and destroy the argument from nature, leaving Siroès no further reason to sacrifice his ambition for the throne since natural feelings for a

parent are an illusion. Discovered parentage is the motif used to bring about this reversal of attitude. But to Siroès, the alternative to self-sacrifice is the necessary sacrifice of his father in a political coup to seize power, and with that comes the fear of patricide and madness. Thus discovered parentage forces Siroès back to the doubles bond with his father from which there is no escape, back to the threat of madness which must inevitably ensue, and back to the paths of a corrupt sovereignty which will destroy him. Four powerful folk images converge at this point. It is folk motifs which forge the shape of the drama, and from the patterns woven by their combined symbolism, we see within the structure of the play the wheel of history gradually revolving to trace out again in the path of Cosroès the fate of his son Siroès.

We have seen in this section the continuing importance of folk motifs as the basic building blocks from which Rotrou constructs his drama. It is impossible here to discuss every occurence of every motif in detail, but of course many more examples can be found than have so far been quoted. They are all used in the same imaginative way and form the heart of Rotrou's drama. Madness can be found in a number of plays other than Cosroès - for example, Les Sosies, Bélisaire and Crisante. Happy endings with marriage occur in Les Captifs, Clarice, La Soeur, Venceslas, Florimonde and Don Lope de Cardone. Corrupt sovereignty also features in Don Bernard de Cabrère and Antigone; dreams and premonitions play an important part in St.Genest and Venceslas etc. The list is very long. In every case, as the heart of Rotrou's drama, the motifs are a direct link to the non-rational universe where men and miracles coexist. Rotrou's reactionary response to the new scientific naturalism of the Renaissance suggests a profound disturbance at the presumptuousness of modern man. We are reminded of a remark in Shakespeare which

perfectly sums up this despair:[4]

> "They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence it is that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear."
>
> All's Well, Act II sc3.

5.2 THE VISUAL MEDIUM.

In Rotrou's later plays we observe the continuation of the trend, firmly established in his earlier work, away from the visually spectacular and "panoramic" towards small gestures and movements invested with a high degree of symbolic significance. Visual effects are now a highly integrated aspect of Rotrou's theatre, essential to our appreciation of a play, and forming a medium through which are developed alternatives and contrasts to the ideas being expressed verbally. Certain tensions are created from the controlled interplay of aural drama and visual drama which increase our understanding of a situation and intensify the overall theatrical experience.

There are, of course, still some examples to be found of the visual extravagance so popular at the beginning of the seventeenth century and which we noted in many of Rotrou's earlier plays. It appears to have proved difficult in practice to wean the public away from this "goût du spectacle", despite the growing influence of bienséance and vraisemblance, although in Rotrou's plays published after 1640 such visual flamboyance hardly ever occurs. Les Sosies (1638) has some spectacular stage effects, with Mercury "descendant du ciel" in Act III sc5 and Jupiter "en l'air" in Act V sc6. In addition we hear thunder rolling and see the entire cast faint from shock, Act V sc4. In Iphigénie (1641), the goddess Diana appears at the end of the play

(Act V sc3), and from the stage directions it sounds a thoroughly mechanical event ("Le ciel s'ouvre, Diane apparoît dans un nuage" and "Diane disparoît, et le ciel se referme"). Given the appropriate facilities, it would presumably have been produced in the manner of a "pièce à machines". Les Deux Pucelles (1639) has a lot of sword fighting on stage (eg. Act IV sc4) and La Soeur (1646) uses Turkish costumes to add colour to the play and to exploit the spectator's fascination with the exotic and strange. Crisante (1639) is one of Rotrou's most horrific plays and is full of "spectacles d'horreur" with swords, stabbings, blood, death and violence in scene after scene. Here, Rotrou deliberately exaggerates the horror, both verbally and visually, in order to produce a final effect of overwhelming misery and evil. The play is aptly described by Cassie in Act II sc4: "Quel spectacle d'horreur se présente à mes yeux".

However, these examples represent a small fraction of Rotrou's visual drama in the later plays. The fact that there are so few of them suggests a movement in public taste - however slow - towards more subtle dramatic effects, and a growing preference for the visually significant rather than the visually spectacular. This was precisely the attitude that Rotrou seemed to be fostering in his early drama, especially in his extensive use of mime scenes, paving the way for the concentrated effects of Classicism by emphasising small, significant, spatially confined gestures with a high information content. The practice continues in the later plays to become Rotrou's primary visual technique. The eye is drawn to an object, expression or gesture which becomes the focal point of attention and colours our interpretation of everything happening on stage during that particular scene or act. Thus the visual medium can be used to contradict what is being said or to support it, although as we have seen in the earlier plays, Rotrou's

preference is for the former. It is from contrast and contradiction at every level that his drama draws its strength - both as dynamic entertainment which holds the attention and as a medium for the expression of ideas. Contrast and contradiction consequently lie behind most of the examples we find of highly significant gestures dominating a scene.

In Act I of Venceslas the personality of Ladislas is revealed to us in a series of gestures which belie his words. Although he says nothing to interrupt his father in scene 1, he fidgets and moves about in a way that shows how annoyed he really feels ("Ladislas témoigne de l'impatience"), and in scenes 2 & 3, after stating that there is hatred and rivalry between himself and his brother, we see him embracing Alexandre and apparently displaying brotherly affection. In this act Rotrou is using contrast. Elsewhere in the play we see inner feelings confirmed by the actions a character makes. Théodore's distress is so great that she is forced to lean on Léonor for support (Act IV sc2); Ladislas, in a state of shock, collapses into a chair (Act IV sc3); the weariness and despair which overcome Venceslas can be clearly seen (Act IV sc5). The reaction of one character to another or to some external event is crystallised for us in revealing gestures which provide immediate "situational definition". Without any lengthy explanations, we know immediately how a character feels or what the significance of an event really is. Further examples of this may be seen in Les Deux Pucelles (nearly every scene has some important visual focus and the play ends with a mime scene such as we observed in many of Rotrou's earlier plays), Don Bernard de Cabrère and Bélisaire (where the visual medium is more thoroughly and imaginatively used than in any other play by Rotrou), Les Captifs and Clarice (where the visual medium is used primarily for comedy).

Although Rotrou's particular visual techniques may have served to accustom the public to a more sophisticated and complex form of drama, it is still basically very "unclassical" drama, and we see this as clearly in the use of the visual medium as we did in the use of folk motifs. The fact that it is still necessary in Venceslas for visible actions to express inner states is one indication of this. A more revealing indication is in the way Rotrou dramatises the dilemma monologue - for example, Crisante, Act II sc4 and Iphigénie, Act I sc1. Cassie, in Act II sc4 of Crisante, is torn between his desire for Crisante and his sense of honour as a Roman. The inner conflict is externalised, partly by his words, but more significantly, by his movements about the stage which form a visual statement of the struggle taking place within. He moves towards Crisante's door when swayed by passion, and backs away from it as if in horror on remembering his reputation and sense of honour. What it is important to notice is that both his actions and his words result from the ebb and flow of conflicting passions and show no sign of any rational process taking place. The dilemma monologue in Rotrou is never rational, never a dialectical process, and his characters never argue their way out of the dilemma by employing logical arguments. There is no sense of rational enquiry into inner motivation and no attempt to learn from the situation. On the contrary, the dilemma monologue is always an emotional process in which the speaker allows first one feeling then another to hold temporary sway over him, and in the end either yields to the stronger (as does Cassie) or abandons the conflict altogether in favour of a tangential course of action (eg. Don Antoine, Act I sc2 of Les Deux Pucelles). The dilemma is never actually solved. The actions made by a character whilst going through this emotional crisis illustrate the particular feelings reigning at the time. In Iphigénie, Act I sc1, the visual focus is on the letter which at first Agamemnon

tears up but, overcome by the instinctive desire to protect his daughter, begins to write again. The letter itself signifies the triumph of love over duty.

Mime scenes such as we observed in La Bague de l'Oubli, Act II sc6 and Hercule Mourant, Act V sc3 (see pg54), occur in the later plays also, often in the final act to add depth of meaning to the dénouement. Some examples are: Les Deux Pucelles, Act V sc6 & 7; Iphigénie, Act V sc3; Don Bernard de Cabrère, Act I sc8, Act II sc3 & 5, and many more; Bélisaire, Act I sc6 etc. Consistently throughout the whole of Rotrou's drama we find mime scenes adding an a-temporal dimension to the events taking place on stage. The visual medium, as distinct from the verbal, directs our attention to those primal, unchanging aspects of human nature which organise themselves into a predictable pattern of behaviour and take on a timeless ritual significance. At no time does Rotrou lose interest in this mimed visual drama, and it is another aspect of his later work which marks it as so unclassical and, fundamentally, so similar to the early plays. The only observable difference between the early and late mime scenes is that as the years go by Rotrou uses fewer stage directions. In fact, this is true for all aspects of Rotrou's visual technique, especially regarding comedy and buffoonery, where dialogue makes it clear that considerable visual dramatisation could be used (eg. in Clarice, Act I sc5, Act II sc2, Act IV sc6 & 7, and in Les Captifs, Act I sc3, Act III sc4). From what characters actually say and the nature of the situations they are in, we must conclude that Rotrou intended appropriate gestures and expressions to be used, but no longer bothered to "choreograph" each action quite so thoroughly - an indication that this particular characteristic of Rotrou's drama was now so thoroughly acknowledged and well-established that he no longer had to "spell it out" to the actors

but could safely assume they would understand his intentions.

The power of the visual medium in the theatre can lie either in its approach to realism - the idea of art mocking nature - or in its poetic stylisation of reality, where symbolism and artificiality enclose a multiplicity of meanings which in some mysterious way induce a spontaneous understanding. Rotrou's visual technique embodies just such a degree of artificiality. His actions and gestures are seldom realistic, but stylised (almost visual clichés) and full of the symbolism of human striving. The language of gesture is very immediate and universally understood, and encapsulates certain truths about the human condition which words are inadequate to convey. Hence Rotrou develops a combination of aural and visual drama, gradually rejecting over the years the Pre-Classical tradition of spectacle and ornamentation for its own sake in favour of a more complex and integrated theatrical experience. The spectator's eye is made to receive as much information as his ear. Preference for concentrated symbolism rather than empty spectacle suggests that Rotrou was trying to align the techniques of visual drama with his use of folk motifs, so as to evoke a direct, primitive response from the audience with the strongest possible emphasis on the immediate dramatic experience itself.

5.3 STRUCTURAL UNITY.

We established in Chapter 4 that structural unity in Rotrou's early plays is achieved through a complex system of dynamic contrasts, apparent at every level of the drama and shaping each play into a self-consistent organic whole, whose parts are intimately related to each other by means of symmetry and balance. The principles behind this are aesthetic rather than rational. Despite the growing influence of

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reason upon drama, Rotrou continues with this same principle throughout the whole of his work.

Inevitably, since Rotrou does make some concessions to classical formality in the later plays, we notice a diminution in the use of certain types of contrast. "Liaison de scène", for example, when strictly adhered to, excludes the possibility of juxtaposed contrastive localities in the same act. However, this is more than compensated for by the increase in certain other types of contrast. The polarisation of character types, for example, is more marked in the later plays, the use of the doubles motif increases, and the thematic preoccupations of the later drama are expressed exclusively in terms of conceptual polarities. Extremes of every kind are set in opposition to each other in such a way as to highlight, through contrast, the absurdity and danger of such polarities and to produce a resultant sense of equilibrium - both as a philosophic tenet (moderation and the via media) and as a structural mechanism which generates a satisfying dramatic experience. We shall first of all look at the variety of contrasts to be found, and then consider in more detail the significance of their continued use.

Folk motifs are an important source of contrast: the extreme opposites of personality in the doubles motif and in disguise, the rags to riches (or vice versa) implication of discovered parentage, the contrast of magic and ordinary everyday normality, madness as the alternative to sanity. Inherent in all these is the basic thematic contrast of illusion and reality. In Les Sosies, Amphitryon's servant discovers he has a double, and becomes so confused between his real self and the illusory one that he loses all sense of identity. The same happens to his master. In Act IV sc4 a comic stichomythic repartee underlines the

"dédoublement": one statement made by two halves of "one" person - with half a line each. The motif is used in such a way as to erode the traditional distinctions between illusion and reality and hence undermine one's confidence in absolute distinctions of any kind. Cassie (Crisante) is the classic doubles figure: "the representatiom by one and the same person of two distinct beings"[5] - distinct and opposite, to the extent that the play is virtually divided into two halves, Acts I & II presenting the negative, evil side of Cassie, and Acts III & IV the nobler, more civilised side striving to subdue the animal instincts which lead him astray. Cassie's "split personality" is thus externalised into the actual division of the play into scenes and acts. Use of the alter ego can also be found in Bélisaire, Célie, Don Bernard de Cabrère and Cosroès. Nearly always it is accompanied by the motifs of disguise and madness, and all combine to create powerful contrastive forces at work in the body of a play. These are then developed and extended by other levels of contrast, for example: between character, between scenes, and in the use of language.

Between character types we find a great variety of contrasts: serious/comic, master/slave, virtuous/evil, positive/negative, human/divine etc. The most frequently occuring of these is undoubtedly the master/slave relationship (always involving the contrast of serious and comic). It is depicted in a number of different ways, all denoting, over the years, the gradual domination of slave over master, resulting c.1645 in the eventual supremacy of the confident. The master becomes the servant of his slave, and his nobility of rank and social standing are ironically contrasted with his plaintive dependence upon the superior wit and ingenuity of his theoretical inferiors. The mirror-like reversals and inversions, the paradoxes and ironies of the situation provide a richly

textured fabric, woven entirely out of contrasts, against which to unfold the action of the play. The culmination of this reversal of roles is to be found in Célie and La Soeur, both published in 1646.

Contrast of temperament distinguishes Léocadie and Théodose in Les Deux Pucelles. Léocadie epitomises hatred, selfishness, anger and all the passions of violence and evil, whereas Théodose displays the exact reverse of all these: devotion, selflessness, inner calm, compassion and humility. Symbolically, Léocadie corresponds to the animal (Hell) side of Don Antoine, and Théodose to the virtuous (Heaven) side, the two of them thus depicting the inner struggle of base and nobler instincts taking place within Don Antoine - himself, therefore, a personality divided by contrasting extremes of motivation. The baser instincts of Don Antoine would obviously choose a woman like Léocadie, and, on the same principle, his more virtuous nature would appropriately be drawn to a woman like Théodose. The dramatic conflict of choice between these two women gives rise to the action of the play. Contrast of temperament similarly divides Antigone and Ismène (Antigone). Whilst Antigone stands for all the positive qualities of self-assertion, independence of thought and action, spiritual awareness and conviction, her sister Ismène is held back by an extremely negative personality - she is passive and weak, easily frightened, a conformist with no independence of thought and totally unable to act from fear of becoming involved. The two personalities are characterised linguistically. The language of Antigone is full of active verbs, whereas that of her sister contains largely passive verbs: "céder", "restant" etc. (cf. Act III sc5). In Les Captifs we find the contrast of liberalism and prudishness between the two sisters, Philénie and Olympie, and in Iphigénie, the contrast of spiritual fervour and earth-bound preoccupation with self in the contrast of Iphigénie and her mother Clytemnestre.

Juxtaposed contrasting scenes abound in every play and lend a kind of rhythm to the progress of the action. The contrasts of monologue/dialogue, action/reflection, serious/comic, major characters/minor characters, etc. propel the play along in a "stop-go-stop" jerky fashion which is dynamic and full of life. Each play has a kind of revitalising inner heart beat based upon the immediate juxtaposition of opposites from scene to scene. The process was noted in the early plays (pg.77)and is continued in the later ones. Also continued is the use of parallelism, where a scene or situation is repeated at some later stage in the play with but one significant difference. The effect of this technique is to give exaggerated importance to past events, forcing our memory back to earlier stages in the play and linking past, present and future in a cyclic rather than linear fashion. Some examples of this are: Iphigénie, Act III sc2 & Act IV sc2; Les Deux Pucelles, Act II sc3 & Act IV sc2; Célie, Act IV sc5 & Act V sc3, etc. The combined effect of parallel scenes and juxtaposed contrasting scenes is a poetic interpretation of reality rather than a logical, causal interpretation.

Rotrou uses language as a further level on which to explore contrastive extremes. Extensive use of imagery occurs throughout the whole of Les Deux Pucelles, predominantly concerning the contrast of night and day, dark and light, and all the symbolism related to these two polarities of nature, (blindness/sight, secrecy/openness, confusion/clarity, moral blindness/moral awareness, evil/good, hypocrisy/truth etc.) The play opens at night and this is stressed in a number of ways: references in the dialogue to the darkness, clothing appropriate to night-time and sleeping, a lantern carried around to shed light in the dark, and so forth. Act I and Act II, during which all the major confusions are introduced upon which rests the action of the play, take place at night.

Then as the play proceeds and night gradually gives way to day, so the confusions of night are gradually resolved in the clear light of day. The symbolism can hardly be missed, especially since every scene contains some verbal reference to either night or day. A similar effect is created, although only for the duration of one act, in Venceslas, Act IV, with the use of highly loaded adjectives to tell of the murder in an atmosphere of chaos, darkness and despair. The imagery of dark and light becomes the language of the entire act. Yet another example of this can be found in La Laure Persécutée (Act I sc7, Act I sc11, Act III sc6, Act IV sc8 etc). Also in this play we have the paradox of words being used to say one thing but indicating another. Orantée's obsessional repetition of the word "Laure", in Act IV sc2, suggests exactly the opposite of what he is trying to convey; by repeating Laure's name so many times he proves that he has by no means forgotten her despite his attempts to prove otherwise. Antithesis within the alexandrine line succinctly captures the essence of paradox, and is used to convey the love/hate torment of confused romantics: for example, Théodore in Act I sc3 of Bélisaire and Philénie in Act I sc1 of Les Captifs. This succinct use of linguistic contrasts is found in abundance throughout Rotrou's work.

Contrast is also a source of humour, especially the slap-stick kind of farce associated with fanfaron types - the military braggart or the oafish doctor. The humour arises largely from a sense of incongruity, and this is achieved with the techniques of visual and verbal parody. In Clarice the two comic figures are the fanfaron captain Rhinocéronte and the idiot doctor Hippocrasse. These two characters strut about the stage displaying exactly the characteristics one would imagine from such names, and in each little episode in which they appear we can see Rotrou developing a sustained parody of the chivalric code of heroism (eg. Act III

sc5, Act IV sc6 & 7). The mock heroic battle of Act IV sc7 is the final visual culmination of the comedy built up from their first appearance on stage in Act I, and the dialogue increases the sense of incongruity, with mythological references to the heroes of antiquity. Comedy in Rotrou is generally achieved through some process of contrast,[6] whether the subtle humour of irony or the broader comedy of the fanfaron. It is yet another medium through which to reinforce the web of contrasts within each play.

Many more contrasts than those so far discussed are easily discovered from a careful study of almost any play by Rotrou. We have already mentioned the use of visual effects in opposition to dialogue, and a close look at the themes of any play will reveal further dimensions of contrasts, this time in the realms of philosophy or ethics. Should man dispense justice or mercy, how can he reconcile the two concepts, are instincts and natural bonds more important than social responsibilities, does man have free will or is his destiny predetermined? Questions such as these pervade all Rotrou's drama, and are worked out in various ways throughout the course of a play by means of all the other contrasts at the writer's disposal. We begin to see that each of Rotrou's plays is a massive complex of interweaving and interdependent contrasts, operating within any one level and across different levels. There is both horizontal and vertical symmetry, and the combination of the two accounts for the tight structural cohesion to be found in the plays. They are (mostly) very skillfully integrated units with an impeccable internal geometry which controls and shapes. It is because structure is internally developed from the gradual build-up of contrasts, and is not externally imposed upon the material, that the plays have such a strong sense of freedom and spontaneity.

As we observed when examining the early plays, Rotrou's particular

approach to structure reinforces our impression that we have here a dramatist whose work recaptures the primitive dramatic experience of ritual.[7] The audience should become subliminally aware of the patterns woven by the contrasts, but consciously react to what is apparently spontaneous, unsophisticated drama free of formal restrictions. In Rotrou we see the subordination of structure to the immediacy of the dramatic experience itself. One of the most important continuing characteristics which distinguish Rotrou's drama is this principle of gradual internal development of structure from the interplay of contrasts. It is quite different from the classical approach which externally imposes certain restrictive patterns upon the material. In Rotrou, form grows from within. The principle is so distinctive, and such a marked characteristic of Rotrou's work, that we feel we must disagree with Professor Knight's observation that Rotrou: "seems to have no manner truly his own".[8] Observation of the plays reveals just the opposite.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS.

All the basic characteristics of Rotrou's dramatic technique established in the early plays are found to occur consistently throughout his later work as well. Despite the climate of change in French drama during the mid-seventeenth century, Rotrou's work at heart remains unchanged. He displays throughout his writing life a feeling for drama which looks back beyond theoretical sophistications to the simple universal impulse to enact meaningful rituals. The folk motifs are the semantic foundations of this primeval drama - simple and direct, they crystallise basic problems of the human condition in powerful images buried deep in the subconscious of all people. The visual medium is integrated to produce a fully three-dimensional

dramatic experience, and Rotrou's particular approach to structure ensures that each play is a coherent unit, aesthetically shaped but not too rigidly formalised.

We therefore claim that to his death Rotrou continued to write a very individual and distinctive type of drama, whose content and form were uniquely appropriate to the expression of the writer's personal dramatic vision.

However, we must not ignore the fact that the 1630's and 40's were important years in the maturing of Rotrou from a young inexperienced writer to a very successful dramatist and responsible public official. They were also of supreme importance for French drama as a whole; in fact, the years from 1630 to 1650 were probably the most important twenty years in the entire history of the theatre in France (cf. Scherer[9] and Garapon[10]). We are therefore dealing with a unique period of time which fostered not only the development of Rotrou as an individual dramatist, but also the maturing of French drama as a whole, from its unformed youth in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the classical mastery of seventeenth-century High Tragedy. It would consequently be surprising if Rotrou the individual were not in some way affected and influenced by the general climate of change surrounding him, and if this did not appear in some way in his work. Although he does not alter his own inner vision of the place and purpose of drama in society, he does make certain modifications, in the light of new ideas, to aspects of his technique.

In Chapter 6, therefore, we shall look at Rotrou's gradual incorporation of some of the principles of Classicism into his plays, and assess the extent and importance of this.

NOTES.

1. By "later plays" is meant those plays published after 1640 and contained in Vols. IV & V of the Oeuvres de Jean Rotrou, edited Viollet le Duc, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1967.

2. Jacques Scherer, La Dramaturgie Classique en France, Paris, Nizet, 1951, page 382.

3. Jean Rousset, La Littérature de l'Age Baroque en France, Librairie José Corti, 1954, page 54.

4. Shakespeare, All's Well That Ends Well, Act II sc3 (The Arden Shakespeare, Methuen, London, 1967, page 50).

5. Otto Rank, The Double: A Psychoanalytical Study, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1971, passim.

6. H.C.Knutson, The Ironic Game: A Study of Rotrou's Comic Theatre, Univ. of California Press, 1966.

7. Northrop Frye, A Natural Perspective, Columbia Univ. Press, 1965, see in particular page 59.

8. R.C.Knight, 'A Minimal Definition of Seventeenth-Century Tragedy' (French Studies, Vol. X, 1956, page 298).

9. Scherer, ibid., pages 427-428.

10. Robert Garapon, 'Les Dramaturges Français, Les Acteurs et Le Public au Dix-Septième Siècle' (French Studies, XXVII, 1973, pages 1-8).

6. CLASSICAL FEATURES.

At various stages throughout this thesis, Rotrou's plays have been compared, either implicitly or explicitly, with classical dramaturgy. It is now perhaps time to try and put Rotrou's exact relationship to classical drama into reasonable perspective. Our main source of information about the development of Classicism in France will be Scherer: La Dramaturgie Classique en France,[1] Corneille's Trois Discours[2] and La Pratique du Théâtre[3] by the Abbé d'Aubignac. Scherer considers that the important developmental years of 1630-50 should all be called Pre-Classical, and that Classicism as a dramatic epoch does not truly begin until after the Frondes - that is, after 1652.[4] Consequently, since Rotrou died in 1650 and wrote his last play probably a year or so before his death, his drama can never strictly be called classical, and we should not expect to find in it much more than tendencies towards those features which, in later years, would constitute the principles of Classicism. Here, then, is one reason why we should not seek to find much classical regularity in Rotrou's work.

The second reason is derived from our observations in Chapters 4 & 5, that the kind of drama Rotrou was writing and the particular dramatic vision he held were totally unsuited to the rigid formality of classical doctrine. We may also add here that the major revolutionary impetus behind Classicism was undoubtedly the new cult of reason, and this resulted in the widespread promulgation of two concepts (ultimately derivable from Aristotle) - "le vraisemblable" and "le nécessaire" - as being the fundamental logical tenets of drama. Rotrou's view of the universe, however, as far as we can ascertain from the plays themselves, is one where the symbolically significant

is a far more powerful influence than the realistically credible (viz. the continuing importance of folk motifs), and where causal necessity is frequently violated by the sudden intervention of the supernatural in the affairs of man to disrupt his ordered view of the world and to bring about events which cannot be rationally explained. Hence, underlying Rotrou's drama we find the opposite concepts of the "invraisemblable" and the "imprévu", - another reason why his work could not accommodate much in the way of logical classical rules.

A further point to be born in mind is that Rotrou was not a theorist. He wrote plays, assisted in their production and was a practical man of the theatre, but as regards dramatic theory he kept utterly silent. This was quite unusual. The development of Classicism in France was the cause of unceasing theoretical disputes, and nearly everyone who wrote plays (and many who didn't) had something to say about this particular rule or that particular interpretation of Aristotle. The "Querelle du Cid" in 1637 typifies the ferment of ideas being aired about drama, its theory and practice.[5] Rotrou's silence at such a time forces us to the conclusion that he was little concerned with new ideas and theoretical rules, and more interested in getting on with the practical business of writing successful plays that pleased the public and worked as drama - regardless of whether they "obeyed the rules" or not. He was interested in what did work, and not what ought to work. If this assumption has any truth in it at all, then we would hardly expect Rotrou to rush into experimenting with new ideas, but would rather expect him to display practical caution and admit any changes slowly and only when they had been proved valuable. This accounts for the fact that, although Corneille may have referred to Rotrou as his master[6], in practice Rotrou lagged behind Corneille in the use of classical principles, and was possibly prompted into

considering them more closely only after seeing with what skill and success Corneille was able to put them into effect.

Finally, we must examine the influence of Aristotle upon Classical thought - the confused interpretations about his statements in the Poetics and the anomalies which subsequently arose. If we then bring Rotrou's drama and dramatic principles into this arena, an interesting discovery will be made. It is by now a generally accepted fact that Renaissance critics of Aristotle severely misinterpreted ideas contained in the Poetics and also misunderstood the significance of the document as a whole:[7]

> "It is still, perhaps, necessary to begin by emphasising that it is not a manual of instruction for the would-be playwright. Aristotle's main intention was to describe and define what appeared to have been most effective in the practice of the best poets and playwrights, and to make suggestions about what he regarded as the best procedure. The misconception, still to some extent current, that he was laying down a set of rules for composition arose with the Renaissance critics. For example, it was Castelvetro who, in his edition of the Poetics published in 1570, formulated in rigid terms the 'Aristotelian rules' of the three unities - the unities of time, place and action. In fact, Aristotle only once mentions time in relation to dramatic action."

He does not mention unity of place at all! The confused ideas about what Aristotle was thought to have said and was thought to have considered important were passed down over the years. Hence, in d'Aubignac, we find the idea that "a single revolution of the sun" must mean day-light time only[8] - about ten hours (never mind Aristotle's qualification of "or thereabouts" which he never even considers). The ten hours he then manages to reduce, by application of logic, to about three. Surprisingly we find similar thinking in Corneille's third Discours, although he does at least refer to the qualifying "or thereabouts".[9] The most amazing thing of all is that the unity of time principle is made into such a theoretical issue, when Aristotle mentions

it only once, and then almost in passing, in a paragraph dealing primarily with epic poetry. Such over-concentration on what were obviously in Aristotle just passing observations, typifies Post-Renaissance confusion over the whole idea of theories in drama. The principles of Classicism appear to have been, in the main, a combination of disproportionately formalised ideas from Aristotle and an excessive application of unimaginative rationalisation. It was only thanks to the practicing playwrights, especially Corneille, that any degree of common sense and flexibility was introduced into the system at all.

The gulf between theory and practice widens when we look at Rotrou's drama, which rarely conforms to any of the rigid tenets of classical theory. Now as we have seen, many of the so-called "Aristotelian rules" were in fact the mistaken formalisations of mere passing observations and speculations made by Aristotle about the drama of his day. They were not rules and not rigid concepts, and in fact were not issues that he discussed much at all. Perhaps in this respect Rotrou was right to absent himself from theoretical debates and maintain silence. There is, however, one issue about drama which Aristotle deals with at some length and obviously considers, from the amount of space he devotes to it, to be of central importance. This is the matter of primacy of action in drama. Aristotle's view is that in life character is subordinated to action because it is the product of action, and thus similarly, in drama, character can only be manifested in action and must therefore play a subordinate part to it. In discussing Sophocles, Aristotle remarks:[10]

> "In another sense he is like Aristophanes, in that they both represent men in action, men actually doing things. And this, some say, is why their works are called dramas, from their representing men doing things."

Primacy of action over character drawing is thus inherent, for Aristotle, in the very concept of drama. He goes on to expand this

idea when talking specifically of tragedy:[11]

> "Of these elements the most important is the plot, the ordering of the incidents; for tragedy is a representation, not of men, but of action and life, of happiness and unhappiness - and happiness and unhappiness are bound up with action. The purpose of living is an end which is a kind of activity, not a quality..... Tragedies are not performed, therefore, in order to represent character, although character is involved for the sake of the action. Thus the incidents and the plot are the end aimed at in tragedy, and as always, the end is everything.

Aristotle is being quite clear here. Tragedy is the representation, not of men, but of action and life. It is not performed to represent character, but to depict the meaningful deeds and activities in which man engages and which shape and define a man's identity. The focus is thus on external, visible actions and not on internal psychology. It is strange to find that this one principle which is important and is clearly stated in the Poetics should be one of the few Aristotelian precepts that classical drama did not follow. Dedicated observance of the three unities, "bienséance" and "vraisemblance" conspired in time to channel classical tragedy into the representation of a psychological crisis point, with emphasis mainly on character and internal psychological motivation, (the tragedies of Racine, for example). Classical concentration tends to result in a theatre that is inward-looking, rather than dramatically representing life as Aristotle recommends.

Thus we have a paradox. The major theoretical issues of Classicism centered around points which Aristotle either never actually made or made only "en passant", whereas one of his more fundamental arguments was contravened as a result of over-zealous adherence to the "en passant" observations. In contrast to this we have Rotrou, who paid little attention to the finer points of unity of time and action etc., but wrote instead a drama that entirely observed the Aristotelian principle of primacy of action. In seeking to capture the ritual

spirit of primitive drama, we have seen that Rotrou emphasises actions, gestures, expressions, all the external manifestations of men "doing things", for it is in what they do and the patterns they weave in doing that an interactive dialogue with Life is established and the individual defines himself and his place in the scheme of things. Individual character is seen as largely irrelevant to this pattern of meaning - hence Rotrou's use of symbolic types. Self-knowledge comes through action, not introspection, and the actions themselves are more revealing than the personal motivations behind them. We thus find that, intentionally or not, Rotrou closely follows the spirit of Aristotelian drama (a spirit which can only be fully understood by reference to others of his works, especially the Ethics - this will be further discussed in Chapter 8). We do not know if Rotrou had any first hand acquaintance with the Poetics, or any other work by Aristotle, but it is curious to discover the degree of consonance that exists between their basic attitudes to drama in its relation to life.

The above points have been made to put into proper perspective the real relationship between Rotrou and Classicism. They underline what a tenuous relationship it was, and reveal the absurdity of trying to judge Rotrou's plays purely by traditional classical standards. However, by bearing these points in mind, we are now in a better position to examine and evaluate those features of Classicism which do begin to make an appearance in the later plays.

6.1 UNITY OF PLACE.

Rene Bray warns against treating the three unities "en bloc" as one dramatic rule since "en réalité, elle n'a pas l'unité historique et logique qu'on lui suppose." Our observations of the confusions and

contradictions surrounding the unity of time alone would tend to support Bray's idea,[12] and so we shall treat each unity separately. Certainly with Rotrou's plays this is most appropriate, for he clearly considers them to be separate issues and, whilst gradually adopting modified forms of the unities of time and place, always puts unity of theme above any kind of unified action.

Corneille remarks[13] that unity of place is not an Aristotelian or Horatian concept, but that it developed as a logical consequence of unity of time and the need for vraisemblance. Any single action taking place in twenty four hours or less must necessarily be restricted to a limited area, and the stage on which that action is depicted can logically represent only one specific locality. Scherer agrees with this sequential development,[14] pointing out that whereas unity of time was being discussed and put into practice before 1630, unity of place does not occur until well after 1630, and then only imperfectly. However, in Rotrou we observe the reverse sequence. Chronologically, he first gradually reduces the diversity of locations used (1635-40), thereafter consistently representing only one town, or one street, or one palace (1640 onwards); then, in consequence, he cuts down the time duration accordingly (1640-50), although not necessarily to as few as twenty four hours. After 1640, every play by Rotrou observes a modified form of unity of place, but not all of them respect unity of time. For Rotrou unity of place seems to be the primary issue, not for any theoretical reasons, but as a result of the "mise en scène".

We observed in the earlier plays (see Chapter 3) that a wide variety of localities would occur in just one play, taking the action from town to country, across seas to foreign lands, into prisons and palaces, and covering a colourful canvas of places that encompassed, in their

diversity "toute l'étendue de la terre".[15] A good example of this is La Belle Alphrède. Although Rotrou had excellent artistic and thematic reasons for thus varying the locality of the action, the practice presented a number of production problems for "décor simultané" (see pg51). For practical reasons some modifications were called for so as to give the actors more freedom to move about the stage without appearing to travel through France, London and the Orient in so doing. Since Rotrou was a practical dramatist and not a theoretician, and since any reduction in the variety of locations used was really a measure contrary to his aims in drama (which were to portray man against a wide universal perspective), we can only conclude that he did gradually adopt greater unity of place for thoroughly practical reasons such as the one suggested here. Hence, by 1640 (and in some cases, before then, eg. Les Sosies and Antigone), we find that all Rotrou's plays observe a modified form of unity of place like that described by Corneille:[16]

> "Je tiens donc qu'il faut chercher cette unité exacte autant qu'il est possible; mais comme elle ne s'accommode pas avec toute sorte de sujet, j'accorderais très-volontiers que ce qu'on ferait passer en une seule ville aurait l'unité de lieu."

Nothing so extreme as strict "unité exacte" is ever found in any of Rotrou's plays (even in Cosroès, it is impossible for all scenes to take place in just one room), but the more flexible "unité de ville" is a reasonable description of the kind of restriction found in his later work. We are told in Don Bernard de Cabrère that "la scène est à Saragosse, dans le palais du roi", and the action takes place in various parts of the palace; in Antigone the action is confined to the city and city walls of Thebes; Bélisaire takes place in and around the Emperor's palace at Constantinople; for Don Lope de Cardone the action returns to Saragosse, including the town streets, the palace and a prison tower in the palace; Florimonde takes place entirely in the countryside, in some unidentified open spot surrounded by a wood; etc...

In each case, although Rotrou has considerably confined and localised the action, he has still preserved some degree of variety in the contrasts between outdoors and indoors, palace and prison (St. Genest, for example), open fields and dark woodland. These contrasts he develops and exploits in much the usual way, thereby seeming to have lost very little in terms of continuity of dramatic effect, but having gained appreciably in practical terms by opening up greater acting areas on the stage and, to some extent, "decompartmentalising" the stage.

Rotrou does not really seem to have been following a unity rule. His fundamental dramatic principle of contrast could not admit strict unity of place anyway, and in fact necessarily requires a variety of locations from which contrast may be derived. Thus the theory behind unity of place is alien to his dramatic approach. It is more fruitful to see thic apparent move towards greater classical formality as a practical measure taken for practical, not theoretical reasons, and resulting in no real change to Rotrou's overall "unclassical" conception of drama. He restricts the diversity of localities used in any one play in such a way as to leave himself, in practice, with nearly as much scope for variety as he had in the early plays, and thus his basic technique remains unchanged.

6.2 UNITY OF TIME.

Rotrou seems to have been rather less convinced of the need for unity of time, although once having limited the localities of the action, he was presumably not averse to restricting the time duration accordingly. However, he by no means regarded it as an unbreakable rule and, when the subject matter dictated, was quite ready to ignore the limitation of twenty four hours in favour of extended time. In Bélisaire, for example,

it is quite clear that the action could not possibly take place in as little as a day; it is more appropriate for the play's theme to consider the time span to equal, not one revolution of the sun, but one revolution of the Wheel of Fortune - however long that may be. In La Soeur it is deliberately not mentioned, leaving to our imagination alone any time scale that we might wish to impose upon the events of the play.

However, since unity of time was a much discussed issue in the late 1630's and 40's (its alleged violation constituted one of Chapelain's criticisms[17] of Le Cid, for example), one imagines that Rotrou must have sensed a certain pressure to conform, or at least to make some public acknowledgement of the existence of the "rule". Also there is the fact that in his later work Rotrou does begin to show a preference for less complex action composed of only one or two "fils", compared with earlier plays which sometimes, as in the case of Les Occasions Perdues, had as many as four "fils". The simpler action, as well as being easier for the audience to follow, could more believably be contained in twenty four hours, or at least a fairly short period of time. Thus it is that, after 1640, we find a number of Rotrou's plays which clearly take place well within a day, and some before 1640 (like Crisante and La Laure Persécutée) which, it is implied, have a very short time span.

In some of the plays where Rotrou keeps to twenty four hours or less, he makes sure that we are left in no doubt of the fact. It is as if he had a rather "tongue in cheek" attitude to all the fuss being made; he responds to the rigorous demand for unity of time by an equally rigorous and exaggerated obedience, which consists of continual and unnecessary references by various characters throughout the entire

course of the play as to exactly what time of day it is. Clarice is an excellent example of this. In Act I scl we are told that it is very early morning: "Le jour commence à poindre, et la lune pâlit", and in the next scene dawn breaks: "le jour croît". In Act II sc2 an arrangement is made for later in the day, and the phrase "dès ce soir" is repeated four times. Act IV sc3 takes place in the evening with references made to the morning's arrangements: "Oubliez-vous le soir les propos du matin", Act V sc2 reminds us that it is still the same evening, and Act V scll takes place rather later, at about midnight. The final scene of the play, Act V scl3, verifies the by now hardly surprising conclusion that all the action has in fact taken place in the space of only one day:

> "Quel bonheur est le mien! O dieux! en même jour
> Voir à tant de mépris succéder tant d'amour!"

This rather amusing behaviour on the part of Rotrou is to be found in a number of other plays also, and suggests that he had a sense of the ridiculous. His practical preference for dealing with the time issue was clearly to avoid mentioning it altogether and to leave it to the imagination of his audience. This solution was more in accord with his technique in the earlier plays of expanding the time dimension to such an extent as to create a sense of timelessness. Hence, after a period of experimenting during the 1640's with different ways of dealing with unity of time, he seems to decide finally to ignore the issue and, in La Soeur, Don Lope de Cardone and Florimonde for example, the action neither blatantly exceeds twenty four hours nor is particularly contained within twenty four. Instead, the time dimension is ignored, deliberately left vague and made irrelevant, creating the desired sense of timelessness.

6.3 UNITY OF ACTION.

Although we find that some of Rotrou's later plays (especially Cosroès

and Venceslas) do observe unity of action, it is still perhaps more meaningful to look for thematic unity in these plays, and as we did with the earlier drama, to replace the criterion of unity of action by that of unity of theme. The former occurs sporadically and only in the later plays, whereas the latter is appropriate for all Rotrou's work. In a drama which represents the symbolically significant rather than the realistically credible, it is the overall theme rather than the specific action which focuses our attention. The incidents of the plot are so arranged as to disclose a theme that has a significant bearing on experience:

> "a theme that can be taken out of the particular action and universalised in the form of an important judgement on some aspect of human life." (18)

The specific action of a play (whether unified or not) are subordinated to the universal truths they are intended to dramatise, and this is so for every play by Rotrou.

Emphasis on unity of theme in Rotrou accords well with our other observations: the fundamentality of folk motifs; characters who are emblematic, not realistic; general absence of verisimilitude; a preference for some form of miraculous dénouement etc. Although in Cosroès, for example, the action may be said to be unified in the classical sense, we have already seen (Chapter 5.1) that the play is better understood on the grounds of thematic unity as exemplified by the interdependence of folk motifs. It is only by looking at the play in this way that we begin to see the cyclic pattern of history within which Siroès is trapped. Unity of action may well serve on a purely practical basis to eliminate irrelevant episodes which could detract from the overall "flow" of the play, but it is by no means a central principle of Rotrou's drama and is unnecessary to the accomplishment

of the writer's aims.

The question of irrelevant episodes raises another problem where Rotrou's plays are concerned. The classical rule regarding unity of action insists that:

> "aucune action accessoire ne doit pouvoir être supprimée sans rendre partiellement inexplicable l'action principale." (19)

Any incident which can be removed without disrupting the central action is thus deemed to be irrelevant to that action and hence to the entire play. (This was the conclusion reached by Chapelain[20] regarding the role of the Infante in Le Cid). Most of Rotrou's plays, both early and late, contain irrelevant episodes in the strictest sense of this rule and may be said to offend against unity of action in this respect. In fact, certain plays like Bélisaire, Clarice and Don Bernard de Cabrère seem to be composed entirely of disconnected episodes, any one of which could be removed without rendering the play meaningless. One of Rotrou's methods for disclosing thematic significance is to dramatise a series of small cameos, each representing aspects of the theme and linked together, not causally and sequentially, but by a common thread running through each, such as a recurring character or situation. Thus in Don Bernard de Cabrère we find the theme of universal order where each individual has his appointed place and his destined role to play. Don Lope de Lune represents man fighting against this sense of predetermination by trying to move outside his appointed station and attain a social position which is not meant for him. The play consists of a variety of "cameo" incidents in each of which Don Lope tries and fails to break free of his destined role in life. The reverse attitude of quiet acceptance is seen in his friend Don Bernard who, although playing a minor part, voices the philosophy of the play and therefore features in the title. The two friends and their respective attitudes to Destiny form the

linking element between the different incidents of the play. There is no real action in the classical sense and the play reaches no real dénouement. Instead the five acts are an aesthetic dramatisation of a theme which is presented in a purely artistic style, the incidents of the play being developed in the manner of fugue variations.

There is another way in which Rotrou makes use of apparently irrelevant episodes. The phrase "O! le doux passe-temps" is used in Rotrou's comedies and tragi-comedies to herald an "irrelevant episode" or scene which interrupts the flow of the main action and exists solely as a comic interlude, a brief respite for audience and actors to indulge in a little light relief before proceeding with the serious business of the play. One or more such "doux passe-temps" scenes may occur in the course of a play and they are deliberate breaks in the continuity of the action. Even the characters admit as much. Act III sc7 of Amélie is classed as a comic interlude by a version of the key phrase spoken by Amélie (eg. "L'aimable passe-temps"), and the incident is closed by a statement suggesting that this was only a temporary break before returning to the main concerns of the play:

> "Ce passe-temps est doux: mais il est tard, adieu;
> Et demain, du matin, soyons tous en ce lieu."

Some other examples of "doux passe-temps" scenes are: Les Captifs, Act III sc4 & Act V sc4; Clorinde, Act III sc3 & Act V sc3; Les Sosies, Act III sc2; Clarice, Act IV sc7 & Act V sc9; Florimonde, Act II sc2. There are also a great many of these scenes in the earlier plays. They indicate a deliberate disregard for unity of action and are used for the purposes of comedy and comic contrast.

Classical unity of action is to be found mainly in Rotrou's later tragedies where he seems to be aiming for a stark, concentrated effect

with which to heighten the tragic experience (for example: Crisante, Iphigénie, Venceslas, Cosroès). However, Rotrou's is not a tragic universe, and a very small proportion of his plays are really tragedies. (Of the four plays quoted above, it is an easy matter to make out a case for Iphigénie and, more particularly, Venceslas as being tragi-comedies, not substantially different from plays like La Laure Persécutée and L'Innocente Infidélité.) The vast majority of Rotrou's plays depict a more subtle cosmic system than the one implied in tragedy, and suggest a complex web of interrelationships between human and divine which, to a certain extent, is reflected in the multiplicity of actions contained in each play. Philosophically and artistically tragedy is a genre alien to Rotrou's drama and he uses it seldom. Multiple actions disclosing a unified theme is a more appropriate description of his work, and even in the plays where we find unity of action, it is thematic unity that predominates and is the key to our understanding of the play.

6.4 LIAISON DE SCENE.

Liaison de scène really developed as a logical consequence of unity of place, since absence of liaison implied (from experience with the Pre-Classical theatre) a change of locality in the middle of an act. Both Corneille[21] and Chapelain[22] supported liaison de scène as a good dramatic practice, and it brought the contingent benefits of continuity of action (d'Aubignac insisted that "le théâtre ne devrait jamais être vide"[23]) and sufficient time for a new actor to enter in a dignified manner and make his way to the front of the stage. Liaison de scène began to be used generally between 1630 and 1640, was established as an excellent practical technique resulting in better theatre, and after the Frondes was used nearly all the time.

We have already seen(pg127) that Rotrou's interest in unity of place was as a practical measure to overcome some of the production difficulties inherent in "décor simultané", and that consequently it was the one unity rule which he applied consistently after 1640. Not surprisingly, therefore, we find the gradual use of more and more carefully liaised scenes during this same period, with a hesitant start in the late 1630's and early 1640's, improving to complete and unbroken liaison de scène in the last few plays. Liaison of scenes saved much time previously wasted while the audience looked at an empty stage and waited for new actors to enter after the previous group had exited. Empty periods were a serious fault in the theatre (there could be several in one play) and indicated a dramatic weakness which presumably Rotrou was to some extent aware of and anxious to overcome. Crisante (1639) is a four act tragedy with comparatively few scenes per act (4,4,6,5). Unfortunately there is a break in liaison de scène at least once in every act, and with so few scenes these empty periods would be very noticeable. They are particularly injurious in this case since in every other way Rotrou goes to great lengths to build up a suffocating atmosphere of tension and horror, with unremitting violence and misery building up to the culminating peak of tragedy on which the play ends. The stress is upon continuity of horror. The empty breaks in each act through faulty liaison de scène severely mar this effect by introducing points of discontinuity where the action is temporarily interrupted. The tension is broken and so too is the spell cast by the play.

Crisante is a fairly early example of the consequences, in terms of dramatic effect, of an imperfect dramatic technique; published in 1639, it was probably first performed c.1635. Similarly flawed is Les Sosies. The Plautus original has all scenes perfectly liaised, but on the grounds of bienséance Rotrou was forced to alter much of the Amphitruo, and it

is where he has added new scenes or changed the order of others that the breaks in liaison occur. These breaks spoil the overall comic effect. There is no play published before 1640 in which Rotrou manages complete liaison de scène throughout, although one or two are very nearly complete (Antigone has 4 breaks; Clorinde has 2; Amélie has only one break plus a number of awkward 6-line scenes to act as liaison scenes).

The first play by Rotrou to observe complete liaison de scène is Iphigénie, and after that there is a gap of several years until Venceslas, Cosroès, Florimonde and Don Lope de Cardone which equally do so. The intermediate plays like St. Genest and Clarice have at least one break (and sometimes more). Nevertheless, on average there are far fewer breaks in liaison in plays written from about 1637 onwards compared with Rotrou's earlier work, and this is obviously related to his preference for greater unity of place which begins to occur at about the same time.

The topic of liaison de scène forces us to look again at Rotrou's last published play: Florimonde, published in 1653. Viollet le Duc considers that it was probably first performed before Don Lope de Cardone, but nevertheless still after Rotrou's death (i.e.after 1650), and also draws our attention to an old edition of the play which states: "c'est le dernier ouvrage de Rotrou".[24] Hence, while recognising that in certain ways Florimonde is more like the very early plays by Rotrou, Viollet le Duc does not really question its later origins but just implies that it is some kind of dramatic anomaly. Scherer, on the other hand, does question the play's date of origin. Although published after Rotrou's death, he considers that it was probably written and first performed many years earlier, suggesting an approximate date of 1635 at the latest,

thus grouping the play with others that it apparently ressembles eg. Le Filandre, La Diane, La Célimène, and so forth.[25] Scherer supports this by pointing to all the archaic aspects of the play which occur only in Rotrou's earliest work and certainly never after 1640. The play is a pastoral comedy exactly like Le Filandre, with the typical pattern of "chaînes d'amoureux" pursuing each other through a pastoral landscape and indulging in frank sexual escapades. There is little regard for the proprieties of bienséance, all the characters are simple country folk, the language is full of lyrical outbursts and preciosity, and in every respect the play seems to belong to what Scherer calls "la dramaturgie archaïque".[26]

The above observations are superficially accurate, and we could add even more features which apparently mark the play as an early work (for example, a very high visual content with emphasis not so much on small significant gestures as on spectacular activity filling the stage). However, despite all this evidence, a closer look at the play reveals a number of features which indisputably mark it as a late work, post 1640, and possibly one of the last plays that Rotrou wrote. Liaison de scène is one of the major keys to this contention. As we have already seen, none of Rotrou 's plays before 1640 show complete liaison between scenes, and it does not occur regularly until the second half of the decade; Florimonde has perfect liaison de scène in every act. A modified form of unity of place begins to occur in Rotrou's plays in the mid 1630's and every play after 1640 observes the generalised "unité de ville" - as does Florimonde. The early plays tended to be full of lengthy monologues and récits (what Scherer calls "longueurs") which slowed down the pace of the action. (La Diane has 25 monologues). In his later work Rotrou eliminates all these "longueurs" in favour of short "aparté" comments in the middle of a scene full of action.

Florimonde has hardly any monologues. Instead the information is conveyed to the audience either in short asides (Act I sc3, Act V sc6) or by resourceful use of the scenery (with characters hidden on stage and able to overhear a conversation, eg. Act III sc4, Act IV sc2 & 3, Act V sc4).

The above points all concern dramatic technique and indicate that Florimonde is a relatively late play by Rotrou, since these particular technical modifications belong exclusively to his later work. Further evidence may be found from the play's contents (theme and attitude) which appear so similar to many of the early plays but in fact express quite opposite points of view. Florimonde, like Le Filandre and La Diane, is a comedy in the pastoral tradition, with lyrical evocations of the beauties of nature, a rural setting and country characters - but the pastoral idyll fails. The natural evocations do not create an aura of idyllic romanticism, but instead are regarded with scorn and contempt as something superficial and, above all, artificial and hence meaningless. (For example, Act I sc2 & 3). From the beginning of the play to the end pastoral conventions are used to undermine and destroy the pastoral ethos. Florimonde is tinged with a certain cynicism and bitterness, unusual in Rotrou's work, and there seems to be no place for the trite artifices of Arcadia. Théaste, the Arcadian lover, is subjected to scorn and ridicule, is forced to suffer the humiliations of reality, and is used and abused by everyone (eg.Act I sc3, Act II sc2, Act III sc1, Act V sc2 & 3). The play as a whole seems deliberately to be stripping life of its artificialities and meaningless conventions, with the accent on true naturalism rather than all the stylised versions. As Rousset points out:

> "Tout dans la pastorale émane d'une tradition. Rien de plus conventionnel que cet appel à fuire les conventions; rien de plus masqué que ces coeurs simples; le combat

contre l'artifice se livre à grands coups d'artifice."[27]

In Florimonde alone Rotrou seems to tire of the conventions and of their inherent hypocrisy, and argues instead for openness and honesty. This is reflected at the thematic level also, where the customary illusion/reality relationship is changed. Normally in Rotrou's theatre we see illusion represented as a vehicle for the revelation of truth. When a character indulges in disguise (eg.Tyndare in Les Captifs) or some other form of deliberate illusion (eg.Genest acting the role of Adrien in St.Genest) he enters upon the one path which paradoxically leads him to self-discovery and the eventual revelation of some hitherto undiscovered truth. Illusion is a positive, necessary factor in this process and, by virtue of its special relation to reality, becomes a kind of truth in itself. Florimonde, however, is the one play by Rotrou which contradicts this philosophy. For the first and only time illusion remains what it is, the false, the unreal; it does not lead to any discovery of truth, it has no part in reality, and it is seen as an obstacle which the characters must overcome in order to reach the truth. Likewise reality remains intact - there is no borderline in the play where the two intermingle. They are seen as distinct, separate and opposed. In Act V a variety of pretences are brought to light which are all seen to have failed in their purpose, for as Florimonde herself observes, "la feinte" cannot be turned into "l'effet" simply by wishing it so:

"Admirez, Cléonie,
De ce présomptueux l'aveugle tyrannie;
Il veut que malgré moi je brûle de ses feux;
Il veut, la force en main, s'attribuer mes voeux,
Que je sois en effet ce qu'il m'a vu paroître,
Enfin être vainqueur parce qu'il a cru l'être.
J'ai fait mentir mes yeux; il est vrai que j'ai feint,
Mais je l'en avertis avant qu'il fut atteint;
Je n'ai pu rebuter son ardeur violente;
Il s'offrit à payer les mépris de Cléante;
Et s'étant fait tromper, enfin mal satisfait,
Me veut faire passer de la feinte à l'effet."

Act V sc3

This attitude is unique in the whole of Rotrou's theatre. As well as attacking the artificiality of the stylised romantic poses of the pastoral tradition, Rotrou questions the value of all forms of role-playing, seeing them all as artificial and contrary to the nature of truth. The changed attitude perhaps suggests an older man disenchanted with the naivety of youth, although at best we can only speculate on this. Basically Florimonde must remain somewhat of an enigma in Rotrou's drama. However, we feel we can state with some certainty that his handling of the pastoral conventions and the illusion/reality theme in the play has nothing in common with the spirit of his early work, and, along with the formal modifications we have already noted, suggests a very late date for the play, many years after the 1635 date proposed by Scherer.

6.5 BIENSEANCES.

The doctrine of fitness, or literary propriety, although discussed by Aristotle, is really a Horatian dramatic principle. Every part and every aspect of a work must be appropriate to the nature of the work as a whole, and nothing unnecessarily revolting or unnatural should appear on stage. The gradual development of concern for "les bienséances" on the French stage was due largely to the increasing number of respectable middle class women frequenting the theatre, and there arose during the years 1630-1640 "une crise de la conscience morale dans le théâtre pré-classique."[28] Much Greek and Latin source material was substantially altered and "toned down" to render it inoffensive to refined sensibilities, although as Scherer points out, the modifications generally only went as far as surface appearances (linguistic niceties) with the result that very risqué subjects continued to be presented under the veneer of polite language.[29]

It took a very long time for the bienséances to exert any real power over the French theatre, and during the years that Rotrou was writing we notice only a slight moderating effect. However, he was aware of this moralising conscience in the theatre as early as La Bague de l'Oubli, for in the "Epître au Roi" he writes:

> "J'ai tant travaillé à la rendre capable de plaire,
> je l'ai rendue si modeste et j'ai pris tant de peine
> à polir ses moeurs que, si elle n'est belle, au moins
> elle est sage, et que, d'une profane, j'en ai fait
> une religieuse."

The statement is amusing , since there are a number of grounds on which the play could be criticised for impropriety, but it does show Rotrou deliberately making some attempt to acknowledge changing public taste. However, in general, all the early plays contain something to which objection could be made on the grounds of bienséance: frank sexual references, horrific scenes of bloodshed, violence and murder, sword fighting, scenes from "la vie quotidienne" etc. The fact that these features appear in such abundance testifies to the fact that whatever change was taking place in public taste, it was slow to gain ground and met with the natural resistance of human inertia. For example, throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, bienséance proved virtually powerless to combat the influence of "le goût du spectacle horrible". Continuing fascination with the macabre and horrific accounts to a certain extent for the great success of Crisante, which was well received by the public and not thought to be particularly offensive to anyone's taste, despite the fact that it is really quite a gruesome play.

Bienséance particularly objected to the representation of acts of daily life on stage (sleeping, eating, dressing etc.), but this too proved somewhat resistant to change. It is interesting to note that Rotrou's Les Sosies, Act II sc3 retains the Plautian "nous lavâmes

ensemble", a public reference to a rather private activity. In contrast, thirty years later, Molière feels obliged to respect propriety rather more, and substitutes the more modest "ensemble nous soupâmes", (Amphitryon, Act II sc3).

In a number of plays (eg. Agésilan de Colchos, Act III; Les Deux Pucelles, Act II sc5; La Soeur, Act II sc2) Rotrou plays with ideas like incest and homosexuality to the limits of permissibility, always avoiding total impropriety by letting the audience know that such things belong to the realms of illusion and in reality all is chaste and honourable. Nevertheless the innuendoes are perfectly clear, and La Soeur was published in 1646. Rotrou adopts the same principle as other writers of the time, and uses correct euphemistic phraseology to describe in the most discreet terms a number of thoroughly indiscreet situations - what Chapelain so aptly called "envelopper les ordures".[30]

Basically Rotrou's work was not much affected by the restrictions of literary propriety, since it predated the era when bienséance had much real influence (i.e.post 1650). In some of the very last plays, like Venceslas and Cosroès, we do find a relatively high degree of dramatic propriety - murders committed off-stage, restrained language, etc. - but even then Rotrou seems unable to resist the power of visual horror and, in Act IV sc5 of Venceslas, he introduces on stage the blood-stained sword which killed Alexandre. In this Rotrou is following his instinct for what constitutes good theatre, not in a detached, intellectual sense, but in purely practical terms. His concern is to create, as powerfully and as immediately as possible, a specific atmosphere of suspense and fear, and the visual medium is his choice. In the same sense as a picture is worth a thousand words, for Rotrou the visual medium can evoke impressions and sensations which words are powerless

to convey. Sensitivity to the medium with which he is working overrides more academic and culture-bound concerns for what is and is not thought proper for people to see at the theatre. The same guiding principle lies behind Rotrou's approach to all the other aspects of Classicism which we have looked at. If a new idea about drama results - in practical terms - in better theatre, and in no way conflicts with his personal vision of the place and function of drama in society, then Rotrou shows himself to be amenable to change and innovation. If, on the other hand, those two criteria are not met, then at most he pays only lip service to theory and continues in his own way, guided by past experience and the artistic sensibility for what will "work" on stage. To those critics who would point to continuing classical irregularities even in Rotrou's very last plays, and would voice the contempt of Molière's Lysidas (La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes, sc6), Rotrou would probably reply in much the same spirit as Dorante:[31]

> "Vous êtes de plaisantes gens avec vos règles, dont vous embarrassez les ignorants et nous étourdissez tous les jours..... Je voudrais bien savoir si la grande règle de toutes les règles n'est pas de plaire, et si une pièce de théâtre qui a attrapé son but n'a pas suivi un bon chemin."

6.6 "LE VRAISEMBLABLE" AND "LE NECESSAIRE".

The twin principles of "le vraisemblable" and "le nécessaire" constitute the underlying rationale of classical doctrine. One might translate them by the concepts of plausibility and consistency. In application, so that every aspect of a play may be strictly plausible and follow, as a matter of logical consequence, one upon another, it becomes necessary to derive from these two first principles such corollary adjuncts as strict unity of time (with dramatic time as close to real time as possible), strict unity of place (since it is implausible that one stage should represent more than one locality), and

a host of similar rules which must inevitably combine to rob the theatre - by definition a medium of imagination - of all that is imaginative. Such uninspired reasoning is exactly what we encounter in d'Aubignac's ideas on dramatic theory, although thankfully he represented one of the more extreme points of view in the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, many of the classical disputes in the mid-seventeenth century were at root disagreements about how far one could logically extrapolate from the underlying principles of "le vraisemblable" and "le nécessaire". (For example, was it plausible in Le Cid for so many events to take place in the space of only twenty four hours? Was it dramatically credible - as well as morally acceptable - for Rodrigue to get right into Chimène's room moments after killing her father?[32])

Of the two concepts, vraisemblance was probably more basic to the classical aesthetic in that it appeared to incarnate the new spirit of reason. Its opposite, deliberate invraisemblance, defied the dictates of reason and clearly bordered upon an irrational, supernatural view of the world which could not be circumscribed by rules and logic. Hence it was that, on the grounds of invraisemblance, classical theory objected to "spectacles merveilleux", all forms of magic and the marvellous, dénouements of the "deus ex machina" type, certain forms of unlikely behaviour and action, and so forth. However, as we have already seen, Rotrou's drama, being in spirit a reaffirmation of the non-rational universe, retained throughout an underlying core of invraisemblable elements whilst superficially adopting, for some of the later plays, a veneer of plausibility. The classical ideas that Rotrou took seriously appear in his work as practical modifications designed to produce plays that flowed more smoothly in performance. Any other classical elements make only a superficial appearance and in no way affect the basic spirit of the drama. Vraisemblance is a

concept in every respect alien to Rotrou's understanding of drama and the dramatic experience. Although in his later work we find less overt magic and an apparent concession to verisimilitude in the plausible explanations accompanying the "covert" magician, the folk motifs remain essentially the same, the dénouements are illogical and amazing, characters are emblematic and full of cosmic significance, the most unlikely and implausible events occur, and the drama is at heart pure fantasy.

In perpetuating a drama of the invraisemblable, Rotrou was not only following an artistic sensitivity for the primal experience of folk ritual. He was also responding to an undercurrent of popular feeling in the mid-seventeenth century which, regardless of rules or reasons, felt a spontaneous affinity for plays featuring the inexplicable. The danger inherent in Classicism, as in any other code of practice derived from complex and highly debated theories, was of being highly élitist, to the extent of excluding the people it was designed to entertain, and thus representing only the cerebral predilections of an intellectual minority. Rotrou was not a theorist and had little time for intellectual debates on the theory of drama. He felt with and for the people who responded from the heart, and seems to have recognised consciously, as they did unconsciously, that the dramatic experience was essentially one of spontaneous imaginative faith, and not a process of cerebral rationalisation. In 1637 an unknown "bourgeois de Paris", author of a pamphlet on Le Cid entitled Le Jugement du Cid, expressed exactly this popular, primitive response to drama:[33]

> "Des pièces comme Le Cid seront infailliblement courues, principalement de nous autres qui sommes du peuple, et qui aimons tout ce qui est bizarre et extraordinaire, sans nous soucier des règles d'Aristote."

All Rotrou's plays, both early and late, are permeated by the spirit of

the invraisemblable. Even his most classically regular plays, Cosroès and Venceslas, are, as we saw when looking at the folk motifs, in essence dramatisations of the humanly inexplicable. They are both plays proffering a non-classical view of the human animal and his motivation. The ending of Venceslas is a sudden twist, a "coup de théâtre" not psychologically justified by the characters as given and a triumph for emotion over duty. The relationship between Cosroès and Siroès is not rationally justifiable either; rather it is a kind of haunting. The "bizarre et extraordinaire" are everywhere in Rotrou's work. They remind us that as a dramatist he was a writer of the people, and as a thinker he was a Pre-Renaissance spirit in Lafew's modern scientific world[34] which made "trifles of terrors" and reasoned away the "unknown fear".

6.7 CONCLUSIONS.

In this chapter we have examined the major tenets of Classicism and their relevance to Rotrou's later drama which, in date, was contemporary with the beginnings of the period of supremacy of classical doctrine in France. Bearing in mind what we have discovered of Rotrou's dramatic technique from his early plays, it becomes evident that, although he was sensitive to new ideas and flexible enough to incorporate them where appropriate, he made no changes unless they brought immediate practical benefits in terms of stage performance and at the same time did not conflict with his overall aims in drama or his particular conception of the dramatic experience. There were probably two major reasons for this. Firstly Rotrou was a practical man of the theatre and not a theorist. Consequently he would be interested in the practical improvements a new idea would bring and not in the theoretical perfections it ought to bring. Secondly the rational

aesthetic of Classicism was basically alien to Rotrou's view of man and the universe and thus also alien to his sensitivity as an artist. Hence it is inaccurate to speak of his later plays as being more classical, since this suggests an artistic "volte face" in later life, as if Rotrou suddenly started to write "Classical Drama" and to adopt a rationalist philosophy quite contrary to that informing his early work. In fact, there is no such violent change of attitude to be found anywhere in Rotrou's work. Rather, the most startling thing about his drama is the high degree of philosophic and artistic consistency that we find throughout. Any concessions to Classicism take the form of practical innovations adopted with a view to improving a play in performance. The aesthetic underlying and shaping the play remains distinctly non-classical.

One might well accuse Rotrou of being "canny". He took what he felt to be the best aspects of classical drama and used them to perfect his own technique, while at heart retaining his individuality as an artist and his integrity as a thinker. He used the principles of Classicism for what they could add to his dramatic technique and ignored the rest as being irrelevant to his dramatic vision. It is thus to misunderstand Rotrou as a dramatist to think that in any way he became "more classical" in later years.

Looking back over this chapter we find the repeated occurence of 1640 as the significant "break-point" in Rotrou's drama. Only in plays written after 1640 do we find complete liaison de scène; it is from 1640 onwards that we find a modified form of unity of place being used regularly, etc. It is no coincidence that the year 1640 also marks a "break-point" in Rotrou's private life. In 1639 he abandons the literary scene of Paris and returns to his native Dreux to take up a

public administration post, and settles down in 1640 to married life with public and family responsibilities. At thirty he is already a dramatist of considerable professional experience and repute, free now for the first time to "take stock" of all he has learnt and to write at a leisurely, unhurried pace. The intellectual freedom to reflect that Dreux affords him is a major factor in the maturing of Rotrou's drama.

The other major influence must surely have been Corneille. Although there is great doubt as to the extent of their friendship,[35] common sense tells us that there must have been considerable professional respect and admiration between the two men. Their plays competed for popularity, Rotrou's at the Hôtel de Bourgogne and Corneille's at the Théâtre du Marais; they were both among Richelieu's "cinq auteurs"; they were both very popular and successful playwrights; Rotrou pays tribute to Corneille in Act I sc5 of St.Genest, and Corneille considers that, entirely on their own, "M.Rotrou et moi ferions subsister des saltimbanques."[36] It seems highly likely therefore that in Dreux Rotrou reflected not only on his own past experience in the theatre, but also on Corneille's different but equally successful talent as a dramatist. Many of the modifications we find in Rotrou's work after 1640 are in line with the practical, moderate position later to be advocated by Corneille in 1660 (in the Trois Discours) and found in his plays well before that date. (For example, the generalised "unité de ville" - rather than the strict and impossibly constraining unity of place - that is manifest in Le Cid.)

The year 1640 brings the two factors together: the intellectual freedom of Dreux in which to reflect upon the changing dramatic climate in France, as exemplified in the work of Corneille. Thus it

is that, although we can trace the beginnings of a number of changes to Rotrou's dramatic technique in plays of the middle and late 1630's, it is not until the 1640's that we find these modifications adopted as an integral part of the drama and used with ease, confidence and success (eg. the use of liaison de scène).

Having looked in Chapter 5 at the underlying structural and philosophic continuity throughout Rotrou's drama, and in Chapter 6 at the later modifications made in the light of new classical ideas, we come to see that there is a significant artistic coherence at the heart of his work which leads us to see all the plays as a unified dramatic canon. This will be examined in Chapter 7.

NOTES.

1. Jacques Scherer, La Dramaturgie Classique en France, Paris, Nizet, 1951.
2. Pierre Corneille, Oeuvres Complètes, éditions du Seuil, 1963.
3. L'Abbé d'Aubignac, La Pratique du Théâtre, édition Martino, Paris, 1927.
4. Scherer, ibid., page 427.
5. For the full collection of contemporary documents relating to the quarrel, see Armand Gasté, La Querelle du Cid, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1970 (réimpression de l'édition de Paris, 1898). Also, the analysis given by H.T.Barnwell in his edition of Pierre Corneille, writings on the theatre, Oxford, Blackwell, 1965.
6. Jules Jarry, in his Essai sur les Oeuvres Dramatiques de Jean Rotrou, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1970, mentions on page 163 "ce nom de père que Corneille, selon une tradition accréditée, donnait à Rotrou." The tradition is also mentioned in Robert Garapon's article, 'Rotrou et Corneille', (Revue d'Histoire Littéraire en France, 1950, page 385).
7. Aristotle, Poetics, Penguin Classics, 1974, page 18.

8. d'Aubignac, ibid., page 123.

9. Corneille, ibid., page 844.

10. Aristotle, ibid., page 34.

11. Aristotle, ibid., pages 39-40.

12. René Bray, La Formation de la Doctrine Classique en France, Paris, Hachette, 1927, page 240.

13. Corneille, ibid., page 845.

14. Scherer, ibid., page 110ff and pages 181-184.

15. Sarrasin, 'Discours de la Tragédie', in Oeuvres, Paris, 1658, pages 327-328.

16. Corneille, ibid., page 845.

17. Jean Chapelain, 'Sentiments de l'Académie sur Le Cid', in Opuscules Critiques, ed. Hunter, Paris, 1936, pages 168-169.

18. A.A.Parker, Approach to the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age, The Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Councils, (Diamante VI), 1957, page 5.

19. Scherer, ibid., pages 98 and 438.

20. Chapelain, 'Sentiments de l'Académie', page 189.

21. Corneille, ibid., page 841.

22. Chapelain, 'Discours de la Poésie Représentative' in Opuscules Critiques, page 129.

23. d'Aubignac, ibid., see pages 240-248 on "liaison de scène".

24. See the Notice to Florimonde, Vol. V, page 411.

25. Scherer, ibid., page 450.

26. Scherer, ibid., pages 426-427.

27. Jean Rousset, La Littérature de l'Age Baroque en France, Librairie José Corti, 1954, page 33.

28. Scherer, ibid., page 384.

29. Scherer, ibid., page 386.

30. Chapelain, Lettres, ed. Tamizey de Larroque, Paris 1883, Vol. II page 684.

31. Molière, 'La Critique de L'Ecole Des Femmes', sc6, in Oeuvres Complètes, Garnier, edition Jouanny, 1962 (page 505).

32. Chapelain, 'Sentiments de l'Académie'.

33. To be found in Gasté, La Querelle du Cid, pages 230-240.

34. Shakespeare, All's Well That Ends Well, The Arden Shakespeare, Methuen, London, 1967. The quotation comes from Act II sc3 (page 50).

35. Garapon, in 'Rotrou et Corneille' (Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France, 1950, pages 385-394) denies any real friendship between the two writers and suggests only professional respect.

36. Garapon, ibid., quotes this statement as the only firm piece of evidence to suggest any communication between Corneille and Rotrou at all. (page 385).

7. THE PLAYS AS A CANON.

The term "canon," when applied to musical composition, refers to a piece of music with different constituent parts each taking up the same theme successively. It is in this sense that we now feel justified in describing Rotrou's work as a canon, i.e. a dramatic output of different constituent parts (the individual plays) each manifesting the same coherent attitude towards drama, its composition, function and significance. From a detailed textual analysis of how the individual plays work, as practical drama intended for stage performance, we have been able to reach an overall appreciation of:

(a) the basic artistic precepts informing all the plays,

& (b) the assumptions about Man, Life and human behaviour which emerge from the plays.

These two factors shape Rotrou's work into a dramatic canon unified by its unchanging artistic vision and metaphysical viewpoint.

In Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis we have discussed the two major features of Rotrou's work. Firstly, its "deep structure" consistency from play to play, and secondly its "surface structure" modifications over the years, reflecting the gradual development and maturation of Rotrou's technique. The former we may attribute to certain enduring philosophic beliefs and artistic sensibilities in Rotrou the man, and the latter to temporal changes in the state of the art plus the influence of Rotrou's own practical experience. Thus in order to understand the particular conception of drama and human life that Rotrou brings to his work, we must look to the area of consistencies - of "deep structure universals," to borrow a term from Linguistics - for it is here that we find the conceptual foundations upon which the individual plays are built.

From an examination of both early and late plays we have found two recurring principles which form the tight, internal infra-structure of Rotrou's work. The first is an artistic principle which sees drama as essentially a ritual experience of mystic significance and which is reflected in the use of folk motifs and in the stylised visual drama that Rotrou develops. The second principle is philosophic in nature and emerges by implication from the structural juxtaposition of contrastive extremes.

Thus, as regards "deep structure universals," we find two fundamentals in Rotrou's work which appear in play after play - folk motifs and structural contrasts - and these point us respectively to a particular artistic feeling for drama and a particular philosophic attitude. We shall look at each of these in turn.

7.1 ROTROU'S CONCEPTION OF DRAMA.

As this has been dealt with earlier (in Chapters 2 and 5.1,) we shall here briefly recapitulate the most important points.

Consistently throughout all his work Rotrou repeatedly uses a number of simple folk motifs - deeply rooted themes and images from ancient folk culture - as the building blocks of his drama. We have been able to show that this is as true for and as fundamental to a late play like Cosroès as it is to a relatively early work like La Bague de l'Oubli.

The folk motifs constitute a set of stylised and highly artificial conventions which the audience must accept without question in order to be able to enter fully into the spirit of the drama. Reason and common sense, those sophisticated adult faculties, have no place in

this process and must be abandoned in favour of a childlike acceptance of whatever rationally unlikely things may happen. Rotrou uses the folk motifs deliberately to undermine the spectator's critical faculties and encourage a willing imaginative participation in a world of fantasy and make-believe.

That the motifs should have this subversive effect on the spectator's reasoning powers is explained by the existence, in primitive folk cultures throughout the world, of a number of common - and hence, universal - images and themes concerning the attempts of early man to come to terms with himself and his relationship with the Cosmos. With the passage of time and the civilisation of society, these symbols have passed into literature, to be perpetuated in the motifs of fairytale and legend told to children the world over. It is precisely these fairytale elements which constitute the basis of Rotrou's drama, and their appeal is two-fold. They reawaken in the adult audience something of the spontaneity and ingenuousness of childhood, when anything was possible and everything could be magical - and herein lies their power to lull reason to sleep. But more importantly, they are a link with mankind's remoter past when the dramas were enacted meaningfully, not just symbolically.[1] The motifs link Rotrou's drama with an ancient and world-wide tradition which has timeless appeal and significance. Rotrou draws away from all that is local and specialised in the drama of his day (viz. his attitude to classical theory) and works towards uncovering a primal dramatic structure that any human audience could respond to and find meaningful. The motifs are the semantic foundations of this primeval drama, crystallising basic problems of the human condition in powerful images buried deep in the subconscious. These images, descendants of the original, powerful attitudes of primitive man towards the Unknown,

are a part of our human heritage,[2] and in a civilised era, although apparently less relevant, are no less powerful.

Drama has its birth in ritual - a gathering of the people to engage, through words and significant movements, in a spontaneous enactment of some religiously or humanly meaningful ceremony,[3] and it is in this sense that drama for Rotrou is a ritual experience. His overall approach to the theatre, his use of folk motifs and mime sequences, his evocation of primitive, spontaneous responses, all link his drama to this age old experience. The plays, in spirit and technique, are very close to the unsophisticated but direct traditions of folk drama. In ritual we see the origin of the symbolic motifs, and begin to appreciate the power with which they were once invested. Rotrou uses them because they are so basic to the human psyche,[4] and in order to regenerate the primal ritual experience.

In noting the repeated appearance of folk motifs in all Rotrou's work, the particular ways in which they are used, their inter-relationship with one another and with the visual elements of a play, and particularly their importance to the overall structure and effect of a play, we have ultimately been able to derive the significance of their appearance in terms of a statement about Rotrou's conception of drama and the dramatic experience. The idea of drama as a ritual experience, and all that such a concept implies, entirely divorces Rotrou's work from the rational classical ethos with which it was, to some extent, contemporary. Equally, it is inadequately described as "baroque," since the underlying tensions and anxieties that are associated with baroque restlessness are absent in Rotrou. His work is neither classical nor baroque because it is ultimately resolved, and resolved in a supernatural and almost superstitious faith in the interdependence

of the strivings of Man and the strivings of the Numen. As in ritual, Rotrou's drama is a drama of faith, appealing more to Pascal's "esprit de finesse" than to the "esprit de géometrie." It is quite tangential to the classical (and, one might add, the Post-Renaissance) view of Man in the same Pascalian sense; that: "le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point." (5) As we noted in Chapter 5.1, Rotrou seems to react to Renaissance humanism by a reaffirmation, in terms of ritual drama, of a non-rational universe where reason is inadequate in the face of miracles and mystery.

7.2 ROTROU'S PHILOSOPHY OF MODERATION.

We have been able to show (Chapters 4 and 5.3) that structural unity throughout all Rotrou's plays is achieved by a complex pattern of inter-related contrasts operative at every dramatic level. The technique is hierarchical, beginning with the play as a whole which will explore certain themes contrastively, down to contrastive acts, scenes, characters, images and even individual lines. The inter-dependence of each of these levels is assured by contrastive relationships between them, and is responsible for the tight structural cohesion found in the plays. Each play is an organic whole, with its parts intricately related to each other and developing from each other as a result of this structural principle. An idea, explored in terms of contrast, will modulate into a tangential but related idea which is in turn subjected to examination by contrast. The process, repeated at all levels, ensures an integrated structure.

It emerges, from studying a number of Rotrou's plays, that the structural principle of dynamic contrasts is also, by implication, an argument for moderation as a moral attitude. Significantly, the contrasts Rotrou uses

are generally extremes of one sort or another, polarisations of character or attitude or behaviour. These extremes are then contrasted against each other in such a way as to highlight the absurdities and dangers of such polarised positions. Through the techniques of extreme contrast, it is extremism itself which appears in an unfavorable light, and in the realms of human behaviour is seen as an inadequate and dangerous way to approach life. The audience is left no choice but to infer that the proper attitude lies somewhere in between the two extremes - the "happy medium." In the plays, the only "characters" who are ever seen to succeed in the realms of the absolute are the gods, the fates or the other supernatural agencies of power who, by definition, are omnipotent. Man, with all his necessary human limitation, must play a more moderate role and adopt less absolute attitudes towards moral questions about which he can never have absolute knowledge. Thus in Venceslas, for example, we see the dramatisation of the Justice and Mercy theme in terms of contrasting extremes. On the one hand the King must adhere rigidly to the letter of the law in all cases, and on the other hand is tempted to ignore what is thought to be right, for the special case of his own son, thus himself appearing to be criminal and unjust in his disregard for the law. These irreconcilable opposites of morality find their only resolution, Rotrou suggests, in the tangential path of humility and self-sacrifice. For Venceslas, the extremes of justice and injustice are equally abhorrent to his sense of humanity, and only the mid-way solution of mercy, offered at the price of his own abdication from power, can avoid the pitfalls of the two extreme alternatives.

When looking at the early plays, we considered a number of examples of Rotrou's moderate philosophy as it emerged from the structural juxtaposition of contrastive extremes (see Chapter 4.) We shall look at a few more examples of it in his later plays in order to demonstrate

how fundamental to Rotrou's work, both early and late, this moral philosophy may be regarded to be.

In Cosroès we see a number of extreme states embodied each in a separate character; Sira represents lust for power, an intense energy source ruthlessly and exclusively dedicated to the fulfilment of her own ambitions; Narsée argues for the supremacy of natural instincts and feelings as exemplified in family love; Cosroès is mad and sees the world through the tortured vision of a madman; Siroès is an idealist, incapable of compromise, and torn between the two extremes of justice and filial love which he cannot reconcile within himself. The action of the play can be described as the turmoil which results when so many extreme and mutually exclusive moral universes come into conflict. Specifically through the structural juxtaposition of contrasts we begin to see how subjective and relative are each of these assumed absolutes, and hence how wrong it is for Man to confer the objective authority of a moral law upon that which is really an internal, subjective inclination. The Narsée episode (Act III sc4 and Act IV sc1,) which occurs late in the play and (in the classical sense) is irrelevant to the main action, is a typical example of Rotrou deliberately using the structure of the play to illustrate his opposition to extremism. Instead of didactically preaching about moderation, he allows it to emerge as an inevitable conclusion from the nature of the dramatic structure. Siroès, as we have said, represents the conflict of two extremes of behaviour, and Narsée embodies one of these - the Natural Law of instincts and family love for which she argues vehemently in Act III sc4. But when, in Act IV sc1, it is revealed that she is not Sira's daughter and is in no way related to Sira, our faith in the Natural Law is undermined. It ceases to be a perfect absolute and becomes, like all the moral extremes of the play, just another subjective interpretation of the universe.

As such, it is just as fallible a guide for human behaviour as the individual who believes in it. By contrasting in these two juxtaposed scenes the extremes of fanatical devotion to the ties of blood and the total absence of any such blood relationship, Rotrou exposes the limitations of human understanding and thus implies that a more moderate approach to the problems of life would be appropriate. Underlying Cosroès is the moral message that one cannot abandon the mid-way path of judicious common sense for the pursuit of any absolute and extreme principle, since absolute objectivity is not the province of Man. Morality in human behaviour is a relative concept - different for each individual - and one cannot (as Siroès tried to do) place the responsibility for one's own actions at the feet of an external Moral Law.

Moderation, the "via media," implies by definition a certain balance, a point of equilibrium between two extremes. Dramatically, Rotrou uses structural contrasts to achieve a sense of æsthetic equilibrium within each play; philosophically, contrasts are used to suggest a universal principle of balance and order, where all things have their appointed place and harmony is maintained by the avoidance of extremes:

> "Quand d'un oeil trop ardent le soleil voit la terre,
> Le ciel s'en obscurcit, il s'en forme un tonnerre,
> Et par l'excès d'ardeur qu'il a mal employé,
> L'objet qu'il caressoit est souvent foudroyé.
> Peu de pluie en saison rend la terre fertile,
> Ou trop d'eau la submerge et la rend inutile."
>
> Don Bernard de Cabrère, Act V sc7.

In a universe which observes such judicious moderation in all things, Man has no right to interfere with the natural order by provoking the chaos of imbalance which must follow from extremism.

Rotrou is equally happy presenting his argument through comedy. In La Soeur we find him mocking the fashion for preciosity and bienséance as social constraints upon female discourse by suggesting, through the

character of Eroxène, that the logical result of so many linguistic restrictions on the subject of love is total silence.

> "Le silence parfois est un docte entretien;
> Et le voir de ma part, sans lui pouvoir rien dire,
> C'est lui faire sur moi connoître son empire;
> C'est d'un style éloquent et digne de ses voeux
> Expliquer mes soupçons, mes soupirs et mes feux.
> O sexe malheureux et chétif que le nôtre,
> Où l'amour se trouvant naturel comme à l'autre,
> Son pouvoir redoutable et ses succès douteux,
> L'aveu n'en est pas libre et s'en trouve honteux,
> Où l'on permet d'aimer, non d'avouer qu'on aime,
> Où la pudeur travaille autant que l'amour même."
>
> Act II sc 3.

The absurd and extreme lengths to which preciosity will go in restricting what a lady may say is, for Rotrou, tantamount to forbidding her to speak at all. In fact, since her words can convey so little, her silence is probably a great deal more eloquent. A less extreme attitude to linguistic propriety might at least make speech a worthwhile activity.

Crime as a negative moral absolute which society must expunge is a concept that Rotrou explores in a number of plays (e.g. Venceslas, St. Genest, La Soeur, Antigone.) Antigone explores the differences between divine and human interpretations of the concept "crime." This involves the distinction between absolute and relative. The play makes it clear that the absolute is the prerogative of the gods, and that human values must of necessity be relative and imperfect. Hence, human behaviour should be suitably moderate, avoiding the presumptiousness of extremism. Antigone and Polynices are both extreme and die for their extremism. Ephise is the only voice of moderation in the play, and in retrospect was probably right, but the play is a tragedy (a universe "régi par la loi du tout ou rien"[6]) and because of their extremism the characters must die. Here we have another reason why so few of Rotrou's plays are tragedies. His is not a tragic universe, but one of moderation and compromise where mercy

tempers justice and happiness can always be found somehow by modifying one's behaviour. The happy ending which rounds off most of his plays is guaranteed by the intervention, towards the end of some potentially tragic and extreme situation, of the voice of moderation, either in the form of Providential guidance or simple human wisdom from a character who can restore a sense of perspective and balance. In L'Innocente Infidélité, for example, Evandre is the voice of moderation between the extreme passivity and fatalism of Parthénie and the egoism of Hermante. He combines a high degree of self respect and self confidence with quiet spiritual humility, and thus avoids the extremes of either.

Both at the comic level and the serious level there are very many examples, throughout the whole of Rotrou's work, of the use of contrasting extremes specifically to denigrate extremism and suggest the mid-way path of moderation. Rotrou's attitude to the "via media" bears a close relationship to Aristotelian ethical philosophy, both in terms of conceptual content and presentation of an argument. Both men are concerned with how we can achieve happiness in life, and both believe the answer lies in a course of moderation between extremes. Aristotle, although a pupil of Plato, eventually came to reject Platonic idealism. Plato had taught that goodness exists independently of man, and remains to be discovered if man can be properly trained, for goodness and other such moral qualities are absolutes. Thus a course of action is either right or wrong in an absolute sense and independently of anyone's opinion. Aristotle could not accept the idea of objective moral absolutes, but instead saw morality as a relative matter, concerning the way people actually behave in a given social context. What we think of as moral virtues are not "a priori" objective absolutes, but qualitative directional habits

which take on a degree of reality and become part of our ethical system by means of the process of repeated use. In rejecting moral extremism at the conceptual level, Aristotle also rejected all extremes of behaviour, and advocated the path of moderation as the way to happiness for man. This, in the Nicomachean Ethics,[7] he called the Doctrine of the Golden Mean. The mean is itself a relative concept, and is different in each case and for each person. It is the responsibility of the individual to discover by his actions his own moderate position between any two extremes.

> "The man who knows his business avoids both too much and too little. It is the mean he seeks and adopts - not the mean of the thing but the relative mean." (8)

> "Moral excellence is a mean. It is namely a mean between two forms of badness, one of excess and the other of defect, and is so described because it aims at hitting the mean point in feelings and actions." (9)

Thus we can see that there is a philosophic consonance between Rotrou and Aristotle which consists in the following major points:

a) morality is not an objective absolute but a subjective relative defined by individual behaviour in a given social context,

b) our behaviour should therefore be governed by the equally relative principle of moderation between the extremes of excess and defect, and

c) since moral qualities are defined in and by action, it follows that we forge our own moral character in the things we do, and are thus to some extent defined by our actions and must bear responsibility for them.

These are the major ethical points that emerge from both Rotrou and Aristotle, although even on specific issues we find the same kind of agreement between them. For example, Aristotle's distinction between deliberate criminal intent and involuntary error finds its expression in Rotrou in plays like Venceslas and La Soeur with such remarks as:

> "Vous n'avez point péché; l'erreur n'est pas un crime"
>
> La Soeur, Act IV sc4.

Also, both men advocate pity and compassion for genuine error, and not harsh punishment.

The degree of conceptual affinity between Rotrou and Aristotle is matched by the similarity of their method of dramatising the argument for moderation. Aristotle illustrates his meaning in a very concrete way, with little character drawings of extreme "types" who closely resemble some of the types we find in Rotrou and who, when contrasted with their opposite, leave us in no doubt as to the nature of the mean. (For example, his illustration of the extremes of avarice and prodigality.) One of the more amusing types that Aristotle paints so clearly is the braggart, and in this description we see the many "fanfaron" captains of Rotrou's drama:

> "The man who is over-bold is called rash. He gives the impression of over-acting the part, and his courage is a little suspect. At all events he would like people to believe that he is animated by the same feelings as the brave man when danger threatens. So he imitates him whenever he can. For this reason, most rash men are of the forcible feeble type. They swagger a good deal when things look bright, but make themselves scarce in the presence of actual danger." (10)

Aristotle gives us many such clear and succinct word-paintings, and it is this incarnational aspect of his dialectic, plus the use of contrasting extremes, that enables us to draw parallels between his technique in the Ethics and Rotrou's technique in the plays.

It would be possible to find many more points of affinity between the ethical philosophies of Rotrou and Aristotle, although such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this thesis and would really merit a separate study. It has been our intention here simply to highlight the major points of similarity in order to establish an important relationship between Rotrou and Aristotelian thought. Through the structural composition of his plays, Rotrou gives dramatic life to an ethical system which constituted the supreme influence on European thinking from the Middle Ages to the dawn of the Renaissance. We thus feel justified in disagreeing with Geoffrey Brereton[11] who

finds that Rotrou:

> "was hardly a great enough dramatist to create a world of consistent values, however artificial, and to search for this in his varied productions, partially rewarding as that process is with Corneille, would be a futile task with Rotrou. One can find recurrent features and even a development of them from play to play, but little on which to construct an ethical or social background of the kind which can be deduced from the work of a truly major writer."

7.3 CONCLUSIONS

From a detailed consideration of all Rotrou's plays as dramatic constructs intended for the stage and for performance before an audience, we have been able to observe a number of consistent features occurring repeatedly in play after play and which are found to be fundamental to the drama. By appreciating the ways in which there is consistency throughout twenty years as a dramatist, we have arrived at an understanding of the unchanging assumptions about Man, Life and the function of drama which helped to shape Rotrou's work and which underlie the individual plays. It can be seen that the plays form a dramatic canon, unified by a coherent ethical philosophy and a vision of drama as a primitive, ritual experience. The conceptual integrity of Rotrou's work withstands all the vicissitudes of seventeenth-century theatrical innovation and forms the enduring base upon which are built so many different individual plays.

The two principles underlying Rotrou's drama - one artistic and one philosophic - combine to reflect a different conception of Man and the universe from that capable of being conveyed by the classical ethos. Moderation as an ethical precept conflicts with the egoism of classical heroic morality,[12] and the faith-orientated ritual drama looks back to a time before the rational spirit of the Renaissance. Despite being

a contemporary of Corneille, despite writing at a time of major changes in drama, and despite all the cultural and intellectual effects of the Renaissance, in a very fundamental sense Rotrou's drama is mediaeval in spirit and stands witness to a world of faith, humility and wonder.

NOTES.

1. Northrop Frye, A Natural Perspective, Columbia Univ. Press, 1965. See in particular, page 59.
2. Fritz Saxl, A Heritage of Images, ed. Honour and Fleming, Peregrine Books, 1970.
3. Frye, ibid.
4. For example, the strong evidence supporting Jung's theory of a "collective unconscious".
5. Pascal, Pensées, Garnier, 1964, page 146, no. 277.
6. Lucien Goldmann, Racine, Dramaturge, Paris, L'Arche, 1956, page 16.
7. Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics, trans. J.A.K.Thomson, Penguin Classics, 1966.
8. Aristotle, ibid., page 65.
9. Aristotle, ibid., page 73.
10. Aristotle, ibid., page 96.
11. Geoffrey Brereton, French Tragic Drama in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, Methuen, London, 1973, page 174.
12. Paul Bénichou, Morales du Grand Siècle, Librairie Gallimard, 1948. See in particular, page 31: "Les héros de Corneille se chantent d'un bout à l'autre de leur rôle, car la vertu noble ne sait se passer à aucun moment ni d'exaltation, ni de publicité."

8. CONCLUSIONS.

In this thesis we have looked at Rotrou's total dramatic output as a collection of individual plays intended for stage performance, and have therefore tried to judge whether or not the plays would work successfully in the theatre, and whether there is evidence of any coherent and consistent approach to the art of drama to be found underlying the plays.

From a close analysis of individual plays, we have discovered a number of recurring features which come to be seen as "hall marks" of Rotrou's work, characterising it as highly distinctive and unified. The repeated use of elements from folk culture, an imaginative and functional use of the visual dimension, and structural unity through the use of contrasts are the unchanging characteristics of all Rotrou's work which lend it depth and significance - while at the same time ensuring that each play will be visually spectacular and appealing to the audience.

We observed, in the later plays, the gradual development and maturation of Rotrou's skill as a playwright. He shows himself to be a practical man of the theatre, sensitive to changes in dramatic theory and sufficiently flexible to modify his own techniques where necessary in the light of new ideas. However, we have shown that any changes which do appear in his work over the years are of a strictly practical nature, designed to overcome some of the problems inherent in early theatrical stage-craft, and are likewise adopted for practical and not theoretical reasons. Rotrou makes no changes to dramatic technique at the expense of his dramatic vision. We have argued that the rationalism underlying

classical doctrine is fundamentally alien to Rotrou's mystical view of life, and that the egoism of classical man offends against his belief in moderation and humility. Hence it is wrong to think of Rotrou as becoming more "classical" in later years, just because the plays appear more "regular" in the classical sense. Rotrou adopts certain aspects of classical theory for the practical benefits they bring, while preserving in all his work the same un-classical views about life and the function of drama in life. He uses some of the techniques of classicism in a drama which is basically at odds with the classical ethos.

Thus we have found that there are two aspects to Rotrou's work: deep structure consistency stemming from a committed philosophic position, and surface structure development of techniques due to Rotrou's practical sense of good theatre. The drama has its roots in an ancient and world-wide tradition of ritual, symbolism and folk mystique which is then translated into successful seventeenth-century theatre by using imaginative and skilful techniques reflecting the growing sophistication of the French stage.

In Chapter 7 of this thesis we considered Rotrou's dramatic philosophy and his ethical philosophy, both of which have important similarities with Aristotelian thought. The ritual symbolism of the plays lies, to a certain extent, in the meaningful gestures and actions made by the characters and in the patterns of significance woven by these actions. As we saw in Chapter 7, the stress upon action as the chief characteristic defining both drama and human personality is directly in line with Aristotle's concept of drama as the representation of "men doing things".[1] As well as capturing the spirit of Aristotle's Poetics, the plays also translate Aristotle's doctrine of the "Golden

Mean" into the moral plea for moderation which emerges by implication from the structural juxtaposition of contrastive extremes. Thus the thinking behind the Ethics is also germane to Rotrou's work.

The principle which links the Poetics and the Ethics is that of action - Aristotle's view that in life and in drama character is subordinated to action because it is the product of action. Our natures are not formed solely by reference to some absolute and external moral law, but principally by the things we do. We become what we are by the repeated exercise of certain qualitative directional habits which, ideally, should avoid the extremes of excess and defect in order to assure our happiness. If the drama is defined by action and our characters are formed in action, it follows that, in a sense, our whole life is a kind of prolonged drama of self-seeking, with the gradual acquisition of self-knowledge from action. The degree of freewill inherent in this ethical point of view brings with it a like degree of responsibility, both for ourselves and our deeds.

Not surprisingly, a similar although more mystically orientated relationship can be seen between Rotrou's dramatic and ethical philosophies. In ritual drama, the supernatural - in one form or another - constantly intervenes in the affairs of man. It is seen from the action of the plays that there is continuous interaction between the human and the cosmic, with the superior powers of the latter aiding man in the arduous business of life. This is quite different from the classical view of man's situation. The individual is thought to be totally self-reliant, and human nature is exulted to the peak of sublime grandeur, for there is nothing that the human will alone cannot achieve and overcome. This is an extreme view of human

potential, and advocates an equally extreme mode of behaviour. In contrast to this, in Rotrou's ritual drama man has no need to strive alone, and therefore has no need to adopt such an extreme position towards life. It is made clear that extremism is the prerogative of the gods, and man is urged to follow a course of moderation between extremes. Like Aristotle, Rotrou exposes the subjective and relative nature of our moral behaviour, thus making us responsible for our own actions, and revealing the folly of trying to devolve that responsibility upon an abstract law. In the ritual drama the cosmic will hear man and will receive his supplications provided that he does not over-step the bounds of moderation. All Rotrou's extremists are punished and made to suffer in some way, for their extremism is presumptious and threatens to trespass upon the province of the divine. With the stress upon meaningful symbolic actions in ritual, it becomes clear that the link between Rotrou's dramatic and ethical philosophies is moderated action - the process of doing and discovering, interacting and becoming. The moderation consists in responsibility for one's own deeds and humility before God. Self-knowledge comes from action and knowledge of the divine comes from faith.

Having found important similarities between Rotrou and Aristotle at the philosophic level, one is left wondering about the exact nature of Rotrou's metaphysical standpoint. Aristotle, we know, developed his ideas about the primacy of action into a metaphysical system of teleology. He saw the universe as characterised by the notion of purpose - a vast complex of organisms each striving to attain the end assigned to it by Nature. Extrapolating from the idea that our nature is formed in and by action, he came to believe that there is a natural tendency (or teleology) which leads each and every object to seek the achievement of its natural goal, or final form. The alterations that

every object undergoes cannot be understood except in terms of the active purposes involved. The consistent vision running throughout Aristotle's many works was a major influence upon the thinking of the Middle Ages, and was particularly attractive to the theologian, Thomas Aquinas[2], who argued for a Christianised teleology in which the motivating force behind the universe was God. Aquinas made many translations of Aristotle and attempted, against the advice of traditional Christian intellectuals, to reconcile Aristotelian thinking with the major affirmations of the Christian faith. His synthesis was only partially successful, in that he tended to describe God always in abstract Aristotelian terms such as "Unmoved Mover" and "First Cause", and in so doing made cold and impersonal the Being that Christians liked to regard as pure, unbounded love. However, as a theologian, he nevertheless became the most important thinker in Europe for many hundreds of years after his death.

Having posed the question of Rotrou's metaphysical beliefs, and having seen in his drama such clear evidence of strong mystical leanings, we suggest here that his plays may be seen as a dramatisation of aspects of the Thomistic doctrine, and that Rotrou's link with Aristotle may well pass through Aquinas. Since the plays seem to manifest a theological consonance with Thomism and a philosophic consonance with Aristotelianism, one is led to wonder whether Rotrou was not in fact attempting the same synthesis, through the medium of drama, as Aquinas had himself attempted in prose. The whole issue of Rotrou's metaphysical beliefs is outside the scope of this thesis, but it is nevertheless an important question to be answered since it is inevitably raised the moment one begins to consider the nature of the similarities between Rotrou and Aristotle. We have suggested it here as a possible

line of enquiry and put this forward for future research.

NOTES.

1. Aristotle, Poetics, Penguin Classics, 1974, page 34.

2. W.N.Pittenger, St.Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, Watts, London, 1969.

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