



DRAMA

C R I T I C I S M

V O L U M E

21



DRAMA

C R I T I C I S M

Criticism of the Most Significant and Widely Studied
Dramatic Works from All the World's Literatures

VOLUME 21

Janet Witalec
Project Editor

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Preface

D*rama Criticism (DC)* is principally intended for beginning students of literature and theater as well as the average playgoer. The series is therefore designed to introduce readers to the most frequently studied playwrights of all time periods and nationalities and to present discerning commentary on dramatic works of enduring interest. Furthermore, *DC* seeks to acquaint the reader with the uses and functions of criticism itself. Selected from a diverse body of commentary, the essays in *DC* offer insights into the authors and their works but do not require that the reader possess a wide background in literary studies. Where appropriate, reviews of important productions of the plays discussed are also included to give students a heightened awareness of drama as a dynamic art form, one that many claim is fully realized only in performance.

DC was created in response to suggestions by the staffs of high school, college, and public libraries. These librarians observed a need for a series that assembles critical commentary on the world's most renowned dramatists in the same manner as Gale's *Short Story Criticism (SSC)* and *Poetry Criticism (PC)*, which present material on writers of short fiction and poetry. Although playwrights are covered in such Gale literary criticism series as *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)*, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism (NCLC)*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800 (LC)*, and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism (CMLC)*, *DC* directs more concentrated attention on individual dramatists than is possible in the broader, survey-oriented entries in these Gale series. Commentary on the works of William Shakespeare may be found in *Shakespearean Criticism (SC)*.

Scope of the Series

By collecting and organizing commentary on dramatists, *DC* assists students in their efforts to gain insight into literature, achieve better understanding of the texts, and formulate ideas for papers and assignments. A variety of interpretations and assessments is offered, allowing students to pursue their own interests and promoting awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Approximately five to ten authors are included in each volume, and each entry presents a historical survey of the critical response to that playwright's work. The length of an entry is intended to reflect the amount of critical attention the author has received from critics writing in English and from foreign critics in translation. Every attempt has been made to identify and include the most significant essays on each author's work. In order to provide these important critical pieces, the editors sometimes reprint essays that have appeared elsewhere in Gale's literary criticism series. Such duplication, however, never exceeds twenty percent of a *DC* volume.

Organization of the Book

A *DC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** consists of the playwright's most commonly used name, followed by birth and death dates. If an author consistently wrote under a pseudonym, the pseudonym is listed in the author heading and the real name given in parentheses on the first line of the introduction. Also located at the beginning of the introduction are any name variations under which the dramatist wrote, including transliterated forms of the names of authors whose languages use nonroman alphabets.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.

- The list of **Principal Works** is divided into two sections. The first section contains the author's dramatic pieces and is organized chronologically by date of first performance. If this has not been conclusively determined, the composition or publication date is used. The second section provides information on the author's major works in other genres.
- Essays offering **overviews and general studies of the dramatist's entire literary career** give the student broad perspectives on the writer's artistic development, themes, and concerns that recur in several of his or her works, the author's place in literary history, and other wide-ranging topics.
- **Criticism** of individual plays offers the reader in-depth discussions of a select number of the author's most important works. In some cases, the criticism is divided into two sections, each arranged chronologically. When a significant performance of a play can be identified (typically, the premier of a twentieth-century work), the first section of criticism will feature **production reviews** of this staging. Most entries include sections devoted to **critical commentary** that assesses the literary merit of the selected plays. When necessary, essays are carefully excerpted to focus on the work under consideration; often, however, essays and reviews are reprinted in their entirety. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- A complete **Bibliographic Citation**, designed to help the interested reader locate the original essay or book, precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Cumulative Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by the Gale Group, including *DC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *DC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *DC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Title Index** lists in alphabetical order the individual plays discussed in the criticism contained in *DC*. Each title is followed by the author's last name and corresponding volume and page numbers where commentary on the work is located. English-language translations of original foreign-language titles are cross-referenced to the foreign titles so that all references to discussion of a work are combined in one listing.

Citing Drama Criticism

When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

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Jean Anouilh

1910-1987

(Full name Jean Marie Lucien Pierre Anouilh) French playwright.

The following entry provides an overview of Anouilh's works from 1954 through 1999. For additional information on his career, see *DC*, Volume 8.

INTRODUCTION

One of France's foremost dramatists, Anouilh wrote more than forty plays in a wide variety of modes, including tragedy, farce, and romance. Central to his work is a skeptical, often bitter view of the human condition. Discovering and remaining true to one's self in a world of compromise is a theme that continually resurfaces in Anouilh's work. His protagonists typically strive to maintain their integrity in the face of pervasive corruption; however, success in this endeavor often requires existing in a fantasy world or dying for one's convictions.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Anouilh was born in Bordeaux on June 23, 1910. By the age of nine he was already writing plays in imitation of Edmond Rostand; at sixteen he completed his first long play. He briefly studied law at the Sorbonne in Paris, then became a copywriter in an advertising firm. During 1931 and 1932 Anouilh worked as the secretary to the Comédie des Champs-Élysées theatre company. *Le voyageur sans bagage* (1937; *Traveller without Luggage*) firmly established Anouilh in the theater, and for the next several decades his works were staged in Paris with great regularity, even during the German occupation of France during World War II. After the war many of his plays were produced in London and New York. During his career Anouilh won many awards, in both France and America. Several of his plays have been adapted for film and television. Anouilh died of a heart attack on October 3, 1987.

MAJOR WORKS

Anouilh rejected traditional classifications of his works as tragedies, farces, or romances; instead he categorized his plays as *pièces noires* (black plays), *nouvelles pièces noires* (new black plays), *pièces roses* (rosy plays),



pièces brillantes (brilliant plays), *pièces grinçantes* (grating plays), *pièces costumées* (costume plays), and *pièces baroques* (baroque plays). Anouilh's earliest plays were produced during the 1930s and generally fall in the categories of *pièces noires* and *pièces roses*. As the labels suggest, the former plays are dark in tone and explore evil and deception, while the latter include fantastical elements and convey a light-hearted mood. Among the major conflicts Anouilh addresses in both groups are those between wealth and poverty and the burden of the past as it relates to the present. Beginning in the 1940s Anouilh composed a number of plays, classified as *pièces noires*, that adapt Greek myth to modern settings. These include *Eurydice* (1941; *Point of Departure*), *Antigone* (1944), and *Médée* (1953; *Medea*). *Antigone* was the most popular of the three and remains one of Anouilh's most highly respected works.

Following World War II Anouilh's output was dominated by *pièces grinçantes* and *pièces brillantes*. The

pièces grinçantes are marked by black humor, while the *pièces brillantes* convey a less bitter tone and employ witty dialogue. In these plays the conflict between good and evil is not as sharply defined as in Anouilh's early work. Among his later plays are *pièces costumées*, which are based on historical personages, and *pièces baroques*. When using history as a background for his drama, Anouilh drew upon figures of heroic dimension. For example, *L'alouette* (1953; *The Lark*) dramatizes the life of Joan of Arc, and *Becket; ou, l'honneur de Dieu* (1959; *Becket; or, The Honor of God*) concerns Thomas à Becket. The theatrical elements of Anouilh's work come to the forefront in his *pièces baroques*. For example, *Cher Antoine; ou, l'amour raté* (1969; *Dear Antoine; or, The Love that Failed*) the central character is a prominent playwright and the story unfolds as a play within a play. By stressing the artificiality of the theater, Anouilh probes the relationship between reality and illusion and works to create a dramatization of ideas rather than a representation of reality.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Although Anouilh was among the most successful "boulevard" playwrights, having enjoyed many well-attended productions of his works in the Paris theater district, critics have debated his importance in contemporary drama. Some have faulted Anouilh for repetition of theme, for a lack of intellectualism, and for his reliance on theatricality. Others note, however, that Anouilh's strength as a playwright lay in his mastery of stagecraft, which makes his works entertaining, while they at the same time investigate serious themes. Commentators contend that Anouilh's work reflects the classical theater of Molière in its comic portrayal of human folly and misery and the experimental theater of Luigi Pirandello in its overt use of theatrical devices to explore the nature of reality and illusion.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Plays

L'hermine [*The Ermine*] 1932
Y avait un prisonnier 1935
Le voyageur sans bagage [*Traveller without Luggage*] 1937
Le rendezvous de Senlis [*Dinner with the Family*] 1938
La sauvagerie [*Restless Heart*] 1938
Léocadia [*Time Remembered*] 1939
Eurydice [*Point of Departure*; also translated as *Legend of Lovers*] 1941

Antigone 1944
Jézabel 1945
Oreste 1945
Roméo et Jeannette 1946
L'invitation au château [*Ring around the Moon: A Charade with Music*] 1947
Ardèle; ou, la Marguerite [*Cry of the Peacock*] 1948
La répétition; ou, l'amour puni [*The Rehearsal*] 1950
Colombe [*Mademoiselle Colombe*] 1951
La valse des toréadors [*The Waltz of the Toreadors*] 1952
L'alouette [*The Lark*] 1953
Médée [*Medea*] 1953
Ornifle; ou, le courant d'air [*Ornifle; also translated as It's Later Than You Think*] 1955
Pauvre Bitos; ou, le dîner des têtes [*Poor Bitos*] 1956
Becket; ou, l'honneur de Dieu [*Becket; or, The Honor of God*] 1959
L'hurluberlu; ou, le réactionnaire amoureux [*The Fighting Cock*] 1959
La grotte [*The Cavern*] 1961
La foire d'empoigne 1962
Le boulanger, la boulangère, et le petit mitron 1968
Cher Antoine; ou, l'amour raté [*Dear Antoine; or, The Love that Failed*] 1969
Les poissons rouges ou mon père, ce héros 1970
La culotte 1978

GENERAL COMMENTARY

Alba Della Fazia (essay date December 1963)

SOURCE: Fazia, Alba Della. "Pirandello and His French Echo Anouilh." *Modern Drama* 6, no. 3 (December 1963): 346-67.

[In the following essay, Fazia finds parallels between the plays of Anouilh and those of the Italian dramatist Luigi Pirandello.]

"I can just hear a critic whispering into his neighbor's ear that he has already seen this in Pirandello,"¹ anticipates The Author in the opening scene of Jean Anouilh's recent play *La grotte*—a plotless play which has yet to be written and which depends largely on audience cooperation, according to Anouilh.

La grotte's point of departure is a *fait accompli*: the apparent murder of the cook. An investigation of the real cause of death ensues. The Author, a combination of Pirandello's Director in *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* and Hinkfuss of *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, poses, before his audience, the problems of staging an

“improvised” play. He wrangles with unruly characters and capricious stage technicians. He dramatizes the conflict between an author’s illusory creation and his characters’ living reality.

The Pirandello plays which may be considered as having no plot are those plays which present the problems of multiple personality (*Trovarsi*, *Quando si è qualcuno*, etc.) and those which present the relationships among life, art, and interpretation (*Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, *Ciascuno a suo modo*, etc.). These plays are developed through the actions and reactions of the characters and those with whom they come in contact, and through audience participation. A combination of these plotless Pirandello plays is what Anouilh has striven to achieve in *La grotte*.

In constructing their plays, both Pirandello and Anouilh generally use one of two methods. The first method is construction in true *commedia dell'arte* style, with much physical movement, popular joking, games, songs, and dances (*La giara*, *Liolà*, *L'Uomo*, *La bestia e la virtù*, *Le bal des voleurs*, *La valse des Toréadors*, *Léocadia*). The procedure is simple: the plot is exposed in direct language by the characters who exit and enter from one scene to the next either to add to the jocosity of events or to intensify the seriousness or mockseriousness of a scene. In *Liolà*, for example, the scenes in which Liolà appears or exits, singing and dancing with his three children, take the form of *commedia dell'arte lazzi* which delight the children and peasants who call for more songs and capers from Liolà, just as the *commedia* audiences demanded encores until poor Harlequin became quite exhausted.

The second method of play construction is the detective story style: deeds are committed prior to the opening of the play, the problem to be solved is posed at the outset and developed during the play like a psychiatric case history (*Sei personaggi*, *Così è (se vi pare)*, *Ciascuno a suo modo*, *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, *La morsa*, *Il dovere del medico*, *Y avait un prisonnier*, *Le voyageur sans bagage*, *La grotte*, *La foire d'empoigne*). The movement in these plays is mental rather than physical, the only lively scenes being those involving a crowd or group of personages whose movement is intended to contrast with the stability of the central character. The acts are linked by cerebral manipulations, as opposed to the *lazzi* of the first group; and the construction of the “detective” play is such that it progresses smoothly, though not outwardly serenely, towards a fixed destiny.

The better to complicate their plots, the better to play with their marionettes, the better to create theatrical kaleidoscopes, both Pirandello and Anouilh construct plays with a play within them. Pirandello employed the

technique of the play within a play five times, Anouilh nine times. In some cases, the interpolated play is an actual or imaginary piece of literature; in other cases, it is improvised, directed, or evoked by the characters of the outer play. Of the first group, *Ciascuno a suo modo*, *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, *I giganti della montagna*, *La répétition* and *Colombe* may be cited. *Ciascuno a suo modo* includes a Pirandello play within a Pirandello play. The construction of the drama is very unusual, and the dramatist himself declares at the beginning of the play that the number of acts cannot be specified in view of the unpleasant incidents that will arise during the course of the performance. The first act takes place in the ancient mansion of Donna Livia Palegari. A discussion is going on concerning her son Doro’s defense of an actress’ reputation against the attacks of his friend Francesco. The two friends, after each has reversed his opinions, challenge each other to a ridiculous duel. The actress in question, Delia Morello, comes to Doro’s house to explain her situation and all seems to be progressing as a normal play should. But when the curtain falls at the end of the first act, it rises again immediately, and part of the theater lobby is visible on the stage. The spectators in the lobby are discussing the first act of the Pirandello play they have just witnessed. Some of the audience are irritated by the performance, others are thrilled. Among the spectators who have gone out to the lobby during intermission are Delia Moreno and Baron Nuti, who have recognized their story (which had appeared in the newspapers) being reenacted on the stage. In protest, Delia Moreno attempts to stop the performance, but before she can go backstage the second act of the play has begun on the stage that does not include the lobby, and she is forced to hear it through. By the end of this act, however, she is so upset by what she considers an insult to her private life that she runs to the stage entrance, slaps the Leading Lady, and creates such confusion that the play cannot go on, and thus ends *Ciascuno a suo modo*.

Questa sera si recita a soggetto is another unusually constructed play, having neither acts nor scenes, but containing a play within it. Again, the play being improvised by Hinkfuss and his company is based on “a Pirandello theme borrowed from one of his short stories.” Doctor Hinkfuss first introduces individually and by name the actors and actresses who will play the roles in Pirandello’s play: Signor Palmiro La Croce, his wife, their four daughters Mommina, Totina, Dorina, and Nenè, and five young officers who court the girls. Of these five, Rico Verri the Sicilian is the only serious, gloomy, and passionate one. At the end of the first act or tableau, the mother, her four daughters, and the aviation officers are on their way to the theater to see an opera: they come directly into the “real” audience, take their box seats unceremoniously, and, meanwhile, the stage has been transformed by means of screen projections and a phonograph into the opera stage, under

Hinkfuss' loud and conspicuous direction. When the curtain falls on the first act of the opera, the mother and her group go out to the lobby, and Doctor Hinkfuss appears on stage to invite the "real" audience to stay seated if they wish for there will be nothing of importance to see in the lobby, except the same people who have just left their boxes, and he assures the audience that the spectacle of set-changing before their eyes will be more entertaining. In effect (and this constitutes Act II), the "characters" in the lobby carry on very light and unimportant conversation, while Doctor Hinkfuss presents a number of bizarre scenes on the stage: an aviation field and other equally incredible creations. The audience meanwhile expresses its varying opinions of the imbroglio at every possible moment, for and against Pirandello. Act III brings the family back to their home, numerous tragic and comic events occur, and after the death scene of Palmiro La Croce a shout from Hinkfuss causes six days to elapse. At this point the actors and actresses, completely disgusted with Hinkfuss' direction, rebel and refuse to continue acting for they are tired of being marionettes. Having finally put him out of the house, they take up the story themselves. They play through to the tragic ending of the piece, and no one knows whether Mommina is really dead or not for the actress who plays her role lies motionless on the stage even after the play is over. And Hinkfuss, who had been with the electricians handling the lighting effects, returns to compliment his marionettes for their splendid tableau. Such is the unlimited fantasy of Pirandello's mind in constructing a play within a play.

In *I giganti della montagna*, the travelling theatrical company of Countess Ilsa have stopped at a weird villa to enact Pirandello's *La favola del figlio cambiato*, in an undetermined time and place, somewhere between fiction and reality.

In *La répétition*, Jean Anouilh's Count and Countess (stock marionettes in his theater) and their friends are rehearsing Marivaux's *La Double Inconstance* to be presented in the château during a banquet. It has been arranged for the diners to become players. The players will come to life like the Six Characters, and the spectators will be forced to hear them to the end.

The curtain rises on the fourth act of *Colombe* during the presentation of *La Maréchale d'Amour*, presumably written by Poète-Chéri in honor of Madame Alexandra. At the end of Madame Alexandra's and Du Bartas' performance of the play within the play, they take their curtain calls, and then resume their natural attitudes: Du Bartas removes his wig and reverts to his coarse, vulgar speech; Madame Alexandra limps away on her cane.

II

The second group of Pirandello and Anouilh plays are those which include an unwritten play within them. The

technique is obvious in *Enrico IV* and in *Sei personaggi*. The former play opens with a dramatic tableau of Enrico IV's throne room in the imperial palace, which the spectators would assume to be the setting for the play itself, were it not for certain parts of the dialogue. One actor, for example, listens to his comrades and looks around the room with amazement. Finally he bursts out in exasperation that during the entire two weeks he has been rehearsing, he thought he was to act in a play about Henry IV of France, and now he has discovered that the play is about Henry IV of Germany. Landolf, Ordulf, and Arialdo feel that they are playing thankless roles in an unwritten play. Landolf, their spokesman, compares them to characters who have not found an author, actors who have not been given a play in which to perform. Throughout *Enrico IV*, the play within the play is resumed at frequent intervals, and its value and power are felt when the hero finally escapes into its sanctuary.

Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore is another drama of unusual construction that contains an unwritten play within it, on two different levels of reality and illusion. When the curtain rises on the first act, the Director, the actresses, and the actors are rehearsing Pirandello's *Il giuoco delle parti*, but this is not to be the play within the play. For shortly the Six Characters are to arrive and declare that they must play their "play in the making." The Father explains that the manuscript and the drama are within them, and that they are impatient to play it. That the drama of the Six Characters overwhelms and dissipates the "real" play is, of course, the classic example of the Pirandellian theme of illusion versus reality.

In *Le bal des voleurs*, Lady Hurf is the stage director for her comedy in which she will star together with the imaginary Duc de Miraflor and his Spanish nobles. She introduces her actors à la Hinkfuss and begs them to play their roles in the *commedia dell'arte* style in the marionette world of her illusion. In *Le rendezvous de Senlis*, the professional actors Madame de Montalembreuse and Philémon have been summoned to play the roles of Georges' ideal parents, and are thoroughly instructed in their roles by the young hero. Madame de Montalembreuse and Philémon have the extraordinary power that clowns have of masking their faces with tragedy or comedy at a moment's notice. For example, Philémon, having at first completely misunderstood Georges' concept of his ideal father, disguises himself as a wrinkled, bearded octogenarian, which permits Georges to explain, in a Pirandellian vein, that Philémon must mold his role around the concept in Isabelle's mind: a character who is already half alive, because someone believes he exists.

Léocadia is a series of acts within acts, as Amanda sometimes plays the role of Léocadia and sometimes reverts to her real self. Anouilh places the young mil-

liner on the stage of Pont-au-Bronc, a park which is filled with people whose daily occupation is to don a costume and play a fixed role. Even the plants, the birds, and the rabbits seem to be playing their roles in the fantasy.

The plot of *L'invitation au château* is well-known: Horace has invited an insignificant dancer, Isabelle, to play the role of a dazzling young society woman at a ball in his wealthy aunt's home. His intention is simply to dissuade his twin brother, Frédéric, from his blind love for Diana Messerschmann, the beautiful but difficult daughter of a wealthy financier. After a number of episodes which are bound to occur when the poor meet the wealthy, the play ends with Isabelle and Frédéric falling in love, and Horace feeling free to claim for his wife Diana, who has become a pauper because her father has suddenly lost all his money in a crash. To make a happy ending even happier, Anouilh allows Messerschmann's money to come back to him, doubled in amount. The *deus ex machina* of this plot is the improvised presentation being planned by Horace. He tells Isabelle, his star, that he is the organizer of the comedy, but that he is depending on her ability to improvise during the performance. The *dénouement* of this play within the play, then, furnishes the appropriate ending for this "brilliant play."

Act II of *Ornifle* finds the characters dressed in seventeenth-century costume playing a scene *à la Molière*. Ornifle assumes the rôle of The Misanthrope, and his two private physicians, in black robes, ruffs, and pointed hats, are reminiscent of the doctors in *Le Malade imaginaire*. Anouilh intends the insertion of the "fête Molière" into the lives of his modern machines to be symbolic of escape from boredom, as is frequently the function of the play within a play.

The *diner de têtes* (the play's sub-title) in *Pauvre Bitos* is a performance in which players under the guise of Robespierre, Danton, Mirabeau, etc., relive the Reign of Terror. Bitos, as Robespierre, faints when he is "shot" and subsequently embodies an illusion similar to Henry IV's until, ultimately, as in *Sei personaggi*, the "real" Bitos fades, giving way to the character in the contained play.

In *La grotte*, The Seminarist, spokesman for the group of "invented" characters, as is The Father in *Sei personaggi*, explains in Pirandellian language that the "*pièce à faire*" must be played since it has already begun to be lived in the mind of the author. Once again, illusion triumphs over reality.

The play within a play, then, is an important technique for dramatists like Pirandello and Anouilh who belong to the school of the "theater within the theater."

But comparisons between Anouilh's and Pirandello's theatrical techniques flag without the substantiating basis of similarity of themes. Adriano Tilgher, in his penetrating studies of Pirandello's theater,² enumerates at least twenty-two themes which appear and reappear in the plays and novels of the Sicilian dramatist. Of these, the themes which seem most obviously to be present in Jean Anouilh's plays may be limited to six: the impossibility of shedding one's past, evasion, the irreversibility of time, multiple personality, the relativity of truth, and illusion versus reality.

According to the two dramatists under discussion, everyone is escorted by his past, his family, his *milieu*, his education, and his habits, all of which superimpose deforming traits on the original being. If persons were alone, isolated, "naked," to use Pirandello's term, purity and love could exist, but in the world as we know it, antagonisms constantly arise between memories of past formation and present conditions.

The plot of Pirandello's play *Come tu mi vuoi* is well known: a Strange Lady has been living a bohemian life with a writer, Salter, and his daughter. The Lady is a dancer in a nightclub, and her friends are drunken, boisterous young men who spend their time between the nightclub and Salter's apartment. One day, the Strange Lady receives the visit of Boffi, a friend of Bruno Pieri, who informs the nightclub entertainer that Bruno has every reason to believe that she is Lucia Pieri, his beautiful, virtuous, and intelligent wife, who had been living happily with her husband until the invasion of Northern Italy during the World War. Lucia had been taken prisoner by the enemy, and nothing had been heard from her since. Hoping to escape her life of debauchery which she despises, the Strange Lady, who remembers nothing of her past or at least refuses to reveal anything of her former life, accepts Boffi's invitation to return to Bruno. She welcomes the opportunity of living a new life as the beloved wife of a respectable man. However, the Strange Lady finds that the world does not accept her new identity; Bruno's relatives hint to her that the recreation of Lucia Pieri was motivated by monetary reasons, and not by the real belief that the Strange Lady is Lucia; a diary found in the attic makes the Lady herself doubt that she could ever have been or will ever be able to be the noble Lucia; and Salter, refusing to recognize the transformation, brings from Vienna a demented woman who, he claims, is the real Lucia Pieri. The Strange Lady realizes that although she may want to shed her sordid past for a new life, those who know her will never accept the self-created being. Almost hysterical, she joins her enemies by offering proof (a birthmark) that the demented woman, and not she, is really Lucia, and leaves in despair with Salter to return to the personality that society chooses to give her and that she is unable to shed.

In 1937, when Pitoëff produced Anouilh's *Le voyageur sans bagage*, one might have thought that the characterization of the amnesia victim had been overdone on the stage. But Anouilh managed successfully to transpose Pirandello's play. Lucia Pieri has become Gaston, a soldier who is interned in an asylum because he is suffering from amnesia. Gaston has no "past baggage" to carry; he is perfectly happy as an amnesia victim. But presently society must interrupt this happiness, for a man with no past is frightening. Gaston is pushed into his supposed family by the philanthropic Duchess who believes that "our past is the best part of us" and by a lawyer who sees Gaston as the source of a fortune in the form of the government's pension to the family of a mutilated soldier. The stiff Madame Renaud accepts him simply because a mother could scarcely do otherwise, as does Gaston's supposed sister-in-law Valentine, whose husband knows that he had been deceived by his wife and brother. In the second tableau, we learn that the real son, Jacques Renaud, used to behave most despicably toward the cook, the chauffeur, the valet, and the maid. By this time, the indifferent Gaston begins to experience various emotions, and upon learning of Jacques Renaud's fight with his schoolmate, his sentiments toward the Renaud family are violent. The past that this supposed family recreates for him is so repulsive that Gaston refuses it and all its characters. But his refusal is treated as madness and he is told that no one can decline his past—that he must either "belong" or return to the asylum. The scene in which the identifying scar on Gaston's body is revealed, like the similar scene in *Come tu mi vuoi*, represents the decision of the hero. By his final act of leaving with the little English boy (to whom Gaston has confided the secret of the identifying scar), Gaston brings about the symbolic death of Jacques Renaud; he thus frees himself, if not from the vices of society, at least from a public malignity built around a man without a past and from the particularly sordid past being forced upon him.

The affinities between *Come tu mi vuoi* and *Le voyageur sans bagage* are obvious. Each play presents an amnesia victim whose past is a mystery and who is being claimed by a supposed relative for reintegration into an unfamiliar family. Both plays present the struggle of the heroes against petty manifestations of the so-called "truth" of the past—a truth which means for them the destruction of the happiness and tranquillity for which they are striving. Harassed by those who relentlessly try to force them into an undesirable past, the Strange Lady and Gaston wearily rebel. The Strange Lady's struggle ends in black defeat. She cannot shed her overwhelmingly insidious past. For Gaston, who is a little shrewder in evading his foes, the struggle ends in a form of escape, but the play remains pessimistic by the very nature of its theme.

Vestire gli ignudi is another of Pirandello's plays with the same theme of the impossibility of shedding one's past. Again, the characteristics of the play may be shown to have been reproduced by Anouilh. Ersilia Drei, governess of the child of the Italian consul to Smyrna, is a woman who, prior to the opening of the play, has led a life of successive moments of weakness. Expecting to become engaged, she had given herself to an Italian naval officer who subsequently left with his ship and later became engaged to another. Ersilia next turns to the Italian consul Grotti, but this illicit love is rudely shattered by the death of the consul's child in a fall from the balcony (due to the governess' carelessness) and the consequent discovery of the deception by the consul's wife, who dismisses Ersilia. The first act of the play introduces an Ersilia who has mustered sufficient courage to attempt suicide, but the poison has not been efficacious and Ersilia, in proportion as her body has weakened, has become stronger-minded. A noted writer has extended hospitality to the abandoned Ersilia, for, having read her story in the newspapers, he seems fortuitously to have found, in true Pirandellian fashion, "the seed of a short story." Through her contact with the writer (who has by this time formed an idea of his heroine), Ersilia becomes aware that in the eyes of those who know her, she wears an illusory dress which covers the ugly past within her. It is this dress which she struggles to keep wrapped around her, and she distorts her story to make the dress more beautiful. But the thin fabric of her "decent little dress" will not cover her past. At the end of the play, the presence of the consul and the naval officer forces Ersilia to recognize that she cannot shed her past for a new garment acceptable to society. This time the poison takes effect as Ersilia utters her last words: "I am dying naked. With nothing to cover me, scorned, crushed. . . . Let me die in silence, completely naked. . . . Go and announce that the woman who died . . . died . . . naked."³

Thérèse Tarde, "La Sauvage," is the French counterpart of Ersilia Drei. Thérèse is a member of a family of poor uncouth café musicians. The sordidness of her life, corresponding closely to Ersilia's life before her attempt at suicide, is described in detail by Anouilh. Thérèse is loved, however, by Florent, a wealthy and famous pianist. Florent wishes to marry Thérèse, and although she loves him, she foresees that she will never be happy in the new, respectable *milieu* that Florent offers her. After much hesitation, Thérèse agrees to marry Florent and submits to the fittings for her elaborate wedding gown, the symbol, as was Ersilia's "decent little dress," of a new life divorced from the past. But a few days spent with Florent's family convinces Thérèse that her past life is even stronger than her desire for happiness. Her vulgarity, her pathetic family, her past unhappiness will continue to haunt her, and she will be unable to forget hypocritically about them. So Thérèse leaves

Florent and advances determinedly toward her fixed destiny of unhappiness with her unsightly past and no garment to hide it.

Eurydice is another Ersilia Drei, combined with certain characteristics of the Strange Lady in *Come tu mi vuoi*. A member of a travelling stage troupe, Eurydice one day in a train station meets Orpheus, a wandering musician. The two fall immediately in love, and depart for Marseilles, leaving their respective families behind. After the first night at a dingy hotel, Eurydice begins to reveal to Orpheus how sordid her past life has been. She tells him of the numerous lovers she has had, how one committed suicide for her, and about Dulac, the jealous member of the troupe who will probably find her and snatch her away from Orpheus. As Eurydice relates these facts, she realizes that she must leave Orpheus and his pure love. Intending to return to her group, she boards a bus which is involved in an accident, fatal for Eurydice. Death provides the enveloping mantle, and suicide the purging force, against Orpheus' belief in Eurydice's sins.

The theme contained in Jeannette's fruitless struggle to free herself from her evil attachments and the solution by suicide in *Roméo et Jeannette* is almost identical with that of *La sauvage* and *Eurydice*. Frédéric and Julia are an engaged couple. One day, together with Frédéric's mother, they pay a visit to Julia's slovenly family, composed of a drunken father and a sister and brother (Jeannette and Lucien), both of whom have a large assortment of bewildering idiosyncrasies. Frédéric, however, falls in love almost immediately with Jeannette, who returns his love. Jeannette's sentiment is pure within her own soul, but, in the eyes of others, it is tainted with the sordidness of her past life and the continuing insistence of one of her distasteful, middle-aged, but wealthy lovers. Frédéric realizes he cannot marry the savage Jeannette who, completely unlike her sister Julia, is the finished product of a highly objectionable family and a vile *milieu*. He becomes increasingly aware that he must leave Jeannette when Julia, in her jealousy, attempts suicide by poison. The spurned Jeannette then angrily accepts the marriage proposal of her wealthy lover, and during the course of the celebration at his château, escapes in order to show her white gown to Frédéric. But she sees him and Julia going off together, so she begins walking out to the sea, so far out that the tide will have risen before she can return to safety. Frédéric spots her in her symbolic white dress, goes out to join her, and the two drown together. Once more a heroine has been unable to give herself a new identity to cover an ugly past.

In *La grotte*, Adèle, the kitchen-maid, has been asked to baptize the Countess' baby. The Countess feels she is performing a great act of charity in descending to the servants' quarters and bestowing such an honor on

Adèle. But when Adèle sees the baby, she reacts hysterically, and in a long, frenzied tirade, in which she vividly describes her dung-covered dress, symbolic of her sordid past, she shows the vanity of trying to wring out the filth in the rains falling from the Countess' upstairs universe.

III

Pirandello and Anouilh have shown, with different situations but similar development, the tragic predicament of the person who visualizes for himself an identity that will make him beloved, but who instead is victimized by a society which smears his sacred countenance.

The impossibility of being truly oneself—"come io mi voglio"—and the conflict between an ideal and the sordidness of reality lead an unhypocritical character quite logically to a decision to escape the deforming influences of his past, family, and *milieu*. The antagonism between the purity of the individual and a perverted or criminal society ends, for Pirandello and Anouilh, either in actual death, in the symbolic death of an objective reality, or in insanity, as forms of evasion.

In *La vita che ti diedi*, *Il beretto a sonagli*, *Y avait un prisonnier*, *L'Hermine*, *Antigone*, and *Ardèle*, escape is sought not from one's past but from an unbearable tragedy or an obnoxious society. In *La vita che ti diedi*, one of the plays in which Pirandello proclaims the necessity of the irrational as a means of escape, the theme of evasion is subordinate to that of illusion versus reality, but still manifest in the character and life of Donna Anna, who refuses to believe that her son is dead. *Il beretto a sonagli* is a deep and tragic expression of the possible solution of escape in insanity: Donna Beatrice suspects that her husband, Cavaliere Fiorica, is unfaithful to her and accuses the young wife of Ciampa, an employee of Fiorica. With the aid of the police, Fiorica is discovered with Ciampa's wife. Donna Beatrice feels free and relieved of her mental burden, but the affair has brought shame to her husband, to Ciampa, and to his wife. Moreover, Donna Beatrice is in an awkward situation herself, because the society of her day demands that she return to her husband's home and submit to his violence and wrath. In an effort to correct the situation in the eyes of the townspeople, Donna Beatrice accepts Ciampa's solution, which is to put on the cap and bells of madness and fling the truth into the faces of the people in the public square. For three months, Donna Beatrice plays the role of a madwoman. Her insanity negates the entire unpleasant incident and thus she escapes the condemning conventions of society.

Ludovic, of *Y avait un prisonnier*, Frantz, of *L'Hermine*, *Antigone*, and *Ardèle* are some of Anouilh's heroes who seek evasion from society. Ludovic, when he sees what his family has become, almost wishes he