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LE VÉRITABLE SAINT GENEST: FROM TEXT TO PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

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By

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Evaluations of a dramatic work often neglect the performance of the work itself as an important consideration in the evolution of meaning ascribed to it. The advantage of analyzing performance is that the analysis incorporates the interactions of the author, the actors, the director, and the audience as creators of meaning. This study investigates the evolution of Jean Rotrou's dramatic text Le Véritable Saint Genest (1645) toward André Steiger's 1988 Comédie Française production in Paris.

"Le Véritable Saint Genest: From Text to Performance" examines Rotrou's play as a product of the political, artistic, and dramatic climate of the time and as a commentary on the performance triangle composed of dramatic text, performance text, and the aesthetic response of the audience. Rotrou's play emerges as a reaction against the system of dramatic rules and conventions devised by seventeenth-century French classicism. After examining the baroque and classical aesthetic visions, this study identifies Rotrou's

conception of the actor's art with the diversity, change, liberty, and creative imagination associated with baroque aesthetics. Emphasizing the life significance of the dramatic text, the actor Genest urges the spectators to assimilate his passion for God, experience a similar metamorphosis, and spontaneously create their new beings as Christian believers in order to merit salvation and eternal glory in heaven.

Original taped interviews of the director and actors in the 1988 Comédie Française production describe the actors' art, reveal the function of the director, and highlight the changed life significance of the 1645 dramatic text now transformed into a 1988 production. Since the 1988 audience poses particular problems for a successful staging, testimony from the actors and director, newspaper and magazine reviews, and box office statistics contribute to an understanding of the role of anticipated audience reaction in the creation of the performance text and real audience reaction in the play's ultimate success or failure.

To my husband Gary

and to my children Gary Stephen and Laurie Anne

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INTRODUCTION

Evaluations of a dramatic work often neglect the performance of the work itself as an important consideration in the evolution of meaning ascribed to a dramatic text. Keir Elam in The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama offers a useful definition of semiotics and discusses the theoretical difference between the dramatic text and the performance text. He defines semiotics as the "science dedicated to the production of meaning in society. As such it is equally concerned with signification and communication, that is, the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged."[1] As a result, semiologists differentiate between drama and theatre. They identify drama as a type of fiction intended for presentation on the stage and written following certain dramatic conventions. In contrast, theatre incorporates the "complex of phenomena associated with performance-audience transaction: that is, with the production and communication of meaning in the performance itself and with the systems underlying it."[2] According to semiologists, theatre also encompasses the interactions among the spectators. Since traditional performance depicts dramatic fiction, a strict differentiation between drama and theatre is problematical. Comprehensive theatrical research includes the author's

dramatic text and the performance text which consists of material produced in the theatre.[3]

Otakar Zich's Aesthetics of the Art of Drama and Jan Mukarovsky's "An Attempted Structural Analysis of the Phenomenon of the Actor," both published in Czechoslovakia in 1931, laid the groundwork for a significant body of modern theatrical and dramatic theory which rejects the view that the stage spectacle is too transitory for any systematic analysis. Jan Mukarovsky determined that the sign is the theatrical performance which consists of the signifier, the work itself, and the signified, the "'aesthetic object' residing in the collective consciousness of the public."[4] A performance can be represented schematically by a triangle. The performance triangle incorporates the work itself, the theatrical performance, and audience reaction in addition to the concomitant interactions that result. An advantage of analyzing performance is that this analysis recognizes that the audience participates in the creation of meaning.[5] Attention to audience perceptions and potential audience reaction surfaces as an important consideration for the dramatic author during the creative process of writing the play and for the director in the process of producing the play.

Dramatic texts serve as blueprints for a performance and are incomplete; readers do not necessarily notice these voids as they themselves perhaps attempt to fill the gaps.

Pierre Corneille in "Discours des trois unités," while describing the importance of including information to enlighten the reader, points out the incompleteness of the dramatic text. In the tradition of Aristotle, Corneille wants "que la tragédie soit aussi belle à la lecture qu'à la représentation, en rendant facile à l'imagination du lecteur tout ce que le théâtre présente à la vue des spectateurs."[6] Performance anchors the text because it includes specific costumes, set design, a particular group of actors, and the point of view of an individual director. For example, in Le Véritable Saint Genest will the Roman royalty of Antiquity be costumed in the Roman clothes of that era, will they wear French garb of the seventeenth century, or will they wear twentieth-century apparel? What effect does this choice have on the meaning and on audience reaction? The semiotic analysis incorporates decisions of the director, in collaboration with his corps of actors, stage designer, costumer, and lighting designer, who chooses either to maintain the literary integrity of the dramatic text in performance or to diverge from the original dramatic text. They strive for and hope to achieve maximum audience interest and appeal and reaction.

Le Véritable Saint Genest by Jean Rotrou, published in 1647 but presented at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Paris for the first time in 1645 or 1646, is an ideal candidate for a study of text to performance. Not well-known today in

comparison with Corneille, Molière, and Racine, Rotrou succeeded Alexander Hardy as "poète à gages" at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Robert J. Nelson considers him to be a "worthy companion for the great three of seventeenth-century French literature,"[7] and Imbrie Buffum declares that Le Véritable Saint Genest is "Rotrou's undoubted masterpiece."[8] In his position as "poète à gages" Rotrou had to be conscious of creating plays with audience appeal. Although Rotrou, unlike other dramatists of his time such as Georges de Scudéry, the Abbé d'Aubignac, and Pierre Corneille, did not leave a corpus of commentary on dramatic theory and practice, his play Le Véritable Saint Genest, through its play-within-the-play structure, resourcefully integrates mid-seventeenth-century considerations concerning performance and spectator reaction and demonstrates the functioning of the performance triangle. A real audience views the actor Genest's concerns with the performance text and also observes the reactions of the Roman audience to the performance text. This tragedy is an excellent vehicle for study because it has a limited known performance history, and it has not been analyzed from the point of view of text to performance.

Unearthed by Emile Deschanel[9] and resuscitated by the director and actor Bocage who played Saint Genest, Le Véritable Saint Genest inaugurated the reopening of the redecorated Odéon on November 15, 1845,[10] approximately two

hundred years after its initial representation in Paris. Before evaluating the performance and audience reaction, Théophile Gauthier describes the difficult conditions present in the theatre during representations of the tragedy in Rotrou's lifetime and after and contrasts these undesirable conditions with those at the renovated Odéon. He comments:

> Nous ne sommes plus au temps de naiveté ou l'intérêt dramatique suffisait à faire rester debout cinq heures d'horloge tout un parterre dans la plus incommode et la plus genante des positions. Avec la civilisation est venue le raffinement: les sens exercés ne se contentent plus de plaisir simple, il leur faut le plaisir complexe; entendre de beaux vers, mal assis et dans une salle enfumée, n'est plus assez pour nous; la jouissance de l'esprit a besoin d'être compliquée de colonnes à chapiteaux dorés, de décorations splendides, d'illuminations étincelantes et de banquettes bien rembourrées. C'est ce que M. Bocage a parfaitement compris.[11]

In spite of an audience which Gauthier describes as "la plus rebelle qu'il ait au monde; le public des premières représentations composées comme elles le sont aujourd'hui," Le Véritable Saint Genest held the audience "en haleine, l'oreille et le col tendus."[12] Gauthier concludes with a description of the play's resounding success, compares it to a Shakespearean tragedy, and places the tragedy in the "moule classique," a classification rejected by both recent directors Raphaël Rodriguez in 1963 and André Steiger in 1988 who are fascinated by the baroque character of the play.[13] Gauthier comments:

> on s'attendait à la solennité un peu ennuyeuse d'une tragédie chrétienne jetée dans le moule classique, et l'on voyait un drame shakespearien avec changement de scène, double théâtre, dialogue coupé heureusement d'esprît et de naturel, métaphores n'empêchant pas le mot propre et l'expression franche, détails charmants, coquetteries héroiques, une variété de ton infinie, toute la gamme du style depuis le grandiose jusqu'au comique. . . . Cette resurrection . . . a eu plein succès.[14]

Several productions followed which did not receive critical attention comparable to the 1845 representation, but they nevertheless, add some additional insight into the tragedy's performance history. Le Véritable Saint Genest was represented again March 22, 1874 for the Sunday "matinées" of M. Ballande at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin. A short paragraph in Le Journal Des Débats notes that M. Emile Deschanel will lecture on the play at 1:30 P.M., and the "élite de la troupe" will act for both representations.[15] The second performance was preceded by a lecture given by Jules Arboux. October 30, November 6, and November 9, 1899 the Odéon once again tackled the tragedy under the direction of Paul Ginisty; the last representation was preceded with a lecture by N. M. Bernardin. Le National of October 29, 1899 calls it a "curieuse tragédie."[16] Antoine, director of the Odéon, reintroduced the play January 8, 1909; Louis de Gramont in France de Bordeaux describes the tragedy in a literary introduction to the play as "pittoresque et amusant," containing "force passages éloquents."[17] This sketchy overview of performances between

1874 and 1909 focuses on dramatic text, audience, and actors. The inclusion of lectures preceding the play intimates a select educated audience interested in and capable of comprehending the pronouncements of literary critics, an audience far different from that of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. At the same time, the directors, by incorporating lectures and literary interpretation, recognize the importance of the comprehension of the dramatic text as a means to achieve positive aesthetic response. Finally, the use of actors that form the "élite de la troupe" suggests that the play is worthy of the best actors because of its difficulty, its merit, or both.

When Raphaël Rodriguez, a director of Peruvian descent, presented Le Véritable Saint Genest at the Théâtre de Paris in 1963, "la pièce reçut un accueil assez réservé, le public réagissant parfois bruyamment contre certaines fantaisies de l'adaptation."[18] The Figaro concedes that the audience discovered one point of interest: "L'anachronisme pirandellien des costumes amusa pour quelque temps les spectateurs, surpris de voir les habits Louis XIV côtoyer les uniformes second empire et les complets vestons."[19] Jacques Lemarchand in Le Figaro Littéraire describes the production as "un spectacle fort étrange . . . qui propose au spectateur bien des raisons de s'irriter et bien des occasions d'applaudir."[20] In contrast to the Figaro, Lemarchand criticizes Rotrou's actors dressed "comme le sont

ou l'étaient les acteurs français qui interprétaient les opérettes de style Europe centrale des années 1910."[21] While applauding Pierre Debauche, "un étrange et fascinant Genest," he condemns "la façon de rendre incompréhensible ou faux, qu'adoptent systématiquement les acteurs dirigés par Rafaël Rodriguez, les vers de Rotrou."[22] According to Lemarchand what is worthy of applause is the dramatic text itself: "théâtre dans le théâtre, . . . dédoublements de la personalité qui sont grands chevaux de bataille des dramaturges contemporains, . . . une sorte de documentaire précieux sur les comédiens du dix-septième siècle."[23] Rodriguez developed Genest's religious conversion into a political theme, a man following his conscience revolts against the established power.[24] In developing Genest's religious conversion into a political theme, Rodriguez markedly accentuates the differing meanings a director and a performance impose upon a dramatic text. Poirot-Delpech of Le Monde succinctly assesses the shortcomings and strengths attached to this political interpretation:

> Confondant fantaisie et provocation, liberté et anarchie, Rafaël Rodriguez croit bon de faire ses comédiens de façon inaudible, dos à dos ou les bras en l'air, d'habiller les empereurs en généraux d'aujourd'hui, d'aveugler la salle ou de lui seriner une musique fêlée.
>
> Mais, derrière cette espèce de terrorisme maniéré correspondant au "pire" de Rotrou se révèle le meilleur: une vraie désinvolture, une jeunesse joyeuse d'imiter le chaos de la vie, un goût contagieux de la beauté en liberté.[25]

What has motivated the two recent twentieth-century directors Rafaël Rodriguez and André Steiger to produce this relatively unperformed play? Rodriguez who invested 50,000 francs in the 1963 production gave the following response to that question posed by a reporter from Combat:

> Cette pièce-là, Monsieur, est extraordinaire, en ce sens au moins qu'elle caractérise à elle seule un style: le baroque, et une époque: celle qui s'etend à peu près, de 1580 à 1670. Elle en a l'emphase et l'exagération, le goût de l'horreur--qui est là une approche sensuelle de la réalité--le sens du théâtre: illusions, contrastes, surprises, mouvements. Hélas! pendant longtemps, on n'a voulu y voir qu'irrégularité, extravagance, médiocrité. Saint Genest loin d'être une tragédie classique mal conçue, est un chef-d'oeuvre dramatique baroque.[26]

André Steiger's overwhelming interest in the play which he produced in 1988 stems from the fact that the play is an excellent representative of baroque theatre. In an interview of May 12, 1988 Steiger states that he had produced this play with students at a school in Strasbourg, but he utilized "toute autre mise en scène" and "toute autre version."[27] Since then, he has conversed with Jean Rousset, a specialist in the baroque who wrote a chapter on Saint Genest in his book L'Intérieur et l'extérieur.[28] Both men live in Geneva, Switzerland and according to Steiger they engaged in "conversations de repas" not "conversations de travail" about the play. Their discussion and Steiger's reading of Rousset's text inspired Steiger to a "nouvelle lecture" of Saint Genest, one which is "plus subtile."[29] In

Le Quotidien de Paris Steiger says: "il [Rousset] a fait naître en moi un désir absolument insatiable de monter la pièce."[30] Not only literary critics such as Robert Nelson, Imbrie Buffum, and Jean Rousset recognize the importance of Rotrou and Le Véritable Saint Genest but also modern day directors acknowledge the relevance and importance of the play.

"Le Véritable Saint Genest: From Text to Performance" leads to an investigation of André Steiger's 1988 production at the Comédie Française. Although theatrical production can be studied independently of the era in which the dramatic text was written and apart from the dramatic text, the analysis paints a more complete picture when all three aspects are studied in conjunction with one another. Chapter 1 of this study sketches the early seventeenth-century political and artistic climate which promotes performance and an interest in spectator reaction. This first chapter examines primarily L'Apologie du théâtre (1639) by Georges Scudéry, La Pratique du théâtre (1657) by the Abbé d'Aubignac, and the three "Discours" by Pierre Corneille to determine the specific interest in performance and the importance of a performance text. Chapter 2 examines baroque aesthetics as a reaction against the Renaissance ideals of order and clarity and as a proponent of liberty and diversity in opposition to the emerging system of rules devised by seventeenth-century classicism.

Chapter 3 analyzes the acting process itself: performance considerations in the creation of the dramatic text, the interplay of illusion and reality, and the actor's art as an expression of the spontaneous and/or rational. Illustrating baroque characteristics in Le Véritable Saint Genest, Chapter 4 investigates the play as a tribute to an actor's freedom and creative imagination. After presenting seventeenth-century perspectives on actors, directors, and stage production, Chapter 5 develops a twentieth-century perspective focusing on how actors come together to act through an examination of Le Véritable Saint Genest at the Comédie Française. Original taped interviews of key actors and the director contribute to an understanding of the creation of the performance text and reveal the function of the director and the effects of his role as the "premier spectateur."[31] Since the 1988 audience at the Comédie Française poses particular problems for the director and actors, this study reveals the role of anticipated audience reaction in the director's staging of the play.

NOTES

[1] Keir Elam, The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama (London: Methuen, 1980) 1.

[2] Elam 2.

[3] Elam 2-3.

[4] Elam 5-7.

[5] Cynthia Ruoff, "Le Véritable Saint Genest: From Text to Performance," Analecta Husserliana, vol. 32, ed. Marlies Kronegger (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990) 211-212.

[6] Pierre Corneille, Corneille: Oeuvres complètes, ed. Stegmann (New York: MacMillan; Paris: Seuil, 1963) 843-44. All further references, unless indicated, refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text in parentheses.

[7] Robert J. Nelson, "Art and Salvation in Rotrou's Le Véritable Saint Genest," French Review 30 (1957) 451.

[8] Imbrie Buffum, Studies in the Baroque from Montaigne to Rotrou (New Haven: Yale UP, 1957) 212.

[9] Emile Deschanel, Le Romantisme des classiques (Paris: Lévy Frères, 1883) 274-75. He says: "Et c'est moi qui l'[the play] ai déterrée. Quand j'étais élève à l'Ecole Normale, je la signalai à Bocage, alors Directeur de l'Odéon: il en fut ravi, la joua, et fit lui-même Saint Genest."

[10] Critics such as E. T. Dubois in Jean Rotrou, Le Véritable Saint Genest (Genève: Droz, 1972) 44 assign the date November 17, 1845 for the first representation. Sanchez in Jean de Rotrou Le Véritable Saint Genest (Paris: Comédie Française, 1988) 125 gives November 15, 1845 as the date of the reopening of the Odéon and the first representation. In any case, the first performance must be before November 17, 1845 because Théophile Gauthier reviewing the play in La Presse of November 17, 1845 states: "Une de ses tragédies oubliées . . . a tenu hier en haleine . . . le public. . . ."

[11] Théophile Gauthier, "Théâtre," La Presse, 17 novembre 1845: N. pag.

[12] Gauthier N. pag.

[13] See 9 of this dissertation.

[14] Gauthier N. pag.

[15] Rotrou, Saint Genest, ed. Sanchez 127.

[16] Rotrou, Saint Genest, ed. Sanchez 127.

[17] Cited by E. T. Dubois, ed. Saint Genest 46.

[18] "Première mouvementée de Saint Genest au Théâtre de Paris," Le Figaro 5 avril 1963: N. pag.

[19] "Première mouvementée," Le Figaro 5 avril 1963.

[20] Jacques Lemarchand, "Saint Genest de Rotrou, La Farce de Vahé Katcha," Le Figaro Littéraire 27 avril 1963: 18.

[21] Lemarchand 18.

[22] Lemarchand 18.

[23] Lemarchand 18.

[24] Dubois 46.

[25] B. Poirot-Delpech, "Saint Genest de Rotrou," Le Monde 12 avril 1963: N. pag.

[26] Combat 20 mars 1963: N. pag.

[27] André Steiger, interview by author, 12 May 1988, Geneva, tape recording of telephone interview.

[28] See Jean Rousset, "Le comédien et son personnage: De Dom Juan à Saint Genest," L'Intérieur et l'extérieur (Paris: Corti, 1968) 151-64.

[29] Steiger, interview, 12 May 1988.

[30] Patrick de Rosbo, "Le Français en plein baroque," Quotidien de Paris 1 mars 1988: N. pag.

[31] Anne Ubersfeld, L'Ecole du spectateur (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1981) 289.

CHAPTER 1

SETTING THE STAGE FOR ROTROU'S CREATION OF THE TEXT

Politics, Morality, and Spectator Reaction

To a great extent politics motivated Cardinal Richelieu, who ascended to power in 1624, to promote theatrical performance. By 1628 the number of dramatists and the yearly production of plays increased significantly.[1] Excellent theatrical productions diverted the French and European gaze and scrutiny from such tarnishing events as Richelieu crushing the Protestants in 1628, the execution of the Duke of Montmorency in 1632, and the refusal of the Parliaments to "enregistrer" financial edicts.[2] Colette Schérer describes the function of the theatre: "Instrument de la propagande nationale et monarchique, un théâtre brillant convaincra à la fois les Français de l'excellence de leur système du gouvernement et les étrangers de la grandeur de la France."[3]

The clergy's eruptions of hostility toward actors and performance, eruptions still evident in the 1630's, attempted to stifle theatrical performance. To counteract the continuing menace of church hostility Giovan Battista published Le Théâtre céleste (1624) and Le Miroir (1625). In Le Théâtre céleste he dedicates sonnets to canonized actors such as Saint Genest in order to remove the stigma attached to actors.[4] Georges de Scudéry in L'Apologie du théâtre (1639) also describes actors in Antiquity who were martyrs and singles out as an illustrious example, "S. Ginesius, qui de la scène ou il représentoit, fit

l'Eschafaut de son suplice et le Théâtre de sa gloire."[5] In 1632 Bishop J. P. Camus lends credibility to the disapproval of some clergy: "Ce n'est pas sans raison qu'en Italie, en France et presque partout, les histrions ou comédiens sont tenus pour infames: les lois même les déclarent tels pour plusieurs raisons que chacun sait."[6] Battista's Le Miroir, relying on theological erudition, juxtaposes a respectable but intolerant group of Fathers of the Church against an equally respectable group of Church Fathers whose opinions are "plus indulgentes" toward the theatre.[7] Battista establishes an important distinction between theatre based on a pagan heritage capable of corrupting both actors and audience and the French modern theatre which emerges from Christianity and includes an expression of noble sentiments.[8] It is not surprising that Jean Rotrou, writing during the era of the justification and glorification of the theatre, chose to write a play based on the metamorphosis of the pagan actor Genest into a canonized saint.

In spite of church opposition to it, the French theatre experienced remarkable development between 1630 and the early 1640's thanks to Louis XIII's significant interventions[9] and Cardinal Richelieu's determined and overt promotion of the theatre.

In 1630 the Hôtel de Bourgogne, for which Rotrou was a "poète à gages,"[10] and the Théâtre Marais, the primary site of the performance of Corneille's plays, were the two major

theatrical companies in Paris. At this point in time Louis XIII interfered actively in the management of the two theatres by exchanging actors between them.[11] Whether he realized it or not, Louis XIII increased competition, achieved a more equitable balance between the two theatres, and maintained a pronounced presence of excellent theatrical production through more performances and more audience exposure. His second contribution was his approval of the act of April 16, 1641 which specifically states that an actor's profession should not damage his reputation provided that he does not resort to dishonest actions or lascivious words on the stage.[12] The act declares:

> Nous voulons que leur exercice, qui peut innocemment divertir nos Peuples de diverses occupations mauvaises, ne puisse leur être imputé à blâme, ni prejudicier à leur réputation dans le commerce public, ce que nous faisons, afin que le desir qu'ils auront d'éviter le reproche qu'on leur a fait jusqu'icy, leur donne autant de sujet de se contenir dans les termes de leur devoir des Représentations publiques qu'ils feront, que la crainte de peines, qui leur seroient inévitables, s'ils contrevenoient à la présente Déclaration.[13]

Cardinal Richelieu focused the public eye on theatrical performance by creating new theatre space, using state funds to support writers, commissioning dramatic poems, and instigating the writing of theoretical work. In 1630 Richelieu transformed a room of his palace into a "salle de théâtre" containing six hundred places.[14] He inaugurated the "Théâtre du Palais-Cardinal," later known as the Palais

Royal, in 1641 with the performance of Mirame by Desmarets of Saint-Sorlin; this theatre was the largest and most beautiful in Paris during the seventeenth century.[15] Significantly, he invited the clergy to attend this representation,[16] most probably to encourage their leniency toward the theatre and to promote their support. Additionally, to foster continued creation of dramatic texts Richelieu used state money and allotted "pensions" to dramatic authors. As a result, Mairet in 1632, Rotrou in 1633, and Corneille in 1637 were recipients of these state funds.[17] Demonstrating a keen interest in the creation process itself, Richelieu commissioned five authors, among them Rotrou and Corneille, to write La Comédie des Tuileries (1635) and L'Aveugle de Smyrne (1637) for performance at the Hôtel de Richelieu. Joseph Morello suggests that the "Cinq Auteurs" utilized "a form of surrealistic machine writing,"[18] and Richelieu or Chapelain chose the subject while each of the five authors wrote one of the five acts. In spite of the failure of the two plays, Rotrou remained on excellent terms with Richelieu as evidenced by the 1639 designation of the playwright as "gentilhomme ordinaire de Monseigneur l'eminentissime Cardinal de Richelieu."[19] Finally, Richelieu, recognizing the need for a practical manual, requested that d'Aubignac write La Pratique du théâtre as a directive for playwrights.[20] In a retrospective look at the theatre, Chappuzeau in Le Théâtre français (1674) confirmed that drama achieved its

"lustre par l'estime qu'en a fait un Armand de Richelieu, et les graces que luy a données un Pierre Corneille."[21]

Performance emerged as one of the visible manifestations of the wealth, power, and culture of France which attracted foreigners to view the spectacle. By 1647 Mme de Motteville in her Mémoires already assumed the importance and significance of theatrical production:

> Comme la France n'a jamais été plus triomphante qu'elle l'étoit alors, outre les marques de notre abondance qui paroissoit sur les théâtres par les divertissemens de la cour, par les richesses des particuliers, et sur nos frontières par les belles armées du Roi, les étrangers à l'envi des uns et des autres y abondoient de toutes parts.[22]

Writing to appeal to the audience not only insured increased revenue for theatrical troupes but also supported the goals of Richelieu to demonstrate publicly through performance the grandeur of France on the national and international scene. After Richelieu's death in 1642, his successor Cardinal Mazarin, although personally more interested in the opera of his own country, recognized the importance of the flourishing theatre.[23]

Artistic Climate of the Early Seventeenth Century

Unlike Renaissance art, European baroque art, serving as a forerunner of Richelieu's preoccupation with spectator reaction, exemplifies and stresses the importance and significance of the viewer's involvement and aesthetic reaction

in the artist's conception of his creation. In order to include the spectator in the artistic creation, the artist integrates "real space" and "fictive space" of the painting or artistic creation by relying on trompe l'oeil techniques.[24] According to Martin "coextensive space" rather than the Renaissance idea of a "fixed distance between the observer and the subject represented" emerges as a prominent consideration for the baroque artist.[25] Caravaggio's "Supper at Emmaus" c. 1600, portraying the "unexpected intervention of divinity into the everyday world,"[26] illustrates the importance of gesture in bringing the spectator from his real world into the "fictive space" of the painting. Christ's hand moves out toward the spectator, thrusts into the world, and interconnects the two realms. The basket of fruit rests precariously at the edge of the table ready to fall at our feet,[27] yet seems at the same time to invite us to taste a piece of fruit.

Religious artistic creation of this period often strives to achieve a penitent, contrite, and moral response from the observer. Explicit instructions given to Juan Martinez Montañés before creating the sculpture "Christ of Clemency" (1603-1606) state that Christ must be portrayed in the following manner:

> with the head inclined towards the right side, looking at any person who might be praying at the foot of the Crucifix, as if Christ himself were speaking to him and reproaching him because what he is suffering is for the person who is praying;

> and therefore the eyes and face must have a rather severe expression and the eyes must be completely open.[28]

It is significant, however, that the eyes appear open only if the worshipper is kneeling directly beneath the statue. Then, these eyes bring "the beholder into a state of mystical communion with the divine."[29]

In Rubens' "Descent from the Cross" (1611-1612) the viewer almost feels the effort exerted to remove Christ from the cross and shares the grief of those surrounding him. Although the action occurs at night, a light, undoubtedly supernatural, highlights Christ, his group, and the white shroud which by contrast exaggerates the livid color of Christ's body and the red of St. John's clothes.[30] This light extends the fictive space of the picture to include the heavenly realm beyond, and, as a result, incorporates the spectator in the added dimension and moves him to thoughts of his own death and salvation. A seventeenth-century theoretician and art historian Roger de Piles attests to the efficacy of Rubens' creation on the spectator:

> Au reste le Peintre est tellement entré dans l'expression de son sujet, que la veue de cet Ouvrage est une des choses des plus capables de toucher une ame endurcie, & d'y faire entrer le ressentiment des douleurs que Jesus-Christ a souffertes pour le rachepter.[31]

The spectators in the fictive space mirror the emotional response elicited from the viewers in the real space; the

real space merges with the fictive space. Marlies Kronegger, describing spectator involvement in "Descent from the Cross," states:

> The space we occupy seems to become an extension of the illusionistic space in the painting. The spectator becomes intimately involved in the illusionism of the scene. The dividing line between real and fictive space is erased; the spectator is involuntarily drawn into the scene or activity of the painted realm before him.[32]

Once the spectator is drawn into the realm of fictive space, he encounters an expanding world.

Beginning with the Copernican hypothesis that the earth shares the solar system with the other planets, thinkers began to abandon the ancient separation between celestial and terrestrial space.[33] As a result, baroque art accentuates the flow of space from the natural world to the celestial. The viewer sees space opened before his eyes through the use of illusion, perspective, and light. Martin describes the expected spectator response to the panorama: "the viewer is made to feel that the scene that is opened before him is accessible, but that it is at the same time only part of an immeasurably larger expanse."[34] In Poussin's "Landscape of St. John on Patmos" c. 1644-45, contemporary to Rotrou's Saint Genest (1645), the architectural shapes, the rock formation, the trees, the mountain, the obelisk are all pointing heavenward and some of them are mingling with the celestial space creating a feeling of

unity and harmony with the cosmos.[35] Claude Lorrain's "The Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba" (1648) portrays preparations for the Queen's departure by boat to visit King Solomon. Although the foreground depicts a harbor, enclosed partially by ruins and a stately building from which the Queen is descending, the picture opens surprisingly to a vast expanse of ocean and sky at sunrise.[36]

In religious paintings expanding vistas often serve to integrate the supernatural and divine influence and presence in the real world. Although a certain amount of bloodshed in baroque religious paintings appeals to the artist and patrons of baroque art, a martyr's agony demonstrates a mystical union with God which transports the saint beyond the natural world to the supernatural.[37] As a result, a dual movement occurs: the introduction of the divine into the natural world and the movement of the saint, and by extension often the spectator, from the natural world to the heavenly realm. The two worlds are intermingled and perceived as one.

Poussin's baroque canvas "The Martyrdom of St. Erasmus" c. 1628,[38] an excellent example of expanding vistas and the blending of the supernatural in the natural, vividly depicts the intestines of Erasmus being wound out on a windlass. The direction of movement is diagonal and upward pointing toward the angels and the open sky. Stretched out backwards with his chest, head, and finally, his arms descending into

the lower left corner of the canvas, Erasmus seems to be reaching toward the spectators in the real space who complete the foreground of the painting and participate in the horror of the scene. The spectator's eyes are drawn from the outstretched, crossed, and bound hands to the suffering face with tightly closed eyes, then to his chest, and finally, to the pulling of the intestine to and around the windlass. This upward diagonal direction is mimicked by the movement from the highlighted face of the priest whose upraised hand points to the palm of martyrdom and crown of laurel held by angels in the open sky.[39] Continuing from the seemingly infinite heavenly space beyond the confines of the top of the picture, rays of golden light beam their supernatural light on the scene and create contrasts of chiaroscuro. Unlike Rubens' "Descent from the Cross" in which Christ's presence and subtle illumination reflect the supernatural, Poussin introduces angels and distinct rays of divine light to form an explicit but natural part of the scene.

Additionally, the compassionate audience in Rubens' painting contrasts with the mixed audience reaction of Poussin's painting. The real spectators of Poussin's portrayal observe the hardened dispassionate expression of the spectators, executioners, and soldier in opposition to the concerned posture of the priest in white. This spectator-priest participates in the drama enacted before his eyes by

attempting to focus the attention of Erasmus and of the real spectators on the angels and the man's heavenly reward from martyrdom. Poussin has juxtaposed the pagan and the Christian participant and spectator response to the martyrdom. Since spectators always huddle in front of the spectacle to see the outcome, the spectators in the real space who are positioned next to the martyred Erasmus at the bottom edge of the painting, complete the painting with their presence, balance the spectator group in the fictive space, and see before them mirrors of differing spectator response to the violent scene. Through a pictorial medium Poussin had sketched what Rotrou portrayed seventeen years later on the stage with Le Véritable Saint Genest.

Through the use of mise en abyme and illusion Velázquez in "Las Meniñas" (1656) crystallized the performance triangle of text, actor, and spectator as Rotrou did in Le Véritable Saint Genest, by depicting the artist in the process of creating a tableau and by including varied and potentially changing spectator response and subject matter in his creation. The direct gaze of the artist, ladies-in-waiting, the princess, and the dwarf draws the real spectators into the fictive space of the artist's studio to observe the artistic process itself and to experience the scene in its reality. Michel Foucault describes the attraction:

> From the eyes of the painter to what he is observing there runs a compelling line that we, the onlooker have no power of evading: it runs through the real picture and emerges from its surface to join the place from which we see the painter observing us, this dotted line reaches out to us ineluctably, and links us to the representation of the picture.[40]

After being drawn into the studio, the spectator's attention is attracted to the back wall where a strategically-placed illuminated mirror stands out among the poorly-lit paintings and reflects the images of Philip IV and his wife Mariana, the probable subjects of his painting. Since the front of the painter's canvas is hidden from our view, the subject of his painting is open to changeability. Velázquez focuses attention on those royal spectators outside the fictive space of the picture first by hiding them in the real space and then projecting their images on a mirror.[41] He records their presence permanently in the completed painting we see, yet he recognizes the innumerable spectators that will occupy the same real space at different times and places by immortalizing the pair in a fickle unstable mirror reflection.

The imaginary "dotted line" reaching from the gaze of the artist to the spectator and back again demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between the spectator and the artist. The gaze of the ladies-in-waiting, princess, dwarf, and courtiers which is focused away from the painter and his canvas points out the need for an artist, creator, actor, or

writer to concentrate on effective ways to capture audience attention and appreciation. Unless wealthy, the artist, writer, and actor must hope for positive spectator response and patronage; both Rotrou and Velázquez were able to achieve this. Summoned to Madrid by the count-duke of Olivares in 1623, Velázquez painted a portrait of Philip IV in August. Since the king appreciated the artist's work and developed a personal liking to him, Philip IV appointed Velázquez the official painter to the king and monopolized the artist's work for the rest of his life.[42] By including the royal pair in his painting, Velázquez acknowledged and paid tribute to their support and importance. However, through a compression of time and the mirror's expansion of space, the spectators of any time have been placed next to these famous seventeenth-century spectators to share in the royal pair's appreciation of his work.

Dramatic Theoreticians and Performance

Although as the twentieth century progresses critics increasingly realize that the author, actor, director, and audience together create meaning, this semiotic approach is sown in seventeenth-century French literary theory. Steeped in the performance climate promoted by Richelieu, influenced by the baroque artistic vision, literary theoreticians such as Georges de Scudéry, the Abbé d'Aubignac, and Pierre Corneille delineated and propagated the performance

triangle. As a result, verisimilitude, "bienséances," instruction versus delight, directing, staging, and acting emerged as key concerns, and all were consistently evaluated under the aegis of reason. René Bray, who contends that the classical doctrine formed in France around 1630,[43] in La Formation de la doctrine classique, establishes reason as a cornerstone of classical aesthetics and poetry:

> La raison détermine la mission sociale du poète, guide le génie, légitime la règle et dicte les préceptes: c'est la pièce maîtresse de l'édifice. Son importance croîtra même à mesure que les autres principes seront ébranlés.[44]

Relying less and less on the Ancients as models, writers felt the effects of Descartes' "rationalisme radical,"[45] and theoreticians succumbed to its influence in performance considerations.

To what extent were the major theoreticians involved in the promulgation of the performance triangle? Georges de Scudéry in L'Apologie du théâtre (1639), his "éloge véritable" (99) of the theatre, begins his tract with a succinct description of the interactions between the component parts of the performance triangle: the dramatic text, the performance, and aesthetic reaction. Furthermore, he includes in his commentary the admonition that authors and actors may incite audience members to commit crimes similar to the ones portrayed on stage if reason and justice are not

dominant forces in dramatic poems and in performance. He states:

> dans les Poëmes dramatiques les passions bien representées, ayant premierement atteint le Poëte, passent de luy a l'Acteur qui recite, et de l'acteur au peuple qui l'escoute: si bien qu'il s'en peut faire un enchainement de crimes, si la raison et de la justice, ne regnent dans tous les ouvrages. (6-7)

A well-written dramatic text and a well-acted theatrical performance function as powerful stimuli not only to aesthetic response but also to spectator action. For this reason, Scudéry and d'Aubignac insist on the dual purpose of theatre: instruction and delight. Implicit in Scudéry's conjecture is the idea that spectators bring their own background, individuality, and meanings to a play; consequently, these spectators can interpret plays differently than authors and actors conceive them. Acknowledging the supremacy of performance, Scudéry bases the entire organization of his tract on the performance triangle, and near the end, explicitly outlines the format of his work: "Mais apres avoir parlé de la Comédie, de ceux qui la composent, & de ceux qui la representent, il faut dire un mot de ceux qui l'escoutent" (88). His astute division of the audience into "Scavans," "preocupez" and "ignorans," who are not limited to the "Parterre" but exist also in the "Galleries" (88), demonstrated that he is well aware of differing spectator response. The Abbé d'Aubignac's La Pratique du théâtre,

published in 1657 but instigated by Richelieu's command before his death in 1642, was the first study of dramatic technique and the laws of the theatre.[46] In a letter dated March 8, 1640 Chapelain wrote that the Abbé d'Aubignac is composing La Pratique du théâtre which "le sieur de la Mesnardiere attend patiemment afin de faire contre de quoy je me resjouis pour ce que cela sera delectable et peut-estre aussi utile."[47] Pierre Corneille in the "Discours de l'utilité et des parties du poème dramatique" also describes the aesthetic reaction of the audience upon viewing the good fortune of an "honnête homme." When "la vertu y est couronnée, nous sortons avec plein joie et remportons une entière satisfaction, et de l'ouvrage, et de ceux que l'on représente."[48]

Although Scudéry, Corneille, and the Abbé d'Aubignac do not specifically name a dramatic text and a performance text, they allude to a distinction between the two. According to Scudéry the actor's misinterpretation of the dramatic text leads to a faulty performance text and requires an attentive and perceptive audience to detect the flaws. In a concrete example of poor acting Scudéry describes the Greek actor Pylades:

> qui en prononçant un vers d'Euripide, ou il y avoit le grand Agamemnon, se guindoit, & se levoit sur le bout des pieds, jusqu'a souhaiter d'estre monté sur des Eschaffes; lors qu'un Spectateur judicieux, luy cria qu'il le faisoit haut, & non pas grand: comme en effect, ce devoit estre par la maieste grave de la prononciation, qu'il faloit

> exprimer la grandeur de ce Prince, & non point par cette posture alongée & ridiculle. (87)

Corneille, in the quotation cited at the end of the previous paragraph, breaks down the aesthetic response of the audience into two components: response to the work itself, the dramatic text, and response to the actor's representation of it. However, the Abbé d'Aubignac's guide for playwrights most completely describes the difference between a dramatic text and a performance text, includes guidelines to insure consistency of performance, and explains how an actor's interpretation of a role may modify the author's perception of the role.

While establishing the difference between the two texts, d'Aubignac first points out distinctly separate recipients of the two texts: spectators and readers. Then he exhorts the dramatic poet to include specific staging information within the poetic lines not only to inform the reader but also to guide the actors in their performance. He comments:

> Or soit qu'une Comédie se voie sur le theatre, ou seulement sur le papier, il faut qu'elle soit connuë par les Spectateurs, & par ceux qui la lisent. Elle ne peut être connue par les Spectateurs sinon autant que les Acteurs la feront connoître en parlant; & ceux qui la lisent, n'en peuvent avoir aucune connoissance sinon autant que le vers la leur peuvent donner, si bien que toutes les pensées du Poëte, soit pour les décorations du Theatre, soit pour les mouvemens de ses Personnages, habillemens & gestes necessaires à l'intelligence du sujet, doivent être exprimées par les vers qu'il fait reciter. (46)

Since the readers and the audience may not be capable of following the dramatic text or the performance text without these instructions, the playwright's responsibilities dictate that he indicate scenery, costumes, movements, and even the gestures necessary to assist the readers and spectators. Generally speaking, d'Aubignac's treatise does not address the needs of readers. In this case, however, he indicates that stage directions placed in the margins interrupt the reading of the poetic lines and the flow of mounting passions, dissipate images in the process of formation, and consequently "diminuent de beaucoup" the resultant "plaisir" (48).

During the representation of a play, the performance text typically does not incorporate a narrator who announces stage directions and background information such as this scene occurs in Nicomédie.[50] Therefore, d'Aubignac advises the writer to include stage directions as part of the poetic line. Since this information should flow freely and realistically from the actor, reason and verisimilitude emerge as primary considerations in the dramatic construction of these informative poetic lines. He cautions:

> il ne se faut pas seulement contenter de faire dire ce qui doit être connu; il faut que ce soit avec adresse, & trouver en la bouche de l'Acteur un prétexte qui serve si raisonnablement à l'expliquer, que la personne qu'il représente ait pu vraisemblablement le dire. (49)

In the process of insisting on the inclusion of explicit directions in the dramatic text, the Abbé d'Aubignac attempted to reduce a possible and probable disparity between a dramatic text and a performance text and to establish conformity from representation to representation. He anticipated the criticism that typically actors rehearsed in the author's presence and, therefore, conveyed the author's meaning and intent: "on me dira que nos Poëtes ont accoutumé de faire repasser leurs Piéces en leur présence, & d'avertir les Comédiens de tout ce qu'il faut faire; mais cela ne peut pas empêcher que la representation ne souffre beaucoup de défauts . . ." (46-47). This, of course, is true for Molière who wrote specifically for his own troupe and created roles for particular actors in his troupe.[51]

Although the author's presence at rehearsals may provide some control of interpretation, the Abbé d'Aubignac acknowledges that some troupes prefer to perform without the direct influence of the playwright, and in many cases, the author is too far from the performance site to explicate the text or to direct the proper evolution of the performance text (47). Corneille, for example, came to Paris from his native Rouen in 1630 to view audience reaction to his first play Mélite;[52] consequently, he was not involved in the direction and control of his play.

In spite of an author's on-the-spot involvement, the vigilant d'Aubignac recognizes at least three major difficulties in the direction and representation of a play:

1. Negligent actors do not necessarily follow the author's direction.

2. Actors may focus on the development and aggrandizement of their own roles.

3. Actors may not be able to visualize and share the author's meaning of the play, and they may not recognize how the creation of their roles relates to the overall signification. He explicitly points out that the author's presence at rehearsals

> ne peut pas empêcher que la representation ne souffre beaucoup de défauts, parce que les Comédiens sont souvent assez negligens, pour ne pas executer exactement ce que le Poëte leur ordonne, & que chacun d'eux, ne s'attachant qu'à son rolle, ne croit pas qu'il soit necessaires de faire toutes ces observations, dont il ne voit pas le rapport avec le reste de la Piece. (47)

Conscious of the tremendous impact actors exert in creating signification, d'Aubignac targets the actors themselves as responsible for creating a disparity in meaning between the dramatic text and the performance text, and, at the same time, he establishes the importance of conformity between the two texts.

While focusing on the required conformity between the dramatic text and the performance text, the Abbé d'Aubignac testifies to the primacy of the well-written dramatic text

in eliciting an enthusiastic reception from the public. His very conception of La Pratique du théâtre, envisioned as a practical guide for dramatic authors, supports this view. Corneille's "Epitre" to La Suite du Menteur, published in 1645 and contemporary to Le Véritable Saint Genest, states unequivocally that the play's poor reception is not the fault of the actors nor of the audience. In his critique he accepts full responsibility because during the creative process he had not carefully considered the tastes of his audience:

> Ce n'est pas que j'en veuille accuser ni le défaut des acteurs, ni le mauvais jugement du peuple: la faute en est toute à moi, qui devais mieux prendre mes mesures, et choisir des sujets plus répondants au goût de mon auditoire. (363)

Samuel Chappuzeau's Le Théâtre français (1674), a retrospective view of seventeenth-century French theatre, confirms the position of d'Aubignac and Corneille:

> Les autheurs doivent estre considérez comme les dieux tutélaires du théâtre; ce sont eux qui le soutiennent; ils en sont les grans apuys, et il tomberoit avec tous ses ornemens et ses pompeuses machines si de beaux vers et d'agréable intrigues ne chatouillent l'oreille de l'auditeur, a mesure que sa veue est divertie par la beauté des objets qu'on luy présente. Je sçais que la comédie ne demande pas seulement un autheur qui la compose, qu'elle veut aussi un acteur qui la récite, et un théâtre où elle soit représentée avec les embellissemens qu'il luy peut donner. Mais l'invention du poete est l'âme qui fait mouvoir tout le corps, et c'est de là principalement que le monde s'attend de tirer le plaisir qu'il va chercher au théâtre.[53]

Pleasure and positive audience reaction preoccupy the writings of the theoreticians. Scudéry proclaims: "Ainsi lors que la Comedie sera composée, recitée, & escoutée, d'une façon aprochante, de celle dont i'ay parlé, . . . elle est l'Obiet de la veneration de tous les Siecles vertueux . . ." (99). Throughout the "Discours de l'utilité et des parties du poème dramatique" Corneille speaks of the "auditeur" and the "spectateur" rather than a "lecteur." Corneille emphatically states "la poésie dramatique a pour but le seul plaisir des spectateurs" (822) while the Abbé d'Aubignac affirms that "Le poete . . . fait tout ce que son Art et son Esprit luy peuvent fournir pour la rendre [sa tragédie] admirable aux spectateurs: car il ne travaille que pour leur plaire . . . " (38).

In the famous "Querelle du Cid" Chapelain, Scudéry, and La Mesnardiere defend the position evolving from Horace and espoused by the Italian Renaissance that the function of art is not only to please and to delight but also to instruct; therefore, the authors must include "l'utilité morale." Scudéry, in fact, wrote L'Apologie du théâtre to demonstrate the utility of drama,[54] and he specifically describes the function of "Comédie":

> Elle conduit les hommes vers l'instruction, feignant de ne les mener qu'au divertissement: Ainsi cette charmante & sage Mestresse, travaille à les rendre sages euxmesmes, lorsqu'ils pensent qu'elle ne songe qu'à leur plaire . . . cette fidelle, mais adroite guide, les jette insensiblement, dans le chemin de la vertu. . . . (4-5)

The Abbé d'Aubignac, who supports the dual function of drama, explains how to achieve this subtle moral instruction: "La principale regle du Poëme dramatique est que les vertus y soient toujours recompensées, ou pour le moins toujours loüées, malgre les outrages de la Fortune, et que les vices y soient toujours punis, ou pour le moins toujours en horreur, quand mesme ils y triomphent" (8-9). Of particular interest to d'Aubignac is the effect of performance on young people who are inexperienced theatregoers and vulnerable to the conversations, events, machines, and spectacle. Even if performed by "forts mauvais Acteurs" the combination of visual and auditory impact creates a feeling of admiration and regard especially in young spectators "parce qu'ils n'en ont jamais vue de meilleures et qu'ils ne sont pas capables d'en examiner les défauts" (30). By extension, the statement also implies that their theatrical incompetence may lead them to perdition if the plays do not demonstrate the correct moral path to follow. However, in La Pratique du théâtre, he is concerned too with usefulness to society in general:

> soit par la considération de la joie, qui fait le plus grand bien des hommes . . . soit pour faire paroistre la grandeur d'un Estat . . . soit pour inspirer au Peuple le courage ou pour l'instruire insensiblement en la connoissance des vertus, soit pour remedier à l'oisiveté . . . " (10).[55]

While Scudéry and d'Aubignac deem "utilité morale" essential, "Discours à Cliton," written by an unknown author

in approximately 1632, considers moral instruction optional as demonstrated by the words "si" and "veut":

> si le Poëte veut donner quelque instruction moralle, il le doit faire subtilement, et comme en passant, par le jeu, et par le recit de ses Acteurs, et non par une leçon estudiée et par un choeur attaché a sa piece."[56]

The author's advice probably results from a realistic assessment of contemporary audiences. Since the theatre and playwrights were subsidized and patronized by noblemen and especially Richelieu, attending the theatre became fashionable. However, when one considers the occupants of the "parterre" in the 1630's and 1640's, it is not surprising that the author of "Discours à Cliton" urged veiling moral instruction in the "jeu" and in the "récit." Scudéry refers to these spectators as "cette multitude ignorante que la farce attire à la comédie" (98) and indicates that some members of the "Galleries" are of the same caliber as spectators in the "Parterre" (88). The Abbé d'Aubignac describes their poor taste and penchant for farce:

> La populace, elevée dans la fange et entretenue de sentiments et de discours deshonnetes, se trouve fort disposée à recevoir pour bonnes les méchantes bouffonneries de nos farces, et prend toujours plaisir d'y voir les images de ce qu'elle a accoutumé de dire et de faire. (75)

Lancaster claims that the "parterre," the flat area usually with no seats except perhaps stools or chairs, contained that part of the audience that was "the largest, the most

unruly, and the most influential in determining the fate of the play."[57] Since the aristocrats during the time of Louis XIII and Louis XIV formed a significant and influential segment of the theatre-going public, drama reflected their viewpoint. However, the playwrights recognized that performances had to appeal to a much larger group, and neither the aristocrats nor the large majority of the audience was a learned group.[58] Boileau criticizes Molière because he "dérogeait souvent à son génie noble par des plaisanteries grossiéres, qu'il hasardait en faveur de la multitude au lieu qu'il en faut avoir en vûe que les honnêtes gens."[59]

In conformity with the nature of the "Discours à Cliton" Corneille separates himself from Scudéry, La Mesnardiére, and Chapelain who insist on a dual purpose: instruction and delight. Corneille explicitly states that if authors have not pleased the audience they have sinned "contre les bonnes moeurs et contre leur auditoire" ("Epitre" La Suite du Menteur, 364). In a letter dated November 15, 1637 to Boisrobert Corneille's defense of Le Cid against its detractors in "La Querelle du Cid" rests totally on spectator response to the play:

> J'ai fait Le Cid pour me divertir, et pour le divertissement des honnêtes gens, qui se plaisent à la comédie. J'ai remporté le témoignage de l'excellence de ma pièce par le grand nombre de ses représentations, par la foule extraordinaire des personnes qui y sont venues, et par les acclamations générales qu'on lui a faites . . .
> Le Cid sera toujours beau et gardera sa réputation d'être la plus belle pièce qui ait paru sur

> le théâtre, jusqu'à ce qu'il en vienne une autre qui ne laisse point les spectateurs à la trentième fois. . . .[60]

Box office appeal surfaces as Corneille's primary consideration in his analysis of the play's success.

Furthermore, in the 1645 "Epitre" to La Suite du Menteur Corneille points out unequivocally the author's responsibility to please the audience rather than to focus on and propagate morality. He contends:

> Si j'étais de ceux qui tiennent que la poésie a pour but de profiter aussi bien que de plaire, je tâcherais de vous persuader que celle-ci [La Suite du Menteur] est beaucoup meilleure que l'autre, [Le Menteur], à cause que Dorante y paraît beaucoup plus honnête homme, et donne des exemples de vertu à suivre; au lieu qu'en l'autre, il ne donne que les imperfections à éviter; mais pour moi, . . . notre art n'a pour but que le divertissement, j'avoue qu'il est ici bien moins à estimer qu'en la première comédie [Le Menteur], puisque, avec ses mauvaises habitudes, il a perdu presque toutes ses grâces, et qu'il semble avoir quitté sa meilleure part de ses agréments lorsqu'il a voulu se corriger de ses défauts. Vous me direz que je suis bien injurieux au métier qui me fait connaître, d'en ravaler le but si bas que de réduire à plaire au peuple. . . . (363)

Corneille's contemporary critics denounce Le Menteur because Dorante's actions according to Corneille himself, are "fourbes," and he is prone to "menteries," (234) yet he succeeds in obtaining Lucrèce. If one bases the merit and success of a play on moral utility, Le Menteur has failed. In fact, however, in spite of the viewpoint of the Academy, Le Menteur was successful while audiences rejected La Suite

du Menteur which was a "dismal failure."[61] Finally, Corneille's 1660 "Discours du poème dramatique" once again emphasizes pleasure as the goal of drama and the liberty to interpret Aristotle according to his understanding:

> Je tâche de suivre toujours le sentiment d'Aristote dans les matières qu'il a traitées; et comme peut-être je l'entendes à ma mode, je ne suis point jaloux qu'un autre l'entende à la sienne. Le commentaire dont je m'y sers le plus est l'expérience du théâtre et les réflexions sur ce que j'y ai vu plaire ou déplaire. (830)

Although Corneille does not deny that plays may have moral value, moral instruction is not a primary goal of theatre.[62] Corneille states:

> Le succès heureux de la vertu en dépit des traverses et des périls nous excite à l'embrasser; et le succès funeste du crime ou de l'injustice est capable de nous en augmenter l'horreur naturelle, par l'appréhension d'un pareil malheur. (823)

Marie Odile-Sweetser concludes that the spectator must extract the lesson himself: "s'il est honnête homme et possède un instinct de droiture et de générosité, il sera porté spontanément à trouver dans un tel spectacle une invitation à pratiquer la vertu et à haïr le vice."[63]

Although not in agreement on moral utility as a major goal, Scudéry, the Abbé d'Aubignac, and Corneille concur that to please the audience is a major goal of theatrical production. How does a dramatist accomplish this goal? Verisimilitude or "vraisemblance" based on reason emerges as

a key issue for the critical writers.[64] It underlies both the necessary moral effect of a play and serves as the cornerstone for the "bienséances" and the unities.[65] What is verisimilitude? D'Aubignac's shape of the word "vray-semblance" highlights its definition as "something having the semblance of truth, what we would accept as the truth: the norm is provided by the sum of our experience, not by individual, often exceptional cases."[66] The theatrical piece must appear believable to the audience, and credibility depends to a degree on the background, theatrical competence, and composition of the audience. Verisimilitude includes "la fable" or "la conduite de l'action," then the "moeurs des personnages introduits dans l'action," and, finally, "la représentation dans laquelle elle est une des bases de la règle des unités. . . ."[67] It is evident that verisimilitude extends to the staging and performance of the actors. Bray notes the "moeurs des personnages introduits dans l'action"; however, equally significant are the "moeurs" of the audience and the willingness and the ability of the audience to understand, appreciate, and even value the actions and decisions of the main characters. The question of illusion versus reality, a dominant dramatic theme reflected in L'Illusion comique and Le Véritable Saint Genest, stems from concerns about verisimilitude.

Verisimilitude adds credibility to the moral truths contained in a dramatic work; consequently, it governs the

critical thought of Scudéry, Chapelain, and d'Aubignac. In his "Observations sur le Cid" (1637) Scudéry differentiates the work of the historian from that of the poet and emphatically states his position on verisimilitude:

> Aussi ces Grands Maistres anciens, qui m'ont apris ce que je monstre icy à ceux qui l'ignorent, nous ont tousjours enseigné, que le Poëte, et l'Historien, ne doivent pas suivre la mesme route: et qu'il vaut mieux que le premier, traicte un Sujet vraysemblable, qui ne soit pas vray, qu'un vray qui ne soit pas vray-semblable.[68]

Since it is not believable that a young woman in Chimène's position would agree to marry Rodrigue, the murderer of her father, Scudéry attacks Le Cid: "Ce sujet ne peut estre vraisemblable; Et par conséquant il choque une des principales regles du Poëme."[69] For the Abbé d'Aubignac the "vrai" is not the subject of theatre as is so aptly demonstrated by his example of Nero's strangulation and cutting of his mother in order to see the place inside her where he had been carried for nine months. Although history documents this account, the subject is not acceptable as theatrical material. Audiences consider the strangling and desecration of a mother's body as both repulsive and unbelievable in spite of its historical authenticity. Neither is "Le Possible" within the realm of verisimilitude. Although it is possible for a person to die from "un coup de tonnerre," to unravel a plot by eliminating a lover by lightening is not an effective theatrical device (66-67).

The Abbé d'Aubignac moves beyond the Academy members, who focus on creating an atmosphere of believability to promote morality, to concentrate on the creation of the illusion of reality on stage. D'Aubignac states: "la vraisemblance est, s'il le faut ainsi dire l'essence du Poëme Dramatique, sans laquelle il ne se peut rien faire ni rien dire de raisonable sur la scène" (65). To achieve this end, he stresses the importance of an effective, efficient dramatic text: a simple plot, very clear motivation for every action both on stage and off stage, close adherence to the unities of action, time, and place, and the parallel between performance and a trompe-l'oeil painting.[70] His emphasis on simplicity, clarity, and illusion facilitates the spectator's ability to understand and enjoy the play. These recommendations demonstrate that he recognizes the hardships of spectators who attempt to comprehend and to follow the theatrical performance under difficult if not impossible conditions. A noisy, intrusive, disruptive audience can distract a spectator's attention from the performance and, consequently, make the spectator aware that the performance is illusion not "reality."

D'Aubignac's aesthetic aim is to motivate the spectators to believe that the theatrical production is reality; the spectator must forego his disbelief, his view that the theatre is make-believe:[71]

> Je sçay bien que le Theatre est une espece d'illusion, mais il faut tromper les Spectateurs en telle sorte qu'ils ne s'imaginent pas l'estre encore qu'ils le sachent; il ne faut pas tandis qu'on les trompe que leur esprit le connoisse, mais seulement quand il y fait reflexion. Or, en ces rencontres, les yeux ne seroient point deceûs, et l'imagination par consequent ne le pourroit l'estre, parce qu'on ne la peut decevoir si les sens n'en facilitent les moyens. . . . (192-93)

He strives for narrowing the distance between what Martino calls "la scène réelle, telle qu'on pourrait la voir sans les acteurs et sans le décor;" and "la scène idéale, avec les suggestions du décor, des costumes, de la voix, de la poésies, telle qu'il est nécessaire qu'elle se crée pour que se déroule la pièce que l'on y a portée."[72]

The limitations of stage representation become more evident when contrasted with cinema. In film production there is a scenario and a studio; hopefully, the author does not create scenes that extend beyond the capabilities of the studio. However, the director may devise deceptions to create the necessary illusions or special effects much more easily than in live stage performance because the audience is not present to observe and to scrutinize.[73] During d'Aubignac's time special effects were not sophisticated and frequently were not skillfully done. As a result, the spectator's illusion of reality is attacked by obvious malfunctions, distortions, and mistakes. The spectator remains conscious of the reality of the actual stage and its limitations.

In order to reduce the distance between the ideal stage and the real stage the Abbé d'Aubignac emphasizes the unities of place and time. Consequently, he decries the practice of simultaneous setting which places France in one corner of the stage, Turkey in another, and Spain in the middle (30-31). Mahelot describes a multiple setting used in one of Rotrou's comedies La Bague de l'oubli (1629):

> Il faut un palais au milieu du théâtre qui soit en rotonde avec des balustres. Il faut une chambre garnie d'une table . . . Pour l'autre côté du théâtre il faut qu'il ait une grotte, fontaine . . . A côte du jardin et du palais, il faut un échafaud tendu de noir qui soit caché: il s'ouvre au cinquième acte, à la première scéne.[74]

Since he must avoid reminding the spectator that he is witnessing a theatrical illusion, d'Aubignac urges the poet to choose one place where all action can logically occur. To create immediacy of action and by extension the reality of the situation on stage d'Aubignac proposes three hours, (114), the ideal time for the duration of a representation, as the amount of time necessary for a similar real-life event to unfold. He states:

> Il seroit meme à souhaitter que l'action du Poëme ne demandast pas plus de temps dans la verité que celuy qui se consume dans la representation; mais cela n'estant pas facile, ny méme possible en certaines occasions, on souffre que le Poëte en suppose un peu davantage: A quoy la Musique qui marque les intervalles des Actes, le Recit d'un Acteur sur la Scéne durant qu'un autre travaille ailleurs, et l'Impatience naturelle à tous les hommes d'apprendre promptement ce qu'ils desirent sçavoir, aident à tromper l'imagination du

> Spectateur; et sans qu'il y fasse de reflexion, il se laisse persuader qu'il s'est passé un temps convenable pour faire toutes les choses representées. (123)

Although he concedes it is not always possible to achieve this goal,

> le Poëte doit presser son esprit, et faire effort sur son imagination pour si bien ordonnor tous les evenemens de son Theatre dans la mesure du Temps, quoy qu'essentielle, qu'il ne blesse point la vray-semblance qui doit toujours en estre la principale regle, et sans laquelle toutes les autres deviennent déreglées. (127)

Since d'Aubignac does not credit the spectator with a great deal of imagination, "Il n'y a donc que le Vray-semblable qui puisse raisonnablement fonder, soustenir, et terminer un Poëme Dramatique" (67).

Corneille, unlike d'Aubignac and the members of the Academy, relegates much greater importance to historical truth than to verisimilitude. In the first paragraph of "Discours de l'utilité et des parties du Poème dramatique" he comments:

> mais les grands sujets qui remuent fortement les passions et en opposent l'impétuosité aux lois du devoir ou aux tendresses du sang, doivent toujours aller au-delà du vraisemblable, et ne trouveraient aucune croyance parmi les auditeurs, s'ils n'étaient soutenus, ou par l'autorité de l'histoire qui persuade avec empire, ou par la préoccupation de l'opinion commune qui nous donne ces mêmes auditeurs déjà tous persuadés. (822)

Corneille

> reduces verisimilitude to an attribute of the 'acheminements' of the plot which could be invented by the poet--plausible motives and incidents leading up to an event (un effet) which, being extraordinary, constitutes the 'beau sujet' and requires the authority of history to make it credible.[75]

Since the extraordinary and the exceptional form the basis of "le beau sujet," flexibility of rules governs his critical thought. For example, in Le Cid, instead of strictly adhering to the unity of place, Corneille alternates the action between the King's apartment, the Infanta's, Chimène's home, and the street. Although he adheres to the unity of time, Scudéry accuses Corneille of cramming too many events into a small period of time. Somewhat ironically he says: "je vous laisse à juger, si ne voilà pas un jour bien employé, et si l'on n'auroit pas grand tort d'accuser tous ces personnages de parresse?"[76] Since Corneille avoids specific mentions of time and has confidence in the spectator's imagination, he assumes that the viewer does not dwell on the inordinate number of happenings which occur in an unbelievably short span of time.

The principle of "bienséances" is closely associated with verisimilitude and is also based on reason. During the sixteenth century in France the rule of "bienséances" was in embryonic form; it was not until 1630 that it was finally

established.[77] To comply with the rule of "bienséances," a play must not shock the audience; it

> should not conflict with the tastes and moral outlook or prejudices of the audience . . . and in practice playwrights were often compelled to alter the historical or legendary data on which their tragedies were based so as not to come into conflict with the taste and moral outlook of their age.[78]

In "Observations sur le Cid" Georges de Scudéry vividly explains the terms through his descriptions of Chimène's violation of the principle:

> L'on y voit une fille desnaturée ne parler que de ses follies, lorsqu'elle ne doit parler que de son malheur; pleindre la perte de son Amant, lorsqu'elle ne doit songer qu'a celle de son pere; aimer encor ce qu'elle doit abhorrer; souffrir en mesme temps, et en mesme maison, ce meurtrier et ce pauvre corps; et pour achever son impieté, joindre sa main à celle qui dégoute encor du sang de son pere.[79]

Chimène's behavior tarnishes the image of the seventeenth-century authoritarian French father who deserves the obedience, continued devotion of his daughter, and retaliation against his murderer. In conformity with Scudéry's thinking, d'Aubignac rejects Nero's strangulation of his mother as unsuitable for a dramatic text. Although the incident is historically accurate, he also criticized Corneille for the murder of Camille in Horace. The Abbé d'Aubignac recommends manipulating the plot to comply with the rule of

"bienséances" and with the final historical event, Camille's death:

> pour sauver en quelque sorte l'Histoire, et tout ensemble la bienseance de la Scéne, que cette fille desesperée voyant son frere l'épée à la main, se fust precipitée dessus: ainsi elle fust morte de la main d'Horace, et luy eust été digne de compassion, comme un mal-heureux Innocent, l'Histoire et le Theatre auroient esté d'accord. (68)

Corneille loosely interpreted the rules or broke them in order to support his aesthetic vision: to please the audience.

Staging

While the "décorateur" Mahelot was working at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, dramatic poets began to think of the unities of time, place, and action; consequently, after 1635 the multiple decor slowly became dated.[80] The notes of Michael Laurent, a successor of Mahelot, in Le Mémoire de Mahelot prove that plays performed in a single setting were more numerous.[81] However, what remains significant throughout the first half of the seventeenth century is the use of the "merveilleux." Deïerkauf-Holsboër comments:

> Tous les auteurs de la première moitié du XVII^{e} siècle ont tenu compte du goût du public, de sa passion pour le merveilleux, lorsqu'ils composent leurs pièces dramatiques. Ainsi des anges apparaissaient sur la scène, une voix est entendue, des cérémonies magnifiques avaient lieu dans un temple . . . les spectateurs assistaient à une cérémonie pompeuse, etc. Le succès de

> certaines pièces fut souvent dû à ces éléments spectaculaires, qui faisaient accourir la foule des spectateurs. Le Prince déguisé (1632) de Scudéry, la Médée (1635) de Corneille, l'Hercule mourant [1634] de Rotrou et d'autres pièces en sont des exemples frappants.[82]

Mahelot while describing the setting of Rotrou's l'Hercule mourant (1634) highlights its magnificence, the importance of painting, and the "merveilleux." He states:

> Le theatre doit estre superbe. A un des costés, il faut le temple de Jupiter, bastit à l'antique et enfermé d'arcades autour de l'autel, et que l'on puisse tourner autour de l'autel. Dessus l'autel, une cassolette et autres ornemens. Il faut faire le pied destail rond comme l'antique, ou est posé Jupiter. Sur l'autel caré, quatre petittes piramides garny de leurs petits vases ou sont des flammes de feu en peinture. Le temple doit estre caché. De l'autre costé du theatre doit avoir une montagne ou l'on monte devant le peuple et descendre par derrierre. Laditte montagne doit estre en bois de haute futaye, et dessous la montagne, doit avoir une chambre funebre remplie de larmes, le tombeau d'Hercule superbe. . . .[83]

Machine plays such as Corneille's Andromède (1650), Claude Abraham calls it a "divertissement on a grand scale," that "has little to do with Cornelian drama,"[84] not only reflect a sumptuous decor but also demonstrate the baroque use of coextensive space intermingling the supernatural presence in the real world. The Italian Torelli designed the scenery: the temple, the square in front of it, and the heavens.[85] Through trompe l'oeil the architectural columns recede and lead the spectator's eye to a large and prominent dome located at the center and protruding into the space of the

sky. The spectator's eyes follow the vertical and curved lines on the dome to its summit and discover that the curved dome is framed by three distinct groups of clouds graced with the presence of gods. Torelli further accentuates the pull of the spectator's eyes toward the heavens by the continuous repetition of vertical columns on both sides of the stage. Finally, statues with hands stretched toward the gods, top the columns. In the foreground of the square in front of the temple, actors, who themselves are spectators to the heavenly scene, are imploring the help of the gods. Within the temple itself another spectacle occurs. Céphée's sacrifice to the god Jupiter for her daughter's marriage reinforces the intermingling of the human and supernatural realms. A detailed description of the stage decoration includes the comment:

> On y verrait Céphée sacrifiant à Jupiter pour le mariage de sa fille, n'estoit que l'attention que les spectateurs presteroient à ce sacrifice les déstourneroit de celles qu'ils doivent à ce qui se passe dans le parvis que représente le Théâtre.[86]

In view of Corneille's overriding concern for positive audience reaction, his lack of personal interest in the staging itself is surprising. Although he recognized the importance of music and stage decoration in productions, Corneille frees the poet's attention from these decisions, delegates the responsibility of staging to others such as the "décorateurs" and "ingénieurs," and bases his decision

on the precedent set by Aristotle. In his "Discours du poème dramatique" he states:

> La décoration du théâtre a besoin de trois arts pour la rendre belle, de la peinture, de l'architecture, et de la perspective. Aristote prétend que cette partie, non plus que la précédente, ne regards pas le poète, et comme il ne la traite point, je me dispenserai d'en dire plus qu'il ne m'en a appris. (827)

Apparently, since he was a successful playwright beginning with his initial play Mélite performed for the first time in 1629 and since he was associated with the Theatre of the Marais until the mid 1640's,[87] he had confidence in his ability to write a play that could be well-staged, and he had faith in the theatre company's ability to stage his plays effectively.

The Abbé d'Aubignac concedes that unusual and magnificent stage decoration and the use of the miraculous draw crowds to the theatre because of their widespread appeal not only to the masses but also to the refined spectators. Stage decorations add to the performance because they are "agréables à voir, car c'est par ce charme que le peuple s'y laisse attirer" (360). While admitting "le peuple fasse foule à toutes les occasions de voir quelque chose de semblable," (357) and "la Cour ne les ait pas desagréables" (357) d'Aubignac contends that too many risks jeopardize the effective use of elaborate staging and machinery. Since he is writing a manual to improve the representation of

dramatic works and, consequently, to enhance aesthetic reaction, he admonishes the poets for their lack of knowledge about staging and assigns them primary responsibility for defects:

> j'ajoute que les Autheurs mémes ont été si peu soigneux de s'instruire en la connoissance de ces vieilles merveilles et aux moyens qu'on a de les bien exécuter, qu'il n'est pas étrange que souvent le plus grand defaut soit dans les mauvaises inventions. (357)

Furthermore, if the "ornemens" do not contribute "au Noeud des Intrigues du Theatre ou au Dénouëment . . . les gens d'esprit pourront estimer les Ouvriers qui les auront bien faits; mais le Poëte n'en sera pas estimé" (361-62). The poet's creativity and worth will be relegated to a secondary or even negligible role while that of the "Ingénieurs" and "Décorateurs" will capture the spotlight. The Abbé d'Aubignac reduces his concerns to three major categories: the ineptitude of the "ingénieurs" and "décorateurs," the additional problems imposed on actors, and the tendency to violate the rules of theatre. Reason and judgement control d'Aubignac's directives; as a result, he prefers minimal staging characteristic of the classical theatre.

A primary consideration which leads d'Aubignac to prefer minimal staging is the dependence of elaborate staging and machines on the proficiency of the engineers. Their ineptitude leads directly to a "décalage" between "la scène reelle" and "la scène idéale,"[88] Therefore, he specifically

points out that the theatrical engineers must work with stage devices that are "faciles à executer," and he discounts the opinion of the "Ignorans qui croient tout impossible" (360). The engineers must manipulate the machines "si bien . . . qu'il ne soit pas besoin d'avoir un grand nombre d'hommes pour les remuer, et que les Engins fassent leurs mouvemens à poinct-nommé (361). His concern bears directly on audience reception and reaction. If the spectators wait too long for the appropriate theatrical effect to occur, "le peuple impatiente" (361). Poor timing and badly executed staging introduce additional opportunities and moments for disruptive audience response such as boos, inappropriate laughter, shouts, diversion, and inattention that all contribute to breaking the tone of the play. Since the audience already, by nature of its composition, tends toward disruption, d'Aubignac's concerns are well founded.

When creating a dramatic poem, the author has to foresee staging problems that tax the actors' financial resources and dramatic skill. Since the actors are responsible for the expenses incurred in staging a play, according to d'Aubignac the author's responsibility includes a careful consideration of staging and decoration:

> Premierement, il faut qu'elles soient necessaires, et que la Piéce ne puisse estre joüée sans cet ornement; autrement les Spectacles ne seroient jamais approuvez, quoy qu'ils fussent ingénieux; on estimeroit le Poëte peu judicieux de les avoir introduits dans un Ouvrage qui s'en pouvoit

> passer; et les Comédiens imprudens, d'en faire la dépense. (359)

The tendency toward a "décor unique," which outnumbers the "décor multiple" at the Hôtel de Bourgogne according to Michel Laurent's testimony, was readily accepted by the actors because the former required a smaller sum of money.[89] As an example of superfluous staging d'Aubignac criticizes Andromède (1650) in which two large buildings of different architecture are used unnecessarily in the first and fourth acts: "car ces deux Actes pourroient estre joüez avec les Décorations de tel des trois autres qu'on voudroit choisir, sans blesser l'intention du Poëte, et sans contredire aucun incident, ny aucune action de la Piéce" (360). In addition to the actors' limited financial resources available for staging a play, d'Aubignac warns authors that complicated staging also requires especially versatile and proficient actors. Because of the malfunction of stage machinery, poor timing, or both, actors may have to vary the timing of their discourse or to add or subtract lines. The actor's improvisational skills, which may or may not be adequately developed, become invaluable tools to assure successful and credible performance. When the author includes a remarkable feat in the dramatic text

> comme se précipiter dans la Mer, ou tomber d'un chariot en combattant . . . il faut que l'Acteur l'étudie avec soin, avant que de la faire sur le Theatre; ce que je dis, pour avoir veû de mauvais évenemens de la negligence de nos Comédiens, et ce n'est pas le moindre obstacle qui trouble souvent

> l'effet des Machines, et la beauté des Décorations. (362-63)

While d'Aubignac cautions authors of the risks inherent in a dramatic text based on elaborate or complicated staging, agility, improvisational skills, study, and practice surface as important components of acting expertise.

To insure less interference from the audience during the actor's delivery of lines and to maximize the actor's potential for excellent performance, the Abbé d'Aubignac proposes several guidelines for the proper utilization of decoration and machinery. Permanent stage props should appear from the opening of the theatre so that the "murmure du peuple, qui s'émeut toûjours en ces apparitions, soit finy avant que les Acteurs commencent le Récit" (362). The earliest reference to the existence of a stage curtain in a public theatre is recorded in a contract for the remodeling project undertaken at the Theatre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1647, two years after the performance of Le Véritable Saint Genest.[90] The stage curtain was raised at the beginning of the performance and lowered at the end so that the stage was visible to the spectators between acts.[91] The Abbé d'Aubignac advises that decorators complete changes in scenery during the intervals between acts because workers have time to set up the new staging and/or props. Most importantly, before beginning the next act, the actor will have allowed sufficient time for the spectators to converse

about the new props and to express their approval or discontent before the continuation of the performance (362). If a prop or a set change must occur during the course of an act, the dramatic poet must build in words or lines of admiration or astonishment to provide some time for the audience to express emotions and reactions. D'Aubignac presupposes, through experience undoubtedly, a vocal and critical audience. Throughout his analysis, d'Aubignac presents a pragmatist's view of the creation of a theatrical performance based on reason and the known or calculated audience response during his time. The Abbé d'Aubignac has little faith in the improvisational skills of actors; every movement, word, and stage effect is planned in advance to assure a well-orchestrated performance.

Bray succintly defines French classicism:

> Et le classicisme, c'est la doctrine de la raison. C'est aussi le besoin des règles, c'est l'admiration des anciens, c'est le souci d'un art utilitaire, . . . c'est peut-être avant tout le culte de la 'souveraine raison.'[92]

The Academy, Scudéry, and the Abbé d'Aubignac advocate strict adherence to the rules based on reason. Bray contends that La Pratique du théâtre codifies all the doctrines that a generation of critics attempted to establish, but "à laquelle l'oeuvre du grand tragique s'averait trop souvent infidèle."[93] In spite of this emphasis on reason during the formulation of the doctrine and after, dramatic poets did

not immediately and completely conform to the code. Both the baroque vision and the classical vision co-existed. For example, the highly successful dramatic poet Pierre Corneille contests the slavish adherence to a set of rules, and as late as 1660 in the "Examen" of Mélite he attributes the success of his first play Mélite to his common sense:

> Cette pièce fut mon coup d'essai, et elle n'a garde d'être dans les règles, puisque je ne savais pas alors qu'il y en eût. Je n'avais pour guide qu'un peu de sens commun, avec les exemples de feu Hardy dont la veine était plus féconde que polie, et de quelques modernes qui commençaient à se produire, et qui n'étaient pas plus réguliers que lui. (28)

André Stegmann notes that Rotrou is one of the Moderns who does not follow the rules.[94] In the face of a political and artistic climate which focuses on representation and audience response, positive spectator reaction surfaces as a key consideration for Scudéry, Corneille, and the Abbé d'Aubignac in the creation of the dramatic text itself. Scudéry and d'Aubignac envision strict adherence to the rules as a necessary means to achieving excellent audience response.

In spite of the theorists' emphasis on reason, the unities, verisimilitude and "bienséances," with Rotrou, instantaneous intuition and the eruption of spontaneity sometimes subvert reason. Appearances and imagination can undermine reason and make it an ineffective guide. The baroque vision agrees with Pascal's view: "Notre raison est

toujours déçue par l'inconstance des apparences"[95] and "la vie humaine n'est qu'une illusion perpétuelle."[96] Before venturing into an analysis of Jean Rotrou's "Le Véritable Saint Genest, let us first examine the differences between the classical and the baroque, two contrasting aesthetic visions which evolve from the Renaissance.

NOTES

[1] Henry Carrington Lancaster, A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century, part 2, vol. 1, The Period of Corneille (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1932) 5. Lancaster concedes that the Wars of Religion slowed down the development of French drama in comparison to its development in Spain and England.

[2] Colette Schérer, Comédie et société sous Louis XIII (Paris: Nizet, 1983) 20.

[3] C. Schérer 19.

[4] Marc Fumaroli, "Notice," L'Illusion comique, by Pierre Corneille (Paris: Larousse, 1970) 12.

[5] Georges de Scudéry, L'Apologie du théâtre (Paris: Courbé, 1639) 83-84. All further references, unless indicated, refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text in parentheses.

[6] Fumaroli 10.

[7] Fumaroli 12.

[8] Fumaroli 12.

[9] Lancaster, in Corneille, thinks that Louis XIII had "only a moderate interest" in theatre. He attended a few dramatic programs at court, but only three plays were dedicated to him (6).

[10] Henri Chardon, La Vie De Rotrou mieux connue: Documents inédits sur la société polie de son temps et la Querelle du Cid (Paris: Picard, 1884) 38. Chardon proposes 1632 as the date for Rotrou's service to the Hôtel de Bourgogne as "poète à gages." Wilma Deïerkauf-Holsboër suggests 1629 in the more recent work L'Histoire de la mise en scène dans le théâtre français à Paris de 1600 à 1673 (Paris: Nizet, 1960) 40.

[11] C. Schérer 19-20.

[12] Lancaster, Corneille 6.

[13] Cited by Lancaster, Corneille 7.

[14] C. Schérer 22.

[15] C. Schérer 22.

[16] C. Schérer 19.

[17] C. Schérer 19.

[18] Joseph Morello, Jean Rotrou (Boston: Twayne, 1980) 15.

[19] Morello 16.

[20] Lancaster, Corneille 8.

[21] Samuel Chappuzeau, Le Théâtre français (1674; n.p.: Editions d'aujourd'hui, 1985) 15.

[22] Cited in Lancaster, Corneille 5.

[23] Lancaster, Corneille 6.

[24] John R. Martin, Baroque (New York: Harper, 1977) 157.

[25] Martin 157.

[26] Martin 157.

[27] Martin 157.

[28] Cited by Martin 56.

[29] Martin 57.

[30] Martin 19.

[31] Roger de Piles, Conversations sur la connaissance de la peinture (1677; Genève: Slatkine, 1970) 135.

[32] Marlies Kronegger, "Games of Perspective in Baroque Art and Poetry," Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature 8.15 (1981): 277-78.

[33] Martin 155.

[34] Martin 175.

[35] Martin 180-81.

[36] Martin 177.

[37] Martin 112.

[38] Konrad Oberhuber, Poussin: The Early Years in Rome (New York: Hudson Hills, 1988) 195-96. Poussin completed two paintings entitled "The Martyrdom of St. Erasmus"; the first in 1628 and the second larger one for the Vatican in 1628-29. Oberhuber refers to the first, which I describe, as baroque, but he states that in the second painting Poussin "mitigates the baroque quality" of the first and gives it "a more classical character." Martin also calls the second of the two a "baroque religious" painting (112).

[39] Oberhuber 196.

[40] Michel Foucault, The Order of Things (New York: Pantheon, 1970) 4. Chapter I analyzes "Las Meniñas."

[41] Foucault 7-8.

[42] Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, "Velázquez and his Art," Velázquez, by Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, and Julian Gállego (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989) 31-32.

[43] René Bray, La Formation de la doctrine classique en France (Paris: Nizet, 1966) III.

[44] Bray 19.

[45] Bray 126.

[46] Georges Mongrédien, Daily Life in the French Theatre, trans. Claire Eliane Engel (London: Allen, 1969) 33-34.

[47] Jean Chapelain, Lettres de Jean Chapelain de l'Académie Française, ed. Tamizey de Larroque (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1880) I, 581-82.

[48] Corneille, Oeuvres complètes 823.

[49] L'Abbé d'Aubignac, La Pratique du theatre (Amsterdam: Bernard, 1715) 46. All further references, unless indicated, refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text in parentheses.

[50] In the twentieth century Thorton Wilder's Our Town, which is directly contrary to d'Aubignac's guidelines, includes a narrator who is a main character.

[51] Hallam Walker, Molière (New York: Twayne, 1971) 74-75.

[52] H. T. Barnwell, ed., introduction, Writings on the Theatre, by Pierre Corneille (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965) xiii.

[53] Chappuzeau 47-48.

[54] Bray 63-67.

[55] Barnwell in the "Introduction" of Corneille's Writings on the theatre suggests that certain passages of La Pratique du théâtre indicate that d'Aubignac was expecting a type of official appointment as an administrator of a state theatre (xxv). Although Barnwell does not quote passages or indicate their location, this passage may be one of them.

[56] "Discours à Cliton," La Querelle du Cid: Pièces et Pamphlets, éd. Armand Gasté (1898; Genève: Slatkine, 1970) 261-62. Barnwell in the "Introduction" of Corneille's Writings on the Theatre, agrees that the "Discours à Cliton" staunchly supports aesthetic response, not moral instruction, as the goal of art (xxii).

[57] Lancaster, A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century, part 5, Recapitulation: 1610-1700 (1942; New York: Gordian, 1966) 16.

[58] John Lough, Seventeenth-Century French Drama: the Background (Oxford: Clarendon 1979) 98. For a more detailed analysis refer to his entire chapter "Audiences" (76-98). Although the aristocrats were fewer in number, their seats cost more so there was a financial incentive to please them.

[59] Nicolas Boileau. Bolaeana ou bons mots (Amsterdam: L'Honoré, 1742) 50.

[60] Pierre Corneille, Oeuvres de Pierre Corneille, éd. Marty Laveaux (Paris: Hachette, 1862) 430, Vol. 10 of Les Grands Ecrivains de la France.

[61] Claude Abraham, Pierre Corneille (New York: Twayne, 1972) 83-85.

[62] Bray states that moral utility is "d'une necessité secondaire, peut on dire" (71). Barnwell goes farther by saying: "But Corneille denies, as he always will, that the moral function is of primary (even if of any) importance" (xviii).

[63] Marie-Odile Sweetser, Les Conceptions dramatiques de Corneille (Genève: Droz, 1962) 100.

[64] Bray 115.

[65] Barnwell xvi.

[66] Barnwell, footnote #1, xvi.

[67] Bray 192.

[68] Georges de Scudéry, "Observations sur le Cid," La Querelle du Cid: Pièces, et Pamphlets, éd. Armand Gasté 75.

[69] Scudéry, "Observations," 75.

[70] Barnwell xxvi.

[71] Barnwell xxvi.

[72] Pierre Martino, préface, La Pratique du theatre, by L'Abbé d'Aubignac (Paris: Champion, 1927) xvii.

[73] Martino xvii.

[74] Henry Carrington Lancaster, éd. Le Mémoire de Laurent Mahelot, Michel Laurent et d'autres décorateurs de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne (Paris: Champion, 1920) 66.

[75] Barnwell xviii.

[76] Scudéry, "Observations" 77-78.

[77] Bray 218.

[78] Lough 109.

[79] Scudéry, "Observations" 80.

[80] Lancaster, Le Mémoire 25. According to Lancaster, Mahelot finished the first part of this manuscript, describing the decorations used in the plays at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, slightly before the Carnival of 1634. He began it approximately in January of 1633.

[81] Deïerkauf-Holsboër, L'Histoire de la mise en scène 54 & 58.

[82] Deïerkauf-Holsboër, L'Histoire de la mise en scène 60.

[83] Lancaster, Le Mémoire, 102-03.

[84] Abraham 99.

[85] Deïerkauf-Holsboër, L'Histoire de la mise en scène 67.

[86] Cited in Deïerkauf-Holsboër, L'Histoire de la mise en scène 67. This description is included in the edition Pierre Corneille, Andromède, Tragédie représentée avec les Machines sur le théâtre Royal de Bourbon in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Y5564.

[87] Abraham 16.

[88] Martino, préface, La Pratique, by L'Abbé d'Aubignac xvii.

[89] Deïerkauf-Holsboër, L'Histoire de la mise en scéne 59. Lancaster establishes 1678 as the year Laurent writes, not 1673 as indicated on the title page (Le Mémoire 28-29).

[90] Deïerkauf-Holsboër, Le Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, vol. ii (Paris: Nizet, 1970) 184.

[91] Lough 63.

[92] Bray 139.

[93] Bray 203.

[94] Corneille, Corneille: Oeuvres complètes 28, note 8.

[95] Blaise Pascal, Pensées (Paris: Garnier, 1962) 91.

[96] Pascal 104.

CHAPTER 2

BAROQUE AND CLASSICAL AESTHETIC VISIONS

Diversity or/and Unity

Although Wilfried Floeck in Esthétique de la diversité states that the literature of the mid-seventeenth century in France, the period of time incorporating the representation of Le Véritable Saint Genest, "est indéniablement marquée par le style baroque," he points out that a baroque literary vision and a classical aesthetics coexist and stimulate artistic creation.[1] Therefore, to determine how each of these might influence the art of the actor and, in particular, Rotrou's conception of the actor's art as revealed in Le Véritable Saint Genest, we shall begin by contrasting the two aesthetic visions.

Evolving from the Renaissance crisis of knowledge and from principles of rhetoric, the baroque exists in France as an independent literary and artistic vision between 1575-85 and 1650-60[2] and manifests itself in particular works rather than in a developed, organized, and established theory written at that time. The absence of such a codified manifesto is the logical consequence of the nature of the baroque, an aesthetics promoting liberty, diversity, imagination, and change. In contrast, classical aesthetics, insisting on order, clarity, proportion, and reason, consists of homogeneous rules, first codified by Jean Chapelain in 1620,[3] and reaches its height in the literary texts written between 1660 and 1680. Emerging as a reaction against the Renaissance ideals of order and clarity and then continuing

its rebellion against the system of rules devised in reaction to contemporary notions of diversity and liberty by seventeenth-century French classicism, the baroque releases imprisoned imaginative forces activated by sense experience and liberty.

Order, proportion, and harmony form the foundation of Renaissance perceptions and appreciation of beauty, nature, and Antiquity. In rhetoric and in poetics beauty without order and harmony is impossible to envision. Neo-Platonic inspiration reinforces this conception by seeing in an artistic work an expression of divine beauty and its concomitant concrete representation of the harmony and order of the universe. In this way, the beauty of the macrocosm is reflected in the microcosm of the work of art.[4] Further contributing to its emphasis on clarity and order, Renaissance humanism seizes the "entité du monde" through a selection of what is most representative, and it suppresses an abundance of details and seemingly insignificant elements.[5] Ronsard's "Hymne de la justice," for example, praises nature as a harmonious whole directed and controlled by reasonable laws. However, if the order of nature is not perfect, man, through artistic intervention, exercises his power to correct, improve, and ennoble nature. Since the Renaissance humanists believe that the works of Classical Antiquity already imitated nature perfectly, the poet simply has to turn to Antiquity for his inspiration and models.

Consequently, the Renaissance humanists transform the imitation of nature into an imitation of the Ancients.[6]

During the second half of the sixteenth century a "crise de conscience"[7] undermining the unity of the civilized world prompts the development of a divergent aesthetic vision. Prior to the Renaissance, the medieval Christian believed that every man came from God, and, by avoiding sin, every creature could earn eternal salvation in a final return to God. This religious outlook reflects the perceived unity and order of the universe. Although the goal of Copernicus was to demonstrate this harmony in the perfection of the universe, in reality, he brought about a break with this Aristotelian conception and with the Scholastic and Christian perspective reflected in the Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas. The surge in knowledge, the result of scientific and geographic discoveries, creates a tension in man difficult to resolve. As a result of the expansion of knowledge and the development of reason, to know and to believe no longer are synonymous. Man still believes in God, but his belief is not instinctive.[8] Montaigne confesses: "c'est la foi seule qui embrasse vivement et certainement les hauts mystères de notre religion."[9] When one speaks of a scientific and rationalist "esprit" at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, skepticism and pessimism characterize this outlook in which man no longer exists as the highlight and

center of a closed universe.[10] As late as the mid-seventeenth century, Pascal, in Les Pensées, says that man cannot acquire certain knowledge outside of his own experiences, and he describes man as existing in an incommensurable infinity of eternal silence. According to Pascal, man bases his uncertain certainty on uncertainty.[11]

Although baroque discourse attempts to lead the readers/audience to Absolute Truth, it still reflects the changing and uncertain world which the baroque man inhabits. Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani points out:

> Au coeur de tout grand texte baroque, naît une incertitude, masquée par la parole d'autorité, guindé, un peu trop sûre d'elle-même pour qu'on ne puisse y lire, à de fragiles indices, une interrogation secrète. Le questionnement produit un texte divisé.[12]

Her quotation emphasizes the speaker's own uncertainty and internal conflict masked by an air of authority. Sponde's Sonnet XI "Et quel bien de la mort" emphasizes the poet's recognition of the illogical pattern of life. The poet's voice is divided between resignation and rebellion as he questions: "C'est bénédiction que de vivre, pourquoy nous fais-tu mourir?" The query's basic contradiction is overcome only by an act of faith which bypasses reason and exists as an uncertain certainty.[13] In Le Véritable Saint Genest the pagan actor Genest's belief in God and conversion to Christianity are also based on faith, not reason, and his

faith is born from his own uncertainty and receptivity to sense impressions.

Baroque aesthetics, an international phenomenon emerging from the "crise de conscience" and man's uncertainty, is rooted in the last third of the sixteenth century, and it evolves as a reaction against the normative and rational precepts of order and harmony emphasized by the European Renaissance and modeled on Classical Antiquity.[14] While replacing Aristotelianism, Neo-Platonism provides for the baroque a differentiation between a harmonious world of ideas, representing absolute good and a disordered material world representing evil;[15] it opens the way for an aesthetics based on questioning reality.[16] Literary depictions of the chaos of the universe and a display of ambiguity, change, uncertainty, and abundance reflect the upheaval of traditional Renaissance values. In "Le Chaos," the poet Du Bartas describes the beginning of the world as a "forme sans forme" and "une pile confuse . . . sans reglement" which, through time and the course of nature, changes "de laid beau, de mort vif, et parfait d'imparfait. . . ."[17] Théophile de Viau's ode beginning "Un corbeau devant moi croasse" portrays this "monde à l'envers" by including images of blood flowing from a rock, a stream flowing back to its source, and a serpent destroying a vulture (Rousset 2, 72-73). Disorder and confusion become the basic categories of baroque beauty, and perceptions of beauty, formerly

judged against a universal standard, become relative since beauty differs according to country, region, and even individuals. This new outlook invites the creation of an aesthetics based on diversity, change, and liberty.

In addition to the influence of Neo-Platonism, since Petrarch, imitatio through variatio, a traditional concept of rhetoric important for sustaining listener interest, gains prominence and allows the poet to develop his own style.[18] In "Elégie à une Dame" Théophile de Viau writes "La règle me déplaît, j'écris confusément, . . . J'approuve que chacun écrive à sa façon"[19] while Corneille in his "Dédicace" to La Suivante (1637) comments "Chacun a sa méthode; je ne blame point celle des autres, et me tiens à la mienne . . ." (126). As a result of the erosion of confidence in the correlation between knowledge and faith and the apparent dissolution of a unified and harmonious universe, writers insist on freedom and turn to the diversity and disorder displayed in nature as the path to follow in their quest for permanence. Influenced by these perceptions of freedom and diversity, Rotrou's actor Genest, for example, in mid-performance effectively rejects the rehearsed dramatic text, "The Martyrdom of Adrian" and freely creates and enacts his new role in God's theatre.

By diversity these baroque authors mean "une abondance anarchique et un mouvement continu de changement et d'instabilité."[20] Since an aesthetics of diversity dissociates

itself from the order, harmony, and permanence represented by God, in an attempt to reunite God's representation with that of the world, theologians in the first half of the seventeenth century, such as Yves de Paris in Théologie naturelle, locate the roots of diversity in the divine essence composed of three Persons in one God; for them, the diversity seen in this world is an expression of God's infinity and omnipotence based on multitude. For these theologians, the variety in nature reflecting God's diversity justifies the aesthetics' propensity for moving and ephemeral subjects, a proliferation of objects, a disintegration of clearly ordered composition, the irrational, extensive description in baroque poetry, a mixture of genres and styles, an alternation of themes, and increasing structural complexity,[21] such as the use of the play-within-the-play in Le Véritable Saint Genest. While Renaissance humanism focuses on man's appreciation of order and harmony, the baroque aesthetics emphasizes man's enjoyment in the surprising and changing diversity in nature which God creates for man's pleasure. In Peintures morales (1640-1643) the Jesuit priest Pierre Le Moyne, for example, prefers the naturalness of a spring landscape in flower to an artistically arranged bouquet of flowers.[22] Each new day presents to the artist or poet the possibility of dazzling the spectator/listener/reader with a new palette of colors and a novel unexpected arrangement and distribution of flowers in

nature's spontaneous and creative demonstration of its beauty.

The classical movement reacts against the diversity, disorder, and liberty characteristic of the baroque aesthetics, and it establishes an analogy between nature and reason; according to Floeck, "le classicisme est né d'une confrontation déliberée avec le baroque. . . ."[23] In place of the baroque writer's detailed description of terrestrial phenomenon, the classical creator concentrates on man's moral and psychic nature and searches out what is typical, unchangeable, and universal. This switch in focus results from a basic difference in the concept of beauty for the two aesthetics. In reaction to the baroque diversity and liberty, classicism dissociates sensual beauty from spiritual beauty, and as in the Renaissance, defines beauty in terms of simplicity, order, clarity, and regularity. In both the Renaissance and the classical period, if nature does not follow these criteria, the artist must improve and perfect nature.[24] Although in the sixteenth century Ronsard in "Abregé de l'art poétique français" prefers a carefully ordered and clearly disposed composition, it is seventeenth-century classicism which establishes rules of poetics and absolute norms based on philosophical rationalism, not simply on the imitation of Antiquity.[25] Jean Chapelain, an influential spokesman and promoter of classical aesthetics for the Academy, who examines the legacy of Aristotle and

Italian doctrine,[26] first codifies classical literary doctrine around 1620 in his "Préface" to Adonis. In it, Chapelain emphasizes respect for rules, the importance of reason, dependence on models from Antiquity, poetry as a means of moral instruction, principles of verisimilitude and "bienséances," and the unities of time, place, and action. Ten years later, around 1630, these rules begin to attract the attention of writers.[27] Therefore, it is not surprising that Rotrou in Le Véritable Saint Genest addresses the conflict between reason and sense experience.

Both writers and art critics associate rules, reason, and regularity with classical aesthetics, and they highlight freedom, diversity, and sense experience in baroque aesthetics. The dramatist Racine, in his discourse of January 2, 1685 on the occasion of Thomas Corneille's acceptance to the Académie Française, describes the French theatre at the beginning of the seventeenth century and places it in direct opposition to classical aesthetics:

> Quel désordre! quelle irrégularité! Nul goût, nulle connaissance des véritables beautés du théâtre. Les auteurs aussi ignorants que les spectateurs, la plupart des sujets extravagants et dénués de vraisemblance, point de moeurs, point de caractères: . . . en un mot, toutes les règles de l'art, celles même de l'honnêteté et de la bienséance, partout violées.[28]

Marcel Reymond summarizes the essential distinction between the classical aesthetics based on the authority of reason and the baroque, an expression of freedom and spontaneity:

> Les classiques sont les défenseurs du principe d'autorité, de la tradition, du maintien des formules; le Baroque, c'est la liberté. De tous les mots qu'il a dits: beauté, joie, tendresse, féminité, et ceux de santé robuste, de force et de majesté, le mot qui nous reste le plus cher est celui de liberté.[29]

The baroque writer or artist unfolds freely his creative imagination in new potential visions of reality in architecture, art, literature, and performance. Sense perception rather than reason expands baroque vision. In the baroque perspective, images "transmitted by the senses from the exterior world or produced by the imagination, unquestionably possessed a real value. . . ."[30]

Critics also contrast the classical principle of "vraisemblance" with the baroque vision of the "merveilleux." For Jean Chapelain, the marvelous, defined as "contre l'attente et contre l'ordinaire," is the antithesis of verisimilitude; "une poétique axée sur le merveilleux sera le contraire d'une poétique axée sur le vraisemblable."[31] Littré confirms Chapelain's perceptions and defines "merveilleux" as "ce qui dans un événement, dans un récit, s'éloigne du courant ordinaire des choses; ce qui est produit par les êtres surnaturels; ce qui suscite l'admiration."[32] In baroque aesthetics the greatest artist is the creator of the most marvelous illusions. Implied in the word "merveilleux" is a spectator or reader who responds to the creation by expressing astonishment or surprise. Since the verb "mirer," to look, is the stem for "admirer"

"admiration," "miracle," and "merveilleux,"[33] the marvelous is a key element of the artist's and spectator's creative imagination.

The concept of "gloire," a multi-faceted term with religious and political associations, promotes the baroque aesthetics' propensity for the marvelous and the need to display. Molière's poem "La Gloire du Val-de-Grâce" (1669) glorifies baroque aesthetics[34] and Louis XIV. In Molière's poem "gloire" refers to Pierre Mignard's baroque fresco in the dome, a representation of the divine Persons in God, the angels, and saints which surprises "l'esprit" and enchants "l'oeil," but the author also directly praises "le grand" Louis XIV. While this baroque church was built as a thanksgiving for the birth of the king, it stands as a perpetual reminder of his "gloire." The absolute monarch of this era identifies himself in terms of glory;[35] however, its acquisition is not limited to the ruling class. Since death is common to all, even the common man such as Genest in his insistence on martyrdom, can realize aspirations for glory.

Extraordinary manifestations of the grandeur of the king and the marvelous reach their height in the seventeenth century "fêtes de cour baroques," such as <u>Les Plaisirs de l'Isle Enchantée</u> (Versailles, 1664), and the festivities celebrating the marriage of Leopold I^{er} (Vienne, 1666-68), which display the originality and fantasy of the artistic directors. In order to demonstrate their political

superiority and repress their feelings of insecurity on the theatrum europoeum, each monarch, even the prince of a minor state, attempts to imitate and surpass the magnificence of all other "fêtes de cour," especially those at Versailles, by introducing the spectacular or "jamais vu" to elicit the astonishment and admiration of the viewers, particularly heads of state and foreign dignitaries.[36] Magnificence, the "merveilleux," heroic actions, and "un déguisement mythologique, allégorique ou romanesque" make each "fête de cour baroque" an elevated and imaginary representation of the court itself[37] which testifies not only to the grandeur of the reigning monarch but also to the "gloire" of the baroque aesthetics.

While staging the spectacular and the marvelous, the artistic directors of the "fêtes de cour baroques," in reality, create substitute universes for the European monarchs. Germain Bazin identifies the essence of the baroque with man's creation of substitute universes.[38] These baroque festivals reveal an outlook on life in which man's identity exists in seeming rather than being, a perspective characteristic of the seventeenth century. The desire to escape through make-believe into an ideal existence has its roots in man's anxiety over Divine Grace and the uncertainties attached to the concept of life after death. Man projects himself into an imaginary world and becomes an actor portraying his life as he envisions it; as a result,

the actor represents the entire baroque age. The Chevalier de Méré (1610-1684), a French moralist and critic of Voiture, advises that one should be a "'good actor in life,'" "'regard what one does as a play,'" and "'imagine one is acting a part.'"[39] Genest, an excellent example of the Chevalier de Méré's commentary, freely relinquishes his role on the Roman stage and recreates himself to become an actor once again, but this time an actor in God's theatre. This mindset encourages spontaneity, creativity, change, and freedom as man replaces one mask with another.

During the seventeenth century there is a continual tension between classical restraint and the baroque desire for creative freedom. Even in classical writers baroque tendencies emerge when they refer to "new" and "bizarre" aspects of beauty. Boileau confesses the importance of "nouveauté": "Quand je fais de vers, je songe toujours à dire ce qui ne s'est point encore dit dans notre langue"[40] while La Rochefoucauld affirms: "On voit . . . des femmes d'une beauté éclatante, mais irregulière, qui en effacent souvent de plus véritablement belles."[41] Bazin recognizes the interplay between these two aesthetics in his perceptive comment: "For 'classical' and 'baroque' are not opposites. More reason enters into the composition of the one, more fantasy into the composition of the other; but both are facets of a lost world of make-believe."[42]

A direct relationship exists between the baroque plastic arts and literature. Rubens, the Flemish painter, for instance, was deeply inspired by the poet Du Bartas. Here, in this analysis of Rotrou, a frame of reference for theatrical performance is established based on the interrelationship of poetry and architecture. We will first investigate the nature of the baroque in architecture and poetry in order to contrast the classical aesthetics' art of acting with the actor's creative and spontaneous versatility springing forth from Rotrou's Le Véritable Saint Genest.

The Baroque in Architecture and Poetry

The theorists and critics of the century of rationalism, the eighteenth century, first applied the term baroque to the new, irregular art forms.[43] According to the 1690 edition of Furetière's dictionary, "baroque" means "ill-formed pearl"; fifty years later, the 1740 edition of the Dictionnaire de l'académie française includes a second figurative definition: "Baroque se dit aussi au figuré pour irrégulier, bizarre, inégal."[44] In 1788 an architectural text, L'Encyclopédie méthodique, applies the term to buildings which are bizarre, excessive, or ridiculous.[45] Present-day critics still refer to the art as excessive or irregular, but not in a pejorative sense. In a lecture entitled "Some Uses and Misuses of the Terms Baroque and Rococo as Applied to Architecture," Anthony Blunt delineates

the characteristics of High Roman Baroque: preference for large scale, irregular forms, movement, daring illusionism and directed light, and ornate materials.[46] More recently Yves Bottineau in L'Art baroque (1986) describes the baroque:

> dynamisme, jaillissement, ascension, deséquilibre, sinuosités, arabèsques, instabilité, torsions encore le noeud, tumulte, ondulation, agitation, dilatation, courbes et contre-courbes, vertiges et convulsions . . . mise en scène, illusion, leurre . . ., accumulation, ostentation, ornements, artifices, faste, surcharge, extravagance, redondance, exubérance, éloquence, débouche de décor . . . extase, pamoisons, éphémère, fugitif, instant, passage.[47]

His description can be reduced to five major characteristics: movement, change, theatricality, decoration, and illusion. These elements we wish to illustrate with Val-de-Grâce, a highlight of baroque architecture and fresco painting, celebrated by both Molière and Roger de Piles, spokesmen of baroque creativity.[48]

Since Minguet labels it "l'église la plus baroque parmi celles qui subsistent à Paris,"[49] we can describe Val-de-Grâce as an expression of liberties typical of the baroque. Significantly, the young Louis XIV laid the foundation stone in 1645, the same year that Rotrou's Le Véritable Saint Genest was performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Paris. Val-de-Grâce exemplifies novelties and liberties, such as twisted and irregularly-spaced columns, which baroque architects introduced by adapting artistic forms from the Greeks

and applying them to Christian churches.[50] Although Bernini's "colonnes torses" were criticized greatly, Reymond comments that trees rarely grow straight and round like a column and are often wrapped in ivy. He continues "la beauté, la tradition et les exemples de la nature"[51] support its use. In the seventeenth century architects designed the antique colonnade as a portico in front of the church. Rather than designate the same amount of space between each of the columns, they widened the space between the central columns, thus marking the main entrances and inviting the participant/spectator to enter.[52]

As dramatic evidence of the baroque style in Val-de-Grâce, framing the altar, the monumental baldachin, with six twisted columns delineating a stage for the enactment of the divine ritual, directs the spectator/participant's attention to the magnificent cupola decorated with a fresco in which Mignard painted two hundred figures each one three times lifesize. The increased space between the columns in front of the alter encourages the spectator's eyes to converge in that space causing the observers to marvel at the elaborate staging and to participate in the re-enactment of their salvation. Incorporating the spectator/participant in the dramatic action as the baroque architects do through their structural and artistic designs, Rotrou, in <u>Le Véritable Saint Genest</u>, includes on stage the Roman spectators/ participants who instigate the representation of "The

Martyrdom of Adrian" and interact with the actors in this interior play.

Pierre Charpentrat explains that in the seventeenth century "l'homme dans une ville, devant une façade de palais, dans une nef d'église devient avant tout spectateur."[53] In the design of the baldachin the spectator sees that in a dizzying movement the columns spiral upward as the curves glide one into another until the movement is stopped momentarily by six pedestals supporting lifelike angels. Once again the eye is enticed to continue looking up along the arches emerging from behind the angels and forming an airy, light, openwork dome which crowns the six columns. While the arches of the openwork dome repeat the curved lines of the columns, the designer changes them by enlarging them; consequently, he creates new vibrancy and life. With some of their hands gesturing toward the heavens, the tall angels reinforce the vertical directionality of the baldachin, introduce the celestial realm into the structure itself, and lead the eyes to the decorative spike topping the crown. Finally, the spike points to Mignard's fresco in the dome. By highlighting the altar and the fresco, light, radiating from the sky through the windows in the dome, accentuates the paradise Christians aspire to reach and reinforces the influence of the heavens on the world.

Everything suggests movement, theatricality, and illusion: the twisted columns, the winged angels, the trompe

l'oeil dome, and the repetition of curves gracefully slipping into different sizes and forms. Central to the movement is the spontaneous change evidenced by the freeflowing transformation of curves and lines as they repeat, enlarge, contract and shift form.

Although architecture, painting, and sculpture enjoy a more remarkable reputation in the seventeenth century, baroque water poetry also aptly reveals inconstancy, illusionism, and metamorphosis through its reflections, fluidity, movement, shadows and light, reversible images and split images. The baroque poets suppress rigidity, control, and reason; spontaneity and freedom dominate their creative output and produce new and surprising interpretations of reality. In the Life Significance of French Baroque Poetry Marlies Kronegger points out:

> With them [the baroque poets] thinking and sensing live, move, and have their being within the vital medium of intuition. Their poetics takes us back into the one real world that was always there in its undivided wholeness. Their vision in its essence is the art of seeing into the nature of man's own being, and it points the way from bondage to freedom. Freedom for them is giving free play to all the creative impulses inherently lying in their hearts.[54]

Certain images in baroque water poetry illustrate the actor who, guided by intuition, spontaneously and flippantly slides from metamorphosis to metamorphosis while creating dramatic illusions.

In the ode "La Mer" (1628) Tristan l'Hermite's description of the readily changing visible manifestation of water and its inherent potential to change and create new illusions to awe the spectators parallels the actor's creative intuition and his facility and spontaneity in moving from one role to the next. Reinforcing this facile adaptation and change, Tristan the poet/protagonist, seeking consolation in nature for the death of his friend, shifts the temporal and spatial perspectives by including his remembrances and visions of the sea linked in a free and even incoherent manner.[55] Tristan states his method at the beginning of his meditation:

> Nul plaisir ne me peut toucher
> Hors celui de m'aller coucher
> Sur le gazon d'une falaise
> Où mon deuil se laissant charmer
> Me laisse rêver à mon aise
> Sur la majesté de la mer.[56]

Through this technique based on reverie, he paints pictures of the sea affected by lighting shifts from fiery sunlight to chiaroscuro to shadowy darkness by focusing on different moments of the day and on various days. Although viewing the sea from the height of a cliff, he precipitously plunges us to the bottom of the sea by evoking images of Neptune and Proteus, themselves activators of the changing mood of the sea.[57] In addition to the spatial and perspective changes, the very nature of water invites visualization as a fluid susceptible to transformation in its common forms of lake,

river, and rain. Thus, the title "La Mer" immediately evokes a flowing liquid image, but, similar to the actor capable of switching roles from one performance to the next and even within the same performance, water continuously changes shape and form.

Tristan quickly dispels the flowing liquid image and replaces it with a moving but solid mineral depiction of cut green jasper. He temporarily obliterates the fluidity associated with water and creates the illusion of a petrified world in continual movement and change:

> Le soleil à longs traits ardans
> Y donne encore de la grace,
> Et tasche à se mirer dedans
> Comme on feroit dans une glace;
> Mais les flots de vert émaillez
> Qui semblent des jaspes taillez
> S'entredérobent son visage;
> Et par de petits tremblements
> Font voir au lieu de son image
> Mille pointes de diamants. (108)

While crystallizing the reflections of the sun on the water in "Mille pointes de diamants,"[58] he introduces yet another metamorphosis. Once in contact with the water, the sun's rays transform themselves into a thousand diamond fragments encrusted on the moving green jasper and become part of the solidified water image. Although the sun attempts to view itself in the water/"glace," the sun can see itself only in its new disguise through elusive shifting appearances which are other than the vision expected by the contemplator himself. Also personified, the waves, represented by the

enameled green jasper, now act as thieves stealing the sun's image from each other.

Transformations, caused by changing temporal and spatial perspectives, continue with dizzying rapidity in the course of the poem. At sunrise, the reflection of the sun, "ce grand flambeau," on the water gives birth to the image of water as flames, producing an array of bright colors, causing the viewer's "étonnement," while on an overcast day water is reduced to water vapor condensed to fine particles as fog. Images of chiaroscuro emerge when the sun's rays attempt to penetrate "un nuage épais et sombre" producing "montagnes d'ombre / Avec des sources de clarté" (109). The momentum of change continues, but the pace quickens. Nature cries; water evaporated into the air becomes rain. At the end of a shower, through the interplay of air and drops of water in refraction and reflection, Iris, the ephemeral rainbow, displays her magnificent spectrum in a colorful spectacle based on vapor and inconstancy and, in the process, she delights the spectator. Tristan remarks that she "vient étaler dans la nuë / Toutes les delices des yeux" (109). Since the rainbow slowly vanishes, the spectator is faced also with a diminishing intensity of colors. Rapidly shifting perspective, Tristan describes water transforming itself into waves of glass and silver breaking on the shores, and once again water attests to its fragility,

inconstancy, and facility in substituting one form for another.

Plunging us to the depths of the sea for a view from yet another perspective, stanza 3 firmly establishes the inherently fickle and mutable nature of the sea by introducing Neptune/Poseidon, the sea's ruler who resides in a splendid palace beneath the sea. His son Proteus, another undersea inhabitant, changes his shape at will. Neptune activates the sea's temperament shifts; shaking his three-pronged spear, he causes earthquakes, tidal waves, and storms. While driving his golden chariot over the seas, he calms them and produces favorable winds.

Water and sea incarnate fluidity, plasticity, inconstancy, movement, and reflections. Using an oxymoron to describe its evasive nature, La Fontaine in "Le Songe de Vaux" defines water as a "liquide cristal" existing in "plus de cent formes differentes" (Rousset, 1, 219). Rousset in La Littérature de l'âge baroque en France equates water with a chameleon: "l'eau se change en mille et mille formes, . . . C'est un caméleon qui s'habille de toutes les couleurs."[59] An actor is like water and the sea which, according to Tristan, can "dissimule[r] son insolence" (108) by wearing thousands of varied masks in order to portray different characters and assume multiple shapes. However, as in the case of the illusion of water as a petrified mineral jasper, water can return to its original state; ice

flowing water. An actor also conceals himself and reveals himself as he moves in and out of roles, but ultimately is capable of easily recovering his own identity.

Reason or Sense Experience

Rotrou's Le Véritable Saint Genest resourcefully integrates the classical demand for action generated by rules and reason only to highlight the baroque aesthetics based on sense experiences, diversity, novelty, liberty, and facile metamorphosis. During the interior play "The Martyrdom of Adrian," the Roman actor Flavie/Sergeste, addressing Adrian/Genest in regard to rumors of his alleged conversion, presents the prevailing Roman perspective and explanation for Adrian's possible defection to Christianity. He criticizes sense impressions and elevates reason:

> Les uns, que pour railler cette erreur s'est semée,
> D'autres, que quelque sort a votre âme charmée,
> D'autres, que le venin de ces lieux infectés
> Contre votre raison a vos sens révoltés.[60]

This Roman perspective negatively views sense experience and Adrian's conversion as the product of a magic spell or of a poisonous venom. However, in the principal play, Genest, in reaction to hearing a voice from heaven, reveals his susceptibility to being touched by sense impression and the marvelous:

> Qu'entends-je, juste ciel, et par quelle merveille
> Pour me toucher le coeur me frappes-tu l'oreille?
> (2.4.425-26).

Finally prompted by divine intervention and responding to his sense impressions, Genest, an experienced, talented, and highly-acclaimed pagan Roman actor known for his ability to transform himself, annihilates the dramatic text, subverts logic and reason, and spontaneously transforms himself into a Christian believer who has come to life in order to transcend earthly reality. He succumbs to his irrational passions, which according to Wilfried Floeck,[61] determine the movement of the baroque theatre, and he becomes an actor in God's theatre.

In reaction to this baroque emphasis on sense experience, liberty, spontaneity, and change demonstrated in Le Véritable Saint Genest, classical aesthetics insists there is no "génie" or talent without art. For classical aesthetics, art consists of "un code de règles, dicté par une raison immanente, qui à travers les individus assure la continuité de la doctrine et de la critique."[62] Rules, order, and control attempt to suppress the liberty and the free-flowing movement and change evident in representations of baroque artistic expression such as Val-de-Grâce, the ode "La Mer," and Le Véritable Saint Genest. According to classical theory, only a well-written dramatic text based on the classical rules and relying on verisimilitude as its backbone facilitates and enhances the actor's "jeu" and

consequently, contributes to the positive aesthetic reaction of the audience.

Supporting this aesthetics, Scudéry, d'Aubignac, and Corneille attribute some of the shortcomings in an actor's performance to the dramatic poet who has not analyzed and prepared for the actor's potential successful metamorphosis and dramatizations through the creation of a believable and actable text. For these theorists, once the author has written an actable text, the actors must carefully study and evaluate the text to understand it and then plan and prepare their portrayals to coincide completely with the dramatic text and to achieve verisimilitude. Let us examine this classical aesthetics of acting sketched in the theoretical works of Scudéry, d'Aubignac, and Corneille and in the critical praise of Montdory, the reputed greatest actor of the seventeenth century. We shall then see how the classical aesthetics underscores and undermines Rotrou's vision of acting which reflects baroque artistic and literary expression by incorporating the primacy of sense experience, spontaneity, improvisation, and facile metamorphosis as revealed in Le Véritable Saint Genest.

NOTES

[1] Wilfried Floeck, Esthétique de la diversité: Pour une histoire du baroque littéraire en France, trans. Gilles Floret (Paris: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1989) 24.

[2] Floeck 24.

[3] Bray 359.

[4] Floeck 45.

[5] Floeck 35.

[6] Floeck 57-59.

[7] Floeck 72.

[8] Germain Bazin, The Baroque: Principles, Styles, Modes, Themes (New York: Norton, 1968) 8-9.

[9] Cited in Floeck 72.

[10] Floeck 74.

[11] See Pascal 85-139 for a discussion of man's belief in God.

[12] Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, "Discours baroque, discours maniériste Pygmalion et Narcisse," Questionnement du baroque, éd. Alphonse Vermeylen (Louvain-la-Neuve: Collège Erasme, 1986) 71.

[13] Mathieu-Castellani 71.

[14] Floeck 136-37.

[15] Bazin 9.

[16] Jean Rousset, "Peut-on définir le baroque?", French Baroque by Philippe Minguet (Paris: Hazan, 1988) 388.

[17] Jean Rousset, ed. Anthologie de la poésie baroque, vol. 2 (Paris: Colin, 1968) 11-12. All further references, unless indicated, refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text in parentheses.

[18] Floeck 56-57.

[19] Cited in Floeck 47.

[20] Floeck 59.

[21] Floeck 56.

[22] Floeck 55.

[23] Floeck 245.

[24] Bray 151-57.

[25] Floeck 142-43.

[26] See Bray 49-62 for a discussion of the cult of Aristotle and 34-48 for an examination of Italian theorists.

[27] Bray 359.

[28] Floeck 245.

[29] Marcel Reymond, "De Michel-Ange à Tiepolo," France Baroque by Philippe Minguet (Paris: Hazen, 1988) 386.

[30] Giulio Carolo Argan, The Baroque Age (New York: Rizzoli, 1989) 9.

[31] Fernand Hallyn, Formes métaphoriques dans la poésie lyrique de l'âge baroque en France (Genève: Droz, 1975) 41.

[32] E. Littré, "Merveilleux," Dictionnaire de la langue française (Paris: Hachette, 1875) 528.

[33] Kronegger, "Games," Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature 272-75.

[34] Molière, Oeuvres completes, ed. Pierre-Aimé Touchard. (Paris: Seuil, 1962) 665-68. Molière glorifies baroque aesthetics by praising Mignard's fresco in Val-de-Grâce for its invention, diversity, movement, chiaroscuro effects, and the ability to dazzle the spectator.

[35] See E. Léonardy, "Les Fêtes de cour baroques," Questionnement du baroque, ed. Alphonse Vermeylen (Louvain-la-Neuve: Collège Erasme, 1986) 121-28 for a discussion of "Repraesentatio et glorificatio majestatis." Don Diego Saavedra Fajardo, a Spanish diplomat in the court of Philippe IV and author of "Idea de un Principe Politice Cristiano" (1640) considers the glory of the prince as proof of the prestige and power of the country he represents. In France, Louis XIV, writing his Mémoires during the 'Classical Age' states that the first duty of the prince is

the realization of "sa propre splendeur et sa propre magnificence . . ." and the rulers' first goal always must be "la conservation de notre gloire et de notre autorité" (124-25).

[36] Léonardy 119. Each "fête de cour" is an original work of art orchestrated by an artistic director who draws from past traditions, genres, and forms, looks for inspiration in the "fetes de cour baroques" of other European countries, and then relies on his freedom and creative imagination to outshine the others. Incorporating fireworks, water, theatre, ballet, tournaments, and "le trionfo," he strives to produce a unified spectacle from these diverse components. Theatrical machines and trompe l'oeil devices create an atmosphere of illusion and enchantment to dazzle both the spectators and the participants.

[37] Léonardy 119.

[38] Bazin 11. During the sixteenth century man established and maintained his identity through the exercise of power in continual conquest symbolized by Hercules chained to his interminable tasks and exemplified by Charles V. During the 'Classical Age' represented by Louis XIV, the prototype of the royal idea, power belongs to the king by divine right. For the monarch the "fêtes de cour baroques" filled the void left by divine-right monarchs who exercise classical restraint and avoid displays of power and grandeur through conquest. In the shift to the divine-right theory of ruling, the Olympian god Apollo replaced the demi-god Hercules as the symbol of power and monarchy.

[39] Bazin 47-48.

[40] Cited in Minguet 46.

[41] Cited in Minguet 45.

[42] Bazin 12.

[43] Argan 7.

[44] Victor Tapié, Le Baroque (Paris: Presses universitaires de la France, 1968) 6.

[45] Tapié 6.

[46] Anthony Blunt, "Some Uses and Misuses of the Terms Baroque and Rococo as Applied to Architecture," Proceedings of the British Academy, vol. 58 (London: Oxford UP, 1974) 219.

[47] Cited by Minguet 22.

[48] See Bernard Teyssèdre, Roger de Piles (Paris: La Bibliothèque des Arts, 1957) 92-120 for a commentary on Molière's poem "Gloire du Val-de-Grâce" and the conflict between the Academy and Roger de Piles who supports baroque aesthetics by contending that color, light, and shading are as important as drawing in a painting.

[49] Minguet 52. Anne of Austria, at 37, was married twenty-three years and did not have any children. In return for a child, she promised God to have a magnificent church constructed. After Louis XIV's birth she kept her vow. François Mansart drew the plans for Val-de-Grâce. In 1646, dissatisfied with the slow pace of construction, Anne replaced Mansart with Le Mercier who followed Mansart's plans. Upon his death in 1655 Pierre le Muet and Gabriel le Duc completed the church in 1667.

[50] Reymond, "De Michel-Ange à Tiépolo, France Baroque, 385.

[51] Reymond 385.

[52] Reymond 385.

[53] Cited by Minguet 18.

[54] Marlies Kronegger, The Life Significance of French Baroque Poetry (New York: Lang, 1988) xv-xvi.

[55] Floeck 97.

[56] F. Tristan L'Hermite, Poésies, ed. Philip A. Wadsworth (Paris: Seghers, 1962) 107. All further references to this work will be included in the text.

[57] Floeck 98.

[58] Today through a special photographic process each diamond can be identified as different from every other diamond. This system aids police in identifying stolen or lost diamonds. As a result, the diversity involved in the change is magnified when one considers that each diamond is absolutely unique.

[59] Jean Rousset, La Littérature de l'âge baroque en France (Paris: Corti, 1954) 143.

[60] Jean Rotrou, Le Véritable Saint Genest, Théâtre du XVII^{e} siècle, ed. Jacques Schérer (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) 2.8.539-42. All further references, unless indicated, refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text in parentheses.

[61] Floeck, 198.

[62] Bray, 355.

CHAPTER 3

FROM DRAMATIC TEXT TO PERFORMANCE

Primacy of the Dramatic Text

Before beginning his discussion of what constitutes an excellent actor, Scudéry, as early as 1639 in L'Apologie du théâtre, re-establishes the relevance of the "performance triangle": the inter-relationship of dramatic text, performance, and aesthetic reaction. Then relegating actors to a secondary role with a striking visual image from Antiquity, Scudéry compares actors to the statue of Memnon because "il falloit que le Soleil regardast pour la faire parler" (84). To reinforce this concrete simile and to eradicate any possible misinterpretation he reaffirms the actors' predicament, "ne pouvants rien dire sans les Poëtes" (84). In the forefront of his acting theory is the actor's dependence on both author and dramatic text and, by extension, the paramount importance of author and text. Without the dramatic text there is no actor.

For the Abbé d'Aubignac, who was already in the process of writing La Pratique du théâtre in 1640 according to a letter of Chapelain dated March 8, 1640,[1] excellent acting begins with an aware author recognizing and utilizing dramatic techniques which facilitate the actor's performance. Since the poet expresses himself through "la bouche des Acteurs: il n'y peut emploier d'autres moiens . . ." (45), d'Aubignac places the initial burden of producing good acting directly on the dramatic poet and establishes the actor as the voice of the poet. He explicitly states:

> On ne doit pas attendre ici des instructions pour ceux qui jouent la Tragédie, ou la Comédie; je regarde en ce Discours le Poëte seulement, & non pas les Histrions: ce chapitre est composé de quelques observations trés-necessaires pour une parfaite disposition du Poëme Dramatique, & qui conveniennent aux Personnages que l'on y veut introduire. (245)

By visualizing the enactment of his lines and scenes as he constructs the dramatic text, the poet can incorporate safeguards that will propel the actors toward acceptable and believable stage representation. D'Aubignac expresses complete dependence on a dramatic text, anticipates potential problems actors may encounter in stage representation, and suggests solutions. Rather than opt for spontaneity and improvisation, d'Augibnac bases his approach on logic and reason.

How does a dramatist promote the spectator's appreciation of the actor's performance? D'Aubignac focuses on plot comprehension, the character's presence on stage, and his psychological state. By including the names, locations, situations, and gestures in the poetic lines delivered, the poet can shift the viewer's attention from a struggle to comprehend the plot to the recognition of the beauty of the poetic lines, and the spectators can begin to easily lose themselves in the illusion (251). When the main character or actor appears on stage from the beginning, as Genest does, the audience has ample time to develop a relationship with the character.[2]

The main actor's presence dominates the stage time and draws the spectators into the reality of the drama because these principal actors are "les mieux vétus," and in speaking they are "les plus agréables au peuple, . . . ils ont les plus belles choses à dire, & les plus grands sentimens à faire éclatter [sic], en quoi consiste à vrai dire, toute la force & tous les charmes du Theatre" (256). He urges the poet: "De ne point faire par récit, ce que les principaux Acteurs peuvent vraisemblablement faire eux-mêmes sur la Scène, & de ne point cacher derrière la Tapisserie les discours & les passions qui peuvent éclater par la bouche" (257). The spectators lose contact temporarily with their own reality and become absorbed in the "reality" of the actors and the theatrical illusion to the point that "le spectateur espere & craint pour eux, il se réjoüit & s'afflige avec eux . . ." (256). Thus, the actor becomes another and the audience empathizes with the reality of the transformed other, as in Le Véritable Saint Genest.

According to d'Aubignac the author's responsibilities include the creation of the appropriate psychological state for an experienced actor's first appearance. Two preferred states emerge from his discussion: (a) "un sentiment fort modéré & sans émotion" which reflects the natural state of the actor "dont l'âme est en quelque tranquilité & sans émotion," or (b) "un sentiment impétueux" because experience has demonstrated to what point "leur voix & leur geste se

doivent emporter pour exprimer une grande & violente agitation" (258). Both the principal play in Le Véritable Saint Genest and the interior play "Le Martyre d'Adrian" are consistent with d'Aubignac's expectations. When Genest appears for the first time in the main play, the audience has already learned of Valérie's appreciation for Genest's acting. Consequently, Genest enters an accepting environment and is in a state "sans émotion." In his initial appearance of the interior play, Rotrou places Genest, playing Adrian, in the state of a "sentiment impétueux" which is once again compatible with the directives d'Aubignac later publishes. Genest indicates his resolve to become a Christian and to suffer valiantly tortures and martyrdom. Genest/Adrian says:

> Si la gloire te plaît, l'occasion est belle;
> La querelle du Ciel à ce combat t'appelle;
> La torture, le fer et la flamme t'attend.
> (2.7.479-81)

In the 1988 production Michel Aumont, playing Genest screams out these lines, releases Genest's repressed emotions, and admirably demonstrates d'Aubignac's point.

D'Aubignac cautions authors to avoid depicting an actor's initial appearance in a mental state of "un juste milieu" or what he calls a "demi-Passion . . . qui sorte un peu de la tranquillité naturelle de l'esprit, & qui ne s'élève pas néamoins jusqu'à la dernière violence . . ." (258). If an actor must present himself in a state of

"demi-Passion," it is important that the actor include several verses or lines of "un sentiment plus tranquille avant que de le porter dans la demi-Passion, afin que son esprit s'échauffe peu à peu, que sa voix s'élève par degrez, & que son geste s'émeuve avec son discours" (259). In d'Aubignac's opinion, since the dramatic poem controls the success of the actor's performance, the dramatic poet must consciously write an actable text, and the actor must follow it.

Corneille, similar to d'Aubignac, places responsibility on the dramatic poet to create an actable dramatic text; he emphasizes compatible beliefs, language choice, and a clear concise text. Corneille cautions poets to establish conformity between the "moeurs" of the spectators and those of the actors to prevent a "décalage" between the two groups. In "Discours de la tragédie" he states: "pour bien réussir il faut intéresser l'auditoire pour les premiers acteurs" (827). Since actors are not themselves necessarily poets, language "net" and versification "aisée et élevée au dessus de la prose" (827), but not attaining levels of epic poetry, facilitate the actors' delivery. In addition, overloading the spectator's mind with past background information detracts from spectator comprehension and attention:

> Ces narrations importunent d'ordinaire, parce qu'elles ne sont pas attendues, et qu'elles gênent l'esprit de l'auditeur, qui est obligé de charger sa mémoire de ce qui s'est fait dix ou douze ans

> auparavant, pour comprendre ce qu'il voit représenter . . . (842).

Not having the luxury of rereading that the reader enjoys, the spectator is compelled to continually progress with the movement and plot of the play. For example, as we shall see later, because of their cultural conditioning the Roman spectators miss or misconstrue clues which would predispose them to suspect Genest's impending conversion. Corneille recognizes that the actor recites and performs; no instant replay updates the audience on lost or misinterpreted information or cues.

Corneille, unlike d'Aubignac, emphasizes that excellent performance compensates for deficiencies in the dramatic text because the visual and auditory components contribute to audience comprehension. In agreement with Aristotle, Corneille contends, however, that the dramatic author must insure that a dramatic text be "aussi belle à la lecture qu'à la représentation," (844) and he has to make "facile à l'imagination du lecteur tout ce que le théâtre présente à la vue des spectateurs" (844). Through his "jeu" an actor can in reality make the audience understand what needs to be inserted in marginal notes in the dramatic text to increase reader comprehension. He states:

> Le comédien y supplée aisément sur le théâtre, mais sur le livre on serait assez souvent réduit à deviner, et quelquefois même on pourrait deviner mal, à moins que d'être instruit par là de ces petites choses. (843)

Although Corneille credits talented and creative Parisian actors with the ability to comprehend, interpret, and supplement a dramatic text correctly, he criticizes actors in the provinces for their misinterpretations, their "étranges contre-temps" (844). Since these actors have little if any contact with the author, his stage directions in the margin or descriptions within the poetic lines contribute to acceptable performances. Corneille attests to the importance of the actor's gestures, movements, tone of voice, and appearance to convey meaning; nevertheless, the dramatic text remains significant.

Like Corneille, Rotrou, through Dioclétian, recognizes the powerful impact of an actor's voice, body movements, and gestures on viewer reaction. Dioclétian explains:

> Qu'un seul mot, quand tu veux, un pas, une action
> . . . . . .
> Et, par une soudaine et sensible merveille
> Jette la joie au coeur par l'oeil ou par l'oreille.
> (1.5.247-50)

In this quotation, Rotrou elevates sense experience, the performer's voice and body language acting on the spectator, by equating it with the marvelous; then he describes how this sense experience produces an emotional response. In these lines from act 1 Rotrou already prepares the viewer for Genest's initial spontaneous acceptance of the Voice in act 2 as a miraculous one from heaven. Although Genest rejects this thought a few lines later as a "vaine créance

et frivole pensée" (2.4.433), his first reaction demonstrates his receptivity to sense experience in his role as spectator/actor in God's theatre. Although Rotrou agrees with Corneille's appreciation of the importance of gestural rhetoric, Rotrou reveals his baroque orientation through Genest's initial spontaneous acceptance of God's intervention in his life. Corneille, reflecting the classical aesthetics, points out the beneficial effects of an actor's voice and gesture, which the reader lacks, on audience comprehension; Rotrou focuses on the actor's ability through sense experience to create emotion in the spectators.

While Corneille addresses the danger posed by incompetent actors, Rotrou, years before Corneille's "Discours," points out that an actor, talented in gestural rhetoric, improvisation, and metamorphosis, can mislead the audience as easily as gaps or deficiencies in the dramatic text. For example, although Genest attempts to reveal his conversion to Christianity, his departure from the dramatic text, through the expression of his real feelings and thoughts, results in additional praise from the Roman spectators who believe he is realistically portraying illusion. Dioclétian comments:

> Voyez avec quel art Genest sait aujourd'hui
> Passer de la figure aux sentimens d'autrui.
> (4.5.1261-62)

In Dioclétian's opinion, Genest's metamorphosis into the Christian Adrian is not only successful on the surface level of exterior appearances, but also on the level of his portrayal of feelings. Since Genest is improvising the text while revealing his own conversion, the Roman audience is deceived precisely because Genest is an outstanding actor capable of spontaneity and improvisation.

The Actor's Contribution

In spite of their insistence on the dramatic text as the cornerstone upon which excellent productions are created, seventeenth-century classical theorists and critics admit that actors contribute markedly to the success of a play. In addition to crediting the actor's "jeu" with the function of providing additional information for audience comprehension, Corneille, in "Discours du poème dramatique," associates much of the success of Tristan's Mariane (1636) to the actor Montdory's portrayal of Herod:

> Et quoique son auteur eut bien mérité ce beau succès par le grand effort d'esprit qu'il avait à feindre les désespoirs de ce Monarque, peut-être que l'excellence de l'acteur qui en soutenoit le personnage y contribuoit beaucoup. (829)

Although Scudéry attacked Le Cid[3] and wished to discredit Corneille in "Observations sur le Cid," his comments on the actors highlight his recognition that talented actors

contribute to successful productions and compensate for a poor dramatic poem. For him, however, talented actors are undoubtedly ones who think through their roles and then carefully rehearse. His "Lettre à l'Académie Française," written before June 16, 1637 when the Academy met, comments:

> je remarque tant de deffaux, qui n'avoit de beautez que celle que ces agreables trompeurs qui la representoient luy savoient prestées, et que Mondory, la Villiers, et leurs compagnons n'estans pas dans le livre comme sur le Theatre, le Cid imprimé n'estoit plus le Cid que l'on a creu voir . . .
>
> Que trois ou quatre de cette célèbre Compagnie, luy ont corrigé tant de fautes, qui parurent aux premières représentations de son Poëme . . .[4]

Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac, a member of the Académie Française known for letters dealing with general, moral, literary, and philosophical problems, zeroes in on the actor as creator. Prior to the representation of Le Cid (1637) in a letter dated April 3, 1635 from Balzac to Boisrobert, Balzac designates the actor a "second père" and elevates the actor to a creative role comparable to that of the author:

> la grâce dont il prononce, donne un degré de beauté aux vers qu'ils ne peuvent recevoir des poètes vulgaires. Ils ont donc quelquefois plus d'obligation à celui qui la récite qu'à celui qui les a faits, et ce second père, pour le dire ainsi, les purge par son adoption de tous les vices de leur naissance.[5]

The actor gives birth to a new work not only by removing defects but also by bringing it to life with his delivery.

Nevertheless, the actor is not creating his own text as we see Genest do in Le Véritable Saint Genest.

Unlike Scudéry, who might be accused of inflating the contribution of actors to a so-called inferior dramatic text as Le Cid in order to deflate Corneille's literary stature, in a later letter, Balzac supports Corneille's literary talent and is not attempting to detract from his creative genius by acknowledging the contributions of actors as superior to those of the playwright. In "Lettre de Monsieur de Balzac à Monsieur de Scudéry sur ses 'Observations du Cid'" (1638) Balzac retorts:

> C'est ce que vous reprochez à l'autheur du Cid, qui vous advouant qu'il a violé les regles de l'art, vous oblige de luy avouer qu'il a un secret, qui a mieux reussi que l'art mesme; . . . [6]

Balzac's comment demonstrates that at the time Corneille wrote Le Cid, he was not steeped in classical aesthetic theory and was not concerned with following the rules. In fact, his comedies of the 1630's are examples of a baroque aesthetic vision.[7] Significantly, in addition to acknowledging the actor's creative contribution to the dramatic text in performance, Balzac recognizes that conformity to rules and accepted practice does not always insure a great work of art.

The Importance of Verisimilitude in Acting

Even though the classical theorists do not specifically list the characteristics of an excellent actor in their theoretical writings, Corneille's and d'Aubignac's descriptions of Montdory and Scudéry's portrait of the "mauvais comédiens" in Antiquity highlight the importance of an excellent actor's forethought, preparation, and planning before performance. All three theorists and other critics praise Montdory as the ideal, best, most-admired actor of their time; therefore, we can assume that those qualities they praise shed light on their aesthetics of acting. Corneille refers to Montdory as Roscius,[8] the celebrated Roman actor emulated and revered in Antiquity, while the Abbé d'Aubignac calls him "le Premier Acteur" (259) and illustrates several of his acting techniques in La Pratique du théâtre. Although Scudéry refuses to enumerate contemporary fine actors to avoid embarrassment to the inferior ones not listed, he does contend that "le fameux, Mondory, a certainement eu peu d'esgaux, dans les Siecles passez ny dans le nostre . . ." (89). In the same way, the Roman emperor Dioclétian, speaking to Genest, confirms that this successful actor also has reached the pinnacle of fame:

> Le théâtre aujourd'hui, fameux par ton mérite,
> A ce noble plaisir puissamment sollicite;
> Et dans l'état qu'il est ne peut sans être ingrat,
> Nier de te devoir son plus brillant éclat.
> (1.5.229-30)

What forms the basis of Montdory's and Genest's reputations and what is the desired goal of actors studying the blunders of the "mauvais comédiens" in Antiquity?

The primary principle emerging from the theoretical evidence is that the actor's "jeu" must incarnate verisimilitude; illusion must seem to be reality. The classical aesthetics demands that the dramatist create an illusion of reality based on reason and rules, choose a believable subject, and construct a dramatic text according to the unities of time, place, and action. This requirement of verisimilitude extends to the actor's realistic portrayal of his character which incorporates his total adherence to the dramatic text. In conformity with this aesthetics, Genest initially explains to the newly elevated Roman emperor Maximin, a witness to Adrian's martyrdom, that he intends to portray Adrian's martyrdom so realistically that the Roman audience will not be able to distinguish the play from reality. He comments:

> Elle sera sans peine,
> Si votre nom, Seigneur, nous est libre en la scène;
> Et la mort d'Adrian l'un de ces obstinés
> Par vos derniers arrêts naguère condamnés,
> Vous sera figurée avec un art extrême,
> Et si peu différent de la vérité même
> Que vous nous avouerez de cette liberté
> Où César à César sera représenté,
> Et que vous douterez si dans Nicomédie
> Vous verrez l'effet même ou bien la comédie.
> (1.5.297-306)

In contrast, however, as the interior play "Le Martyr d'Adrian" progresses, Genest/Adrian, a baroque protagonist, through his metamorphosis into a Christian, abandons the dramatic text, terminates the representation, and ultimately subverts the principle of verisimilitude by actually converting illusion into reality. While classical aesthetics emphasizes verisimilitude, Rotrou, through Genest's real conversion, finally, undermines the classical aesthetics and points out the danger to the actor inherent in successful imitation. Jean Rousset describes Rotrou's warning:

> Aux yeux d'un Rotrou, on n'entre pas impunément dans un rôle. Le théâtre détient un étrange pouvoir: le personnage s'empare de la personne et l'annule pour la créer à son image . . . Au contact de la scène, aire magique, le comédien court le danger mortel de l'absorption.[9]

Only after his conversion does Genest's expressed intention of portraying Adrian's martyrdom "si peu différent de la vérité même" reveal the threat to the actor who makes illusion seem reality.

Ignoring this potential threat to the actor, Corneille, d'Aubignac, and the critics focus on four significant factors in their praise of Montdory's ability to blur the distinction between illusion and reality while Scudéry condemns incompetent performers because of their disregard for these guidelines: (a) comprehension of and adherence to the written text, which involves forethought, reason, planning, and rehearsal, to effectively convey the author's

meaning; (b) effective use of language and compatible use of body movements, gestures, and tone of voice to facilitate audience comprehension and appreciation; (c) the actor's carefully designed and rehearsed portrayal of emotions consistent with the role he plays and the transfer of emotion to the spectator; (d) the actor's planned transformation into the character he plays.

In addition, Rotrou bases the Romans' praise of Genest's acting on his creation of verisimilitude; in fact, we witness a partial rehearsal in which Marcelle asks Genest to critique her portrayal of the required emotional state. However, Rotrou's baroque vision highly values the marvelous and sense experience, spontaneity, improvisation, and facile transformation in order to demonstrate Absolute Truth while the classical aesthetics focuses on reason, rules, and planning.

Montdory: The Prototype of the Excellent Actor in Classical Theory

Corneille's Latin "Excuse," written years before the "Discours du poème dramatique," praises Montdory and defines his excellence in terms of one of the four criteria which support verisimilitude. The dramatist insists on the actor's attention to body movements, delivery, and his entire person:

> Mais d'ailleurs la scène est là, et le geste et le debit nous secondent, et, si l'oeuvre est imparfaite, Roscius la complète. Les passages languissants, il les relève, toute sa personne contribue au succès, et de la peut-être viennent, aussi à mes vers et leur feu et leur grace.[10]

The specific word "debit" the delivery of an orator, reflects the strong influence of rhetoric and oratory on the typical acting style of the time. Although he never attained his goal, Bellerose, actor and orator of the troupe of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, tried to reform acting by attempting to approach a natural state in recitation and to eliminate the false, artificial, inflated, and bombastic oratorical style in vogue.[11] While Corneille confirms that an actor functions as a corrective to a possibly ineffective or deficient dramatic text, he emphasizes "toute sa personne," including facial expressions, eye movements, body movement, and voice, combine to add fire and grace to his verses.

In the course of complaining to Genest about the "faux courtisans" she abandoned in her dressing room, Marcelle describes her fans' adoration and love by focusing on the gestural acting criteria for which both Montdory and Genest are famous. The rhetoric of gesture emerges as such a significant part of the actor's art that it colors perceptions of her everyday experiences and interactions with people. She comments:

> Par combien d'attentats j'entreprends sur les sens!
> Ma voix rendrait les bois et les rochers sensibles;
> Mes plus simples regards sont des meurtres visibles;
> Je foule autant de coeurs que je marche de pas;
> La troupe, en me perdant, perdrait tous ses appas.
> (2.3.352-56)

Not only does Rotrou highlight the importance of voice, eye movements, and gestures in the art of the actor, he reaches beyond classical aesthetics and once again emphasizes that sense experiences can create an emotional and irrational reaction in the spectator. Marcelle's simple looks at her ardent admirers become "meurtres visibles"; they are completely overwhelmed by passion for her. In this way, Rotrou prepares us for Genest's irrational reaction to the Voice, flames, and angels. In the seventeenth century

> la parole n'a rien d'abstrait et ne se conçoit pas sans l'intervention du corps d'où elle est issue; les préceptes de la rhétorique sont sur ce point en convergence totale avec les théories dramatiques.[12]

While language is paramount, language works most effectively in conjunction with body movement to complete its meaning. Rotrou capitalizes on this collaboration of language and body movement to spotlight man's irrational response to sense experience.

Although d'Aubignac's treatise primarily advises playwrights on dramatic construction, he, too, proposes as a prototype for actors the experienced and admired Montdory, proficient in the creation of verisimilitude. D'Aubignac

also describes Montdory's effective use of gesture, but he surpasses the commentaries of Scudéry and Corneille by picturing how Montdory utilizes body movements to create a "demi-Passion" when it is his first appearance on stage during a performance. The creation of a "demi-Passion," or "un mouvement un peu plus agité que l'assiete ordinaire de notre ame, & moins qu'un transport violent" requires much more study and talent than either "un sentiment fort moderé & sans émotion" or "un sentiment fort impetueux" (257). Therefore, consistent with his belief in the primacy of the dramatic text and its foundation in planning and reason, d'Aubignac advises playwrights to avoid introducing actors on stage for the first time in a state of "demi-Passion." Nevertheless, Montdory, as d'Aubignac demonstrates, mastered the technique of portraying the "demi-Passion":

> car avant que de parler dans ces occasions, il se promenoit quelque temps sur le Theatre comme révant, s'agitant un peu, brandant la tête, levant & baissant les yeux, & prenant diverses postures selon le sentiment qu'il devoit exprimer: ce qu'il faisoit, à mon avis, pour s'animer un peu & se mettre au point de bien representer une demi-passion se tirant par ce moien de la froideur naturelle avec laquelle il entroit sur la Scéne [sic], & se donnant à lui-même la retenue necessaire pour ne se pas emporter trop violemment. Tout cela se connoîtra veritable par les reflexions que le Poëte pourra faire au Theatre, & par la conversation de nos Comédiens qui l'ont plusieurs fois experimenté. (257)

There is a very definite preparation time leading up to the representation of this passion. In addition to the author's

apparent planning in writing the text, the outstanding actor too reflects and develops the appropriate mind set to realistically imitate and reproduce the difficult "demi-Passion."

What characterizes a "passion" in the seventeenth century? In the classical view, it is "une émotion déclenchée par la perception d'un spectacle lorsque celui-ci agit assez fortement sur les sens pour créer au moins l'amorce d'un désordre physiologique."[13] In this interpretation passion includes joy, pity, fear, anger and so on. Descartes in Les Passions de l'âme states:

> Ainsi ceux qui sont portés de leur naturel aux émotions de la joie et de la pitié ou de la peur, ou de la colère, ne peuvent s'empêcher de pâmer, ou de pleurer, ou de trembler, ou d'avoir le sang tout ému, en même façon que s'ils avaient la fièvre, lorsque leur fantasie est fortement touchée par l'objet de quelqu'une de ces passions.[14]

Throughout the seventeenth century, artists, who patterned their techniques on those of the classical rhetoric of Cicero, Quintellian, and Aristotle, vividly demonstrate this expression of passion.[15] In contrast, in "The Ecstacy of Saint Teresa" (1645-52) Bernini follows the account of the Spanish mystic herself describing the angel who thrust a spear into her heart which produced her burning love of God. The artist depicts St. Teresa's spontaneous and passionate response to the intervention of the "merveilleux chrétien" in her life. Bernini, using the rhetoric of gesture to

highlight her passion, portrays the saint in a "collapsed attitude" with "her mouth open as if moaning" and "a passionate expression on her face," while her garments in "turbulent agitation" also reflect her state of bodily and spiritual transport."[16]

According to Germain Bazin this gestural rhetoric was popular with artists of the seventeenth century, and they "probably borrowed it from the art of acting."[17] When an actor incorporates this physiological response, it is extremely difficult to present himself for the first time on stage at an emotional midpoint. Bernini's baroque interpretation of gestural rhetoric focuses on Saint Teresa's instantaneous and spontaneous passionate response to the "merveilleux," while d'Aubignac's classical orientation singles out Montdory's reliance on thought and reason in recreating an emotional state.

In d'Aubignac's estimation, why is Montdory successful in creating the "demi-Passion" and, by extension, any other emotional state? He achieves verisimilitude by reflecting and carefully planning and warming up to the appropriate gesture and movement. The emotional state Montdory creates coincides with the perceived emotional state of the character he portrays. Through control and experience and talent he attains the middle ground; he begins with "la froideur naturelle avec laquelle il entroit sur la Scéne [sic]," and reaches "la retenue necessaire pour ne se pas emporter trop

violemment." Often actors do not perfect their depiction of a "demi-Passion"; consequently, their acting seems false, unreal, and precipitates in "les risées du peuple dans les plus serieux endroits d'un Poëme" (258). Such laughter disrupts the play, detracts from the tragic tone, and breaks the illusion of reality.

In a letter dated April 3, 1635 Balzac claims Montdory's powerful acting ability moves even the most recalcitrant spectator to believe that an illusion is reality. He writes: "Il n'est point d'âme si bien fortifiée, contre les objets des sens, à qui il [Montdory] ne fasse violence, ni de jugement si fin, qui se puisse garantir de l'imposture de sa parole."[18] In this quotation, conquest imagery and Balzac's use of negatives emphasize that Montdory deludes even the most discriminating spectator characterized by a "jugement si fin." Alluding to military imagery and incorporating the force of "ne . . . point," Balzac emphasizes that no spectator's soul is "bien fortifiée" against Montdory's attack. During the seventeenth century "ne" is considered sufficient negation while the use of "pas" or "point" intensifies the negation considerably. The repetition of the negative "ne" with "point" reinforces the inability of the spectator to escape from Montdory's influence. Consequently, through his voice, gesture, body movements, creation of believable emotional states, and

overall excellent acting Montdory forces the spectator to suspend his disbelief and to witness a "real" slice of life.

Contributing to the aura of verisimilitude, this rhetoric of gesture, significant in the praise of Montdory and important in the art of Genest and Marcelle, loses significance in the twentieth-century production as we shall see in the testimony of the actor portraying Genest.

Unlike Corneille, d'Aubignac, and other critics whose views of exemplary acting emerge from their analysis of Montdory's acting, Scudéry in L'Apologie du théâtre sketches his profile of an excellent actor through his depiction of a "mauvais comédien" and his descriptions of admired actors in Antiquity. His detailed descriptions of acting blunders are vivid and jarring reminders of the incompetency of the unprepared actor. In agreement with the theorists' and critics' contentions that planning and reason govern the actor's creation of verisimilitude, Scudéry also emphasizes the importance of the actor's understanding of the text, his attention to appropriate delivery and gestures, and the actor's well-orchestrated physiological response to passion. Ultimately, Scudéry expects the actor to use every means possible to identify with his role and to engage in a difficult to accomplish but credible metamorphosis which arouses an appropriate emotional response in the audience. Significantly, he stresses the role of an alert and competent audience as a means of immediately noticing and pointing out

to the actors performance discrepancies which detract from their metamorphosis, and consequently, from verisimilitude.

Metamorphosis of the Actor

For Scudéry the actor's study and understanding of the text, his willingness to follow the dramatic text, and implicitly the necessity of a playwright or a director to regulate and control the production surface as key elements in the creation of verisimilitude during the performance.[19] Reason and control shape the evolution of performance. Scudéry emphasizes: "les Comediens dans la representation ne doivent jamais agir comme il leur plaist, mais tousiours comme le subiet le demande" (85). By using contrasting visual images which focus on the disparity between the unexpected and the expected, he appeals directly to the senses and succinctly etches portraits of obviously "mauvais" actors who fail to understand the dramatic text or who simply neglect the importance of the complementary correlation and harmony between word and body response. This "mauvais" actor laughs when he should cry, shows anger when he should laugh, puts his hat on his head when it should be in his hand. In a series of diptychs, functioning almost as flashcards for the reader, Scudéry, highlighting emotional response, gesture, and body response, admonishes:

> Ils scauront que ce n'estoit ny en riant quant il faut pleurer; ny en se mettant en colere quand il faut rire; ny en se couvrant quand il faut avoir

> le chapeau à la main; ny en parlant au peuple quand il faut suposer qu'il n'y en a point; ny en n'escoutant pas l'Acteur qui parle à eux, ny en faisant qu'Alphesibée, songe bien plus à quelqu'un qui la regarde, qu'au pauvre Alchmeon qui parle à elle. . . . (84-85)

The accumulated and repetitive negatives "ne . . . ny" and the juxtaposition of the correct acting posture next to the incorrect reinforce the image of the actor's incompetence and slipshod interpretation of the role.

Since the "mauvais" actor does not understand nor attempt to identify with his role, he has no feeling for the character he is playing. He is unable to experience metamorphosis. One can imagine a Scapino or an actor from the commedia dell'arte gesturing and mimicking and sliding from laughter to tears to anger in a recreation of Scudéry's descriptive paragraph into dramatic form. Forestier believes, however that Scudéry did not appreciate the Italian troupe because improvisation was the foundation of Italian comedy.[20] Although Genest does not use his improvised lines as a means to return to the dramatic text and continue his performance immediately after his conversion, Rotrou credits Genest with the talents of spontaneity and improvisation and acknowledges their potential value in maintaining the verisimilitude of a metamorphosis and in sustaining a performance. Lentule remarks:

> Il les fait sur-le-champ, et, sans suivre l'histoire,
> Croit couvrir en rentrant son défaut de mémoire.
> (4.5.1259-60)

For Scudéry, forethought, reason, preparation, and strict adherence to the dramatic text, such as seen in Genest's and Marcelle's rehearsal in Le Véritable Saint Genest, collaborate to form an excellent actor and present a dramatic production showcasing the theorist's insistence on verisimilitude.

Scudéry's descriptions of the Greek actor Pylades single out the lack of correlation between the dramatic text and the actor's delivery and body movements, and consequently, the actor's inability to achieve an easy and successful transformation to deceive the public. While also commenting on audience behavior and competency, Scudéry presents Pylades as the prototype of the "mauvais Acteur." Pylades' acting jars the audience and contrasts directly with that of Genest who is admired by the Roman court for his ability to make illusion seem reality.

Scudéry describes the delivery and gestures of a "mauvais comédien" to demonstrate the necessity of an actor's careful preparation in order to successfully accomplish the difficult process of metamorphosis. Pylades, the incompetent actor, completely misinterprets Euripides' verse "le grand Agamemnon" as demonstrated by his action: "il se guindoit, & se levoit sur le bout des pieds" (87). What makes Pylades/Agememnon "grand"? According to Scudéry, it is "la maiesté grave de la prononciation, qu'il faloit exprimer la grandeur de ce Prince, & non point par cette

posture alongée & ridiculle" (87). In addition to the importance of correct interpretation of a role and tone of voice in the actor's art, the theorist's use of "se guindoit" criticizes an actor's artificial posture. In Cayrou's Le Français classique: lexique de la langue du XVII^{e} siècle "se guinder" means "hausser, lever en haut par le moyen d'une machine. Guinder un fardeau . . . Il se fit guinder avec une corde au haut de la tour."[21] Not only is Pylades' action contrary to the meaning of the dramatic text, but it also is unnatural; it does not evolve innately from his being or from his immersion in the role.

In contrast to Pylades' distorted and forced representation, Genest's transformation is effortless. Dioclétian and Maximin praise Genest's art:

DIOCLETIAN
En cet acte Genest à mon gré se surpasse.

MAXIMIN
Il ne se peut rien feindre avecque plus de grâce.
(2.8.667-68)

Maximin explicitly compliments Genest for the "grâce" with which he transforms himself. Cayrou's dictionary describes "de sa grâce" as "De son propre gré, d'un mouvement spontané, sans en être prié."[22] While describing Genest's proficient metamorphosis, Rotrou also reveals his own consciousness of spectator reaction through the play-within-the-play structure.

Pylades' flagrant acting blunders accentuate his inability to transform himself into the character he plays and point out how easy it is for spectators with an acceptable level of awareness to criticize glaring incongruities. Commenting on audience behavior and the necessity of audience competency, Scudéry specifically notes that a spectator, attacking Pylades' interpretation of "le grand Agamemnon," shouts "Pylades le faisoit haut, & non pas grand" (87). On another occasion, while declaiming, "Ô Cieux," Pylades points to the ground with his hand. Then while reciting "Ô terre," he looks up to heaven. An observant viewer shouts a critical remark: "il bouleversoit tout l'ordre de la Nature" (87); he complains that the order of nature has been violated. Finally, when playing the blind Oedipus, Pylades forgets to utilize his cane to demonstrate his uncertainty, and he walks with "un pas trop ferme & trop resolu, pour un homme qui ne voit goutte" (88). Once again an alert spectator shouts and critiques his behavior: "tu vois" (88).

Since he apparently neglected to adequately prepare his roles, Pylades must have failed to ask himself the basic question, "What am I doing here?" According to Jean-Louis Barrault the actor can divide this question into "What am I determined to allow another to see?" and "What am I determined to hide?"[23] Since he has not changed into his character, Pylades forgets to hide that he can see. Scudéry

remarks that the spectator "par deux mots de deux Silabes, luy fit remarquer en son action, une grande impertinence" (88). Apparently, Scudéry believes audiences, in addition to playwrights and directors, function as correctors, but they must be attentive, competent, critical, and responsive. Measured gestures enhance the performance. However, the actor's careless inattention to reason in developing his transformation detracts from verisimilitude and "bienséances," which is pointed out by Scudéry's use of "grande impertinence."[24] Pylades' disregard for the effective development of his transformation disrupts the creation of an illusion of reality by directly eliciting immediate spectator recognition of the disparity between the text and his delivery and body movements.

In contrast to Scudéry, Rotrou explores the inherent danger which threatens both the talented actor who has asked himself "What am I determined to allow the audience to see?" and the audience responding to this actor. After this complete identification with his role, Genest attempts to reveal his real conversion to the Roman spectators. Since they have considered Genest the master of achieving verisimilitude in his multiple transformations into different characters, his endeavor backfires. It initially intensifies the Roman spectators' conviction that he portrays illusion expertly; for them, Genest is portraying Adrian. Rotrou, through Genest's metamorphosis, not only focuses on

the threat to an actor of being overtaken by his role but also indicates the threat to the spectators who do not expect the theatrical illusion to become reality.

Unlike Genest, Pylades does not transform himself into his character's identity, and his portrayal violates the expectations of verisimilitude. He neglects to use his cane, perhaps the most crucial prop to anchor his identity in "reality." Since an object can help an actor understand and portray his character, Stanislavsky, in the twentieth century, urges actors to find the right object to create "realistic art." In his rules of acting Jean-Louis Barrault seconds Stanislavsky: "An actor who finds the object which connects him with the scene he is playing imparts concrete efficiency to his behaviour."[25] For example, he points to Nero's difficulty during Agrippine's sermon: "Nero plays with his coat which becomes his help, his refuge and also his means of expression."[26] Rather than depend on such concrete physical objects to facilitate his transformation, Genest, a baroque protagonist, responds to and relies on sense experience through representations of the "merveilleux" such as flames, a Voice, and an angel to lead him to his total identification with Adrian. Although Scudéry does not dictate that actors find the right object, nevertheless, he recognizes an object's relevance in the actor's correct interpretation of the dramatic text and in his ability to promote the total effect of verisimilitude.

According to d'Aubignac and Scudéry, the metamorphosis of an actor into the character he portrays solidifies the realism of the character's situation. Inherent in this transformation is the actor's understanding of the script and of his character. In La Pratique du théâtre, by referring to Corneille's tragedies Horace (1641) and Cinna (1643), d'Aubignac demonstrates that actors must renounce their own identities. According to d'Aubignac, when Horace and Cinna speak, those actors who represent them no longer exist. It is "comme si Floridor et Beau-Château cessoient d'être en nature, & se trouvaient transformez en ces Hommes, dont ils portent le nom & les interêts" (37).[27] As a result, the dramatic poet would not include in the poem discussions "du gain" that "les Comediens auroient fait en d'autres piéces [sic]" nor would he address his réflexions aux Parisiens qui l'écoutent" (37). Everything, scenery, costumes, gestures, all allusions must reinforce the reality of Rome, Horace, and Cinna; the dramatic poet provides the appropriate material for the actor to more easily move the spectator to believe he really is the character he represents.

The Actor's Interiorization of the Character's Passions

Scudéry explicitly defines the identification of the actor with his role in relationship to the spectators who

will then experience the transformed actor's "passions" as real. Scudéry advocates complete transformation:

> Il faut s'il est possible, qu'ils [the actors] se metamorphosent, aux Personnages qu'ils représentent: Et qu'ils s'en impriment toutes les passions, pour les imprimer aux autres; qu'ils se trompent les premiers, pour tromper le Spectateur en suite; qu'ils se croyent Empereurs ou pauvres; infortunez ou contens, pour se faire croire tels; & de cette sorte, ils pourront aquérir & meriter, la gloire, qu'avoyent aquise & que meritoyent leurs devanciers. (85)

Scudéry explains that an actor must imprint the character's passions on himself to accomplish this goal. Cayrou defines "imprimer" as "faire une impression profonde sur le coeur . . . imprégner, . . . inspirer un sentiment dans le coeur."[28] Consequently, Scudéry emphasizes the powerful and penetrating impact the character's passions must have on the actor in order for him to transfer those emotions realistically to the spectators and create an emotional response in them. While in the process of changing into their characters, Scudéry insists that the actors "se trompent les premiers" to lead the spectators into believing that illusion is reality. Rotrou echoes Scudéry's analysis that the actor must deceive himself to fool the audience. Valérie comments:

> Pour tromper l'auditeur, abuser l'acteur même,
> De son métier, sans doute, est l'adresse suprême.
> (4.5.1263-64)

Shortly after Valérie's comment, through Genest's conversion, Rotrou, probing beyond Scudéry's analysis, highlights the danger facing a performer who identifies with his character to the point of perceiving himself as that character. In Scudéry's analysis, however, an actor must portray his character's genuine feelings in order to enhance his ability to elicit an emotional response from the audience.

To illustrate the degree to which he expects the actor to assimilate and portray the passions of the character he represents, Scudéry cites several Ancients as experts to emulate. For example, actors playing sad roles continued to cry in the "logis" or dressing room after the performance. In a more striking illustration which ends tragically, Aesope, playing the role of Atrée, who was furious with his brother, killed one of his valets walking before him to cross the stage. Scudéry describes Aesope's emotional reaction: "tant il estoit hors de soy mesme; & tant il avoit espousé la passion, de ce Roy qu'il representoit" (86). In both cases, the character's emotional state permeates the actor's being; the actor's role becomes his reality.

Reflecting his concern for the necessity of a reciprocal relationship between the actors and the audience, Scudéry emphasizes the power of an excellent actor, who feels the passions of his character, to elicit an appropriate emotional response from the spectators. An actor's

performance was so believable that it moved a king named Alexandre "Tiran de Pheres, . . . cet homme de roche, jusqu'a lors insensible à la pitié, qu'elle le força de pleurer: . . ." (82). Since tears are a physiological response, according to Descartes' interpretation, the king is also experiencing a "Passion." The reality of the actor's art makes possible a passionate audience response to the actor's projection of feelings during the performance. Ashamed of this emotional outburst, incompatible with his royal role, the king "pense faire mourir le Comedien qui par une feinte puissante, avoit donné de la Compassion, à celuy qui n'en avoit jamais eu, pour tant de douleurs veritables" (82). When the spectators believe the incidents are really occurring, they are able to respond emotionally to the actor's portrayal of his character's passions.

In order to stimulate the creation of an appropriate, believable, and real emotional state in the actors, Scudéry advises the actor to rely on memories of real-life situations and to use props or aids that will facilitate the performer's manifestation of a passion. To illustrate this point Scudéry cites the example of Polus, a Greek actor playing in Sophocles' Electra. Polus brought an urn filled with the ashes of his recently deceased son on stage. As a result, he represented "si bien . . . sa propre douleur, sous le nom feint de celle d'un autre" (86). Bossuet, who in Les Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie (1694) denounces

the immorality of theatre and the dangers of dramatic emotion, concurs with Scudéry and points out that the remembrance of a lived passion stimulates the actor's representation of that passion. He comments: "Que fait un acteur, lorsqu'il veut jouer naturellement une passion, que de rappeler autant qu'il peut celles qu'il a ressenties . . . ; pour les exprimer, il faut qu'elles lui reviennent."[29] In order to deceive himself, imprint the character's passions realistically on himself, and evoke an emotional response from the audience, the actor, according to Scudéry, must first think, plan, and rely on reason and the remembrance of lived experience to determine how he can best achieve a believable identification with his character's emotions.

The Passions: Classical Internalization versus Baroque Internalization

According to Scudéry, the Abbé d'Aubignac, and other theorists and critics defining and promoting the classical aesthetics, the creation of verisimilitude governs the actor's art, but an actor finds it difficult to fashion the appropriate emotional state and pose necessary to impose an aura of verisimilitude. Therefore, the author must plan his text to facilitate the actor's depiction of emotion, and the actor is compelled to follow that text. For these theorists and critics, forethought and reason are central to metamorphosis; anticipation, preparation, rehearsal, possibly a

prior lived similar experience, and even tangible and visible aids promote the actor's effective metamorphosis. Scudéry cites an example from Antiquity to demonstrate the extent to which an actor sets up the preliminary groundwork. The actor Polus replays his own emotional state by carrying an urn filled with the ashes of his own dead son on stage to create the portrayal of his character's grief. Reality reinforces illusion. Both admired for their outstanding performances, Montdory and Genest, to a point, exemplify the relevance of this advance preparation; they incorporate the appropriate use of gestural rhetoric and tone of voice in their identification with their characters' emotional states to portray these passions believably. Scudéry's L'Apologie du théâtre and d'Aubignac's later descriptions of Montdory's portrayal of passions agree that the commendable actor orchestrates his actions, speech, and feelings to create a believable production. The actor's performance then acts on the emotions of the spectators because the audience thinks it is witnessing reality.

What distinguishes the emotional response of the spectators according to classical aesthetics in which passions are imprinted both on the actor and on the spectator? Scudéry clarifies the meaning of the imprinting of passions on the spectator in his description of the moral utility of drama in Antiquity and, by extension, in seventeenth-century France. Since "comédie" often depicted the punishment of

crimes, "elle avoit souvent imprimé la crainte, en l'ame de ces barbares, [the spectators], & enchainé quelque fois ces bestes feroces, dont elle ne pouvoit pas changer entierement, les cruelles inclinations" (81). The dramatic production arouses the spectator's fear of imitating the actions of the character because of imminent punishment. In another example, Alexandre in the "Tiran de Pheres" viewed a "comédie" in which an "obiet pitoyable," an actor, who "par des expressions touchantes" moved the tyrant or "homme de roche jusqu'a lors insensible à la pitié, qu'elle [la comédie] le força de pleurer: . . ." (82). Alexandre was moved to feel pity for the on-stage characters; he was not motivated to become one of those characters and live that character's situation. Alexandre even wants to kill the actor for evoking his tears, a sign of weakness in his mind.

In classical aesthetics, the actor's credible representation of the character's situation and passions elicits emotions such as laughter, terror, and pity from the spectators. These viewers, however, remain exterior to the action. In Le Baroque Bernard Chédozeau describes this "intériorisation classique" by differentiating it from the "intériorisation baroque." He comments:

> Plus intellectuelle et plus renfermée au spectacle de passions qui ne s'exprimeront que rarement par l'action . . . elle est plus proprement spectaculaire en ce qu'elle maintient, par le rire, ou par la terreur et la pitié, une distance souvent ironique excluant par principe la forte volonté

> d'assimilation vécue que semble impliquer l'intériorisation des dramaturges baroques.[30]

Baroque aesthetics encourages the spectator himself to join in the character's metamorphosis through an "assimilation vécue." In Le Véritable Saint Genest not only is the actor Genest moved to a spontaneous conversion during the performance of his role, but Rotrou also summons the spectator to become the actor and experience an act of faith.[31] In contrast, classical aesthetics expects the actor to portray a carefully planned and rehearsed metamorphosis designed to incarnate verisimilitude and arouse the spectator's emotional reaction, but the spectator distances himself from the character.

From Reason to Irrational Passion

Through the pagan actor Genest's real metamorphosis into the Christian Genest, Rotrou examines and subverts classical aesthetics based on rules, reason, and verisimilitude to reveal an actor who, in the process of identifying with his character's emotions, is moved by sense experience and irrational passion. Genest responds easily to sense experience and the "merveilleux," represented by the audio and visual dynamics of the Voice, flames, and the angel. Before beginning the performance of "Le Martyre d'Adrian" his initial response to the Voice, whether feigned by another actor or miraculous, highlights his joyful readiness to

accept immediately the Christian God's intervention in his life. Genest comments:

> Souffle doux et sacré qui me viens enflammer,
> Esprit saint et divin qui me viens animer,
> Et qui me souhaitant m'inspires le courage,
> Travaille à mon salut, achève ton ouvrage;
> Guide mes pas douteux dans le chemin des Cieux
> Et pour me les ouvrir dessille-moi les yeux.
> (2.4.427-32)

Overcome by this experience, Genest asks God to show him the way to conversion and salvation. In the interior play "Le Martyre d'Adrian" the Roman community's assessment of Adrian's conversion foreshadows the reaction of Dioclétian and the other Roman spectators to Genest's conversion. As we have seen earlier in this dissertation [32] the Romans attribute Adrian's conversion to the influence of a charm or poisonous venom, and they consider him to be a victim of irrational passion. Wilfried Floeck identifies irrational passion, the antithesis of planning and reason, as a primary determinant of "le mouvement interne et externe qui se déroule sur la scéne du théâtre baroque."[33] Genest's all consuming love for God expressed in his desire for martyrdom exemplifies the impact of this irrational passion on the direction of the play.

Not only does Rotrou call attention to the actor's susceptibility to the influence of sense experience in changing the direction of his own life, but he also focuses on the threat to the actor of being easily absorbed by his

role in the process of closely imitating the passions of his character. Understanding the dramatic text, following that text, rehearsing, and finally, reproducing Adrian's passions in performance to create verisimilitude predispose Genest to become that character. However, his heightened awareness and response to auditory and visual stimuli, such as the Voice, flames and the angel, fuel that tendency. Although Genest knows that study and experience facilitate the actor's transformation into the portrayed character and his obligatory return to reality, he recognizes, at the same time, that, instead of playing Adrian, he is becoming this Christian martyr. He comments:

> D'effet comme de nom je me treuve être un autre;
> Je feins moins Adrian que je ne le deviens,
> Et prends avec son nom des sentiments chrétiens.
> Je sais, pour l'éprouver, que par un long étude
> L'art de nous transformer nous passe en habitude.
> (2.4.402-06)

During his metamorphosis into a Christian, Genest, a baroque protagonist, casts aside any logical preparation to thwart this change, and he spontaneously responds to his instantaneous intuition, emotions and sense experience. When his well-played illusion becomes his reality and he refuses to continue the "feinte" by improvising, he can no longer act and his career in the theatre of man terminates abruptly.

Jean Rousset describes this paradox: the actor has to identify with his character's passions, but, at the same time, he has to distance himself from his role in order to

create new and different roles and continue acting. In his assessment, Le Véritable Saint Genest becomes

> le drame d'une tentation propre au comédien,--du comédien tel que le XVII^e siècle pouvait l'imaginer; c'est l'histoire de l'homme séduit par son rôle, et que cette séduction entraîne à faire l'expérience contradictoire de la nécessité et de l'impossibilité pour un acteur de s'identifier complètement à son personnage.[34]

The imprinting of a character's passions on the actor makes the actor especially vulnerable to the loss of his own identity. Rotrou magnifies the potential threat to the actor of being absorbed by his role in that Genest, a highly acclaimed and experienced actor who should be resistant to such influence, succumbs to the seduction of his role.

Through the pagan Genest's facile metamorphosis into the Christian Genest, Rotrou reveals, however, that the actor's art integrates creative forces beyond the realm of logic and reason. Placing his faith in God and defying the Romans who condemn conversion as unreasonable, Genest commits himself to the ultimate baroque metamorphosis: to become a believer. Genest's spontaneity, instantaneous intuition, improvisation, and unconstrained free-flowing metamorphosis from character to character, the very creative forces classical aesthetics suppresses, spring forward and propel him to become a star performer in God's theatre.

NOTES

[1] Chapelain, Lettres, 581-82. Chapelain says: "L'abbé d'Aubignac ne presche plus et fait des sujets de ballet et des règles pour la comédie. Il compose maintenant un traitté qu'il nomme La Pratique du théâtre que le s' de la Ménardière attend impatiemment afin de faire contre, de quoy je me resjouis pour ce que cela sera délectable, et peut estre utile aussy."

[2] Molière's Tartuffe, although appearing to violate this norm, actually conforms because the hypocrite's existence and presence in the Orgon family is vividly described from the first scene. As a result, the audience anticipates meeting him. In Genest's case, the Roman audience already knows the fate of Adrian before the play begins.

[3] See Lancaster, Corneille 128-44 for a discussion of the Quarrel of Le Cid. Scudéry maintains spectator applause does not guarantee the value of a play. Richelieu requested that the Academy evaluate the merits of the play. Although the Academy admits that the play contains beauty, it criticizes Le Cid for lack of "vraisemblance." Ultimately, the value of the "Quarrel" is that it focuses on the rules of art in the seventeenth century.

[4] Gasté 215. Montdory is spelled either Mondory or Montdory. When not quoting a source, this dissertation follows the spelling "Montdory" adopted by H. C. Lancaster.

[5] F. Bouquet, "Corneille et l'Acteur Mondory," Revue de la Normandie, février 1869: 113.

[6] Gasté 454. The nineteenth-century critic Bouquet, in La Revue de la Normandie, 112 states that Balzac's opinion commands attention since he emerges as "le juge des auteurs et le dispensateur de la gloire littéraire" of that time.

[7] See Theodore A. Litman, Les Comédies de Cornelle (Paris: Nizet, 1981) 9 for a summary of why some critics consider these plays baroque. See B. Chédozeau, Le Baroque (Paris: Nathan, 1989) 91-107.

[8] Bouquet 111.

[9] Jean Rousset, L'Intérieur et l'extérieur (Paris: Corti, 1968) 156.

[10] Bouquet 111.

[11] Georges Mongrédien, Les Grands comédiens du XVII^e siècle (Paris: Société d'Edition "Le Livre," 1927) 100.

[12] Jean-Claude Vuillemin, "Nature et réception du spectacle tragique sur la scène française du XVII^ème siècle," Romanic Review 78 (1987) 41.

[13] Vuillemin 37.

[14] Cited by Vuillemin 37.

[15] Bazin 40.

[16] Martin 103.

[17] Bazin, 41.

[18] Bouquet 113.

[19] See 33-34 of this dissertation for d'Aubignac's commentary concerning the author's presence at rehearsals.

[20] Georges Forestier, Le Théâtre dans le théâtre (Geneve: Droz, 1981) 223.

[21] Gaston Cayrou, Le Français classique: Lexique de la langue du XVII^e siècle (Paris: Didier, 1948) 453.

[22] Cayrou 445.

[23] Jean-Louis Barrault, The Theatre of Jean-Louis Barrault, trans. Joseph Chiari (New York: Hill & Wang, 1961) 34.

[24] Cayrou 430. Cayrou points out that an action contrary to reason or "bienséance" is "impertinent." IMPERTINENT -- déplacé, absurde, extravagant, en parlant des choses. "Il se dit aussi des actions, des discours contraires à la raison, à la bienséance."

[25] Barrault 35.

[26] Barrault 35.

[27] S. Wilma Deïerkauf-Holsboër, Le Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne: Le Théâtre de la troupe royale 1635-1680 (Paris: Nizet, 1970) 53 & 59-60. Through the intervention of Bellerose, Floridor relocated from the Théâtre du Marais and became an actor for the Hôtel de Bourgogne in April of 1647. Deïerkauf-Holsboër does not agree with Mongrédien in Daily Life in the French Theatre 60 and in Les Grands comédiens 138. Although he played heroes, Floridor would not have been able to portray Genest because Rotrou's play was

performed in 1645. Mongrédien's books indicate that Floridor was also head of the Royal Troupe in 1647.

[28] Cayrou 482.

[29] Cited in Rousset, L'Intérieur et l'extérieur 162.

[30] Bernard Chédozeau, Le Baroque (Paris: Nathan, 1989) 107.

[31] Chédozeau 106-07.

[32] See dissertation 91-92.

[33] Floeck 198.

[34] Rousset, L'Intérieur 157.

CHAPTER 4

THE ACTOR'S ART: IMAGINATIO CREATRIX AND DIVERSITY

From Classical Rationalism to Baroque Creativity

During the seventeenth century baroque aesthetics, coexisting with classical aesthetics, manifests itself in artistic works rather than in dramatic theories. Arsène Soreil states in "Introduction à l'histoire de l'esthétique française," Nouvelle Edition Revue: "Sous l'esthétique qui raisonne, il y a . . . l'esthétique qui ne résonne pas."[1] He downplays the role of reason alone in artistic creation: "La raison ne peut expliquer, à elle seule, la création artistique. . . ."[2] Even La Bruyère, who wrote "entre le bon sens et le bon goût, il n'y a que la différence entre une cause et son effet," admits the necessity of "nouveauté."[3] Inherited from the Renaissance and fostered by classical aesthetics, ideals of beauty correlating to unchanging forms of reality were admired. However, in seventeenth-century baroque artistic creation "pictures which were equally remote from ordinary visual experience appear perfectly plausible, or at least acceptable as more or less real creations of the imagination."[4]

Jean Rotrou's Le Véritable Saint Genest, through the play-within-the-play structure, attests to the relevance of an actor's creative forces defying classical aesthetics based on "devoir" and reason. Through the acting process itself the pagan actor Genest discovers Absolute Truth and creates his new and unexpected being to the astonishment of the Roman spectators and the French audience. In

seventeenth-century baroque artistic creation, such as Rotrou's play, liberty, diversity, invention, novelty, and change question the standard of immutable perfection, while unusual juxtapositions elicit the spectator's surprise. We can turn to water reflections, mirrors, and metaphor to elucidate the creative act.

Since baroque aesthetics considers the world a theatre and life a dream, the attempt to mirror the real becomes an attempt to display the possible and create illusion. In order to investigate the creation of diverse and novel illusions in baroque poetry, Fernand Hallyn discusses Tesauro's comparison of metaphors in "discours" to mirrors and to sudden or unexpected changes of scene in the theatre,[5] such as Genest's real and spontaneous conversion to Christianity which initially deludes the Roman spectators. Literal language uses empty mirrors in which the proper and usual meanings of words are inscribed while metaphors rely on "miroirs pleins," similar to reflecting water, which include not only the proper usual meaning but also a second reflection, the second meaning. Agreeing with Tesauro's assessment of theatrical scenes, metaphor, and reflecting water, Hallyn comments:

> Ramener l'image d'une scène de théâtre à celle de la profondeur de l'eau, ce n'est pas se livrer à des combinaisons arbitraires. C'est chercher à reconstituer l'unité d'une pensée éclatée en des images diversifiées.[6]

The figure instigates a fusion of the two mental representations, the literal meaning and the figurative one, similar to the fusion of water, the reflecting medium, and the spectacle reflected in it. For example, in baroque water poetry through mirror reflections, according to Habert de Cérisy in "Dans sa glace inconstante," fish fly and birds swim:

> C'est là, par un chaos agreable, et nouveau,
> Que la terre et le ciel se rencontrent dans l'eau;
> C'est là que l'oeil souffrant de douces impostures,
> Confond tous les objects avecque leurs figures,
> C'est là que sur un arbre il croit voir les poissons,
> Qu'il trouve les oyseaux auprès des ameçons,
> Et que le sens charmé d'une trompeuse idole
> Doute si l'oyseau nage, ou si le poisson vole.
> (Rousset, 1, 245)

Thus, the baroque writers while evoking a change of scene, create new and unprecedented illusions and free themselves from the fetters of conventional thought.

In the creative act, according to Tesauro, ingegno does not reproduce; it creates something which did not exist previously. This creative act brings man closer to resembling God because he mimics God's creativity. For example, the metaphors "un liquide cristal" for water and "ondes enflammés" for blond hair provide the author with the possibility of speaking of a crystal which is liquid and waves which catch fire and of relating these images to things which are not crystals or waves. In this process, the spectator's or reader's "merveille" results from the

metaphor's expression of its difference to the natural order of things; however, this difference uncovers and reveals a resemblance. Hallyn comments:

> Les poètes se refusent à faire de leurs oeuvres des reflets d'un ordre aveugle, basé sur des lois physiques. Ils maintiennent la métaphore, mais en font l'expression d'un ordre qui n'existe que par leur ingegno et dans les mots. Et dans leurs antithèses, leurs oxymorons, leurs paradoxes et leurs habiles tromperies, ils prennent volontiers le contre-pied de l'ordre apparent des choses pour affirmer l'indépendance de l'ordre qu'ils instaurent.[7]

The baroque releases imprisoned imaginative forces activated by sense experience and liberty, and consequently, promotes diversity.

The reflective power of the theatre also functions as a liberating power that leads to the discovery of the truth. According to Georges Forestier:

> le paradoxe du théâtre; c'est qu'il signale le vrai tout en le trahissant. Et c'est par l'expérience de la catharsis que nous sommes ramenés au vrai: d'abord l'illusion, puis la rupture de l'illusion; la folie, suivie du réveil de la folie. La révélation passe donc automatiquement par le détour de l'illusion. Pour savoir si l'apparence est trompeuse ou non, pour découvrir le vrai, il faut se laisser prendre au jeu des illusions.[8]

After being duped by this illusion, the spectator stands back and assesses his perceptions. While in Habert de Cérisy's poem "Dans sa glace inconstante" flying fish are reflected in the water with swimming birds, in Le Véritable

Saint Genest, the pagan actor Genest, unknown to the Roman spectators, merges with Adrian the character he plays and becomes a Christian believer; he then attempts to reveal his new being to the Roman audience. In both examples, the surprised spectators must examine these unlikely fusions and attempt to determine what is illusion and what is reality.

Spontaneity, Improvisation, and Metamorphosis

In Jean Rotrou's Le Véritable Saint Genest sense experience and irrational passion, the antitheses of reason, stimulate the actor Genest to annihilate the dramatic text, envision a new life text, and create a new role as a performer in God's theatre. Anna Tymieniecka, in Logos and Life: Creative Experience and the Critique of Reason, describes this liberating power and associates it with the homo creator:

> Imaginatio creatrix proposes to us 'to leave it all' behind and to create for ourselves wings and devices to explore the extraordinary and the marvelous, the unprecedented and the infinite. The individual armed with these becomes homo creator.[9]

In a demonstration of the operation of his creative imagination, visible through the use of the play-within-the-play structure, the pagan actor Genest freely responds to sense experience and the marvelous, leaves behind the established religious beliefs and gods of the Roman court, assimilates the passion of Adrian the convert he plays, and joyfully

creates his new being, a Christian martyr. As in the creation of metaphor and water reflections demonstrated by baroque poetry, two disparate elements in Rotrou's play, a pagan actor and a Christian martyr, fuse and form a new creation, one which astonishes the pagan Roman spectators and forces them to question the reality of his new existence. Genest's fusion with Adrian illustrates Bernard Chédozeau's assertion in Le Baroque that the "appel créatif" of the "baroque de persuasion" is a call to believe, "un appel . . . vers le monde du sacré et du mystère."[10]

Le Véritable Saint Genest divides this creative call to believe into two complementary movements. In the first movement, Genest's "appel créatif" to believe, leads Genest to model his baroque conversion through the art of acting. In contrast to classical aesthetics, according to Genest's demonstration, both a real conversion and the actor's creative art evolve from freedom and openness to experiment and change. In a second movement, Genest, as an actor and convert elevated to God's theatre, urges the spectators to follow his path, experience his act of faith and passion, and spontaneously re-create their life texts to lead to salvation.

Through the pagan actor Genest's real metamorphosis into the Christian Genest, Rotrou subverts the classical aesthetics based on rules, reason, and verisimilitude to glorify an actor whose creative ability is generated by

irrational passion,[11] spontaneity, and sense experience. During his rehearsal of the interior play "Le Martyre d'Adrian," Genest's initial response to the Voice, "Poursuis, Genest, ton personnage" (2.4.421), pinpoints his openness to the Christian God's supernatural intervention in his life:

> Qu'entends-je, juste Ciel, et par quelle merveille,
> Pour me toucher le coeur me frappes-tu l'oreille?
> Souffle doux et sacré qui me viens enflammer,
> Esprit saint et divin qui me viens animer
> Et qui me souhaitant m'inspires le courage,
> Travaille à mon salut, achève ton ouvrage;
> Guide mes pas douteux dans le chemin des Cieux
> Et pour me les ouvrir dessille-moi les yeux.
> (2.4.425-32)

Affected by this emotional experience, Genest voices his aspirations to surpass the limitations of this world, and he demonstrates the flexibility and freedom needed to embark on a new creative journey. Genest's readiness to explore new dimensions challenges the Romans' insistence on following reason and well-established confining norms.

In the interior play, Genest plays the character Adrian who rejects reason by responding to his sense experience. The Roman actor Flavie/Sergeste expresses the prevailing Roman perspective and explanation for Adrian's possible defection to Christianity:

> Les uns, que pour railler cette erreur s'est semée,
> D'autres, que quelque sort a votre âme charmée,
> D'autres, que le venin de ces lieux infectés
> Contre votre raison a vos sens révoltés. (2.8.539-42)

For the Romans, Adrian's conversion may be the result of a magic spell or of a venom which made his senses revolt against his reason. Before arresting and chaining Adrian, Flavie reinforces the perception that Adrian has abandoned logic and reason:

> Si raison ni douceur ne vous peut émouvoir,
> Mon ordre va plus loin. (2.8.657-58)

This Roman perspective elevates reason and negatively views sense experience.

In the principal play, the Romans duplicate this insistence on action generated by logic and reason and in conformity with their value system and beliefs. The Roman spectators' astonishment is expressed in Maximin's "Croirai-je mes oreilles?" (4.7.1375). Their astonishment is so much greater because they realize that the person who just converted and who will be martyred is Genest, the pagan actor that they admire enormously. A witness to Genest's apparent conversion, Valérie immediately evaluates his metamorphosis on the basis of reason and judgment: "Parle-t-il de bon sens?" (4.7.1375). However, Genest, in his portrayal of Adrian and then in his own spontaneous conversion and martyrdom, glorifies the individual who follows the vibrations of his emotions and senses in order to realize his creative possibilities.

Tymieniecka describes the yearning of this individual seeking to exceed the restrictive boundaries imposed by his culture and by himself:

> in forcing back the limits of the exterior world, the creative impulse responds to an interior drive toward the surpassing not only of the limits which the world fixes as a framework of our experience, but before all else of molds which we have forged for ourselves by our ways of feeling, seeing, evaluating, and which we passively perpetuate as the forms of our participation in the world, in others, in our own interiority. (33-34)

Genest's creative call to become a believer defies the value system of the pagan Roman world. By accepting his own imminent suffering, torture, and death in addition to the consequent financial disaster and dissolution of his troupe, Genest challenges the rational norms imposed by the Romans. Since he previously rejected his parent's Christianity to openly persecute the Christians through his acting, Genest breaks the pagan "molds" he "forged" for himself in order to go beyond the limitations of his world and to satisfy his creative impulse.

Genest, like Adrian, responds to sense impression, suppresses reason, breaks from his established frame of reference, and opens his mind and heart to new creative possibilities. His behavior becomes a prototype for the spectator to imitate. In the process of playing Adrian's role, Genest describes his free and spontaneous response to God's grace:

> Il faut lever le masque et t'ouvrir ma pensée;
> Le Dieu que j'ai haï m'inspire son amour;
> Adrian a parlé, Genest parle à son tour!
> Ce n'est plus Adrian, c'est Genest qui respire
> La grâce du baptême et l'honneur du martyre.
> (4.5.1344-48)

While dissociating himself from the character Adrian, Genest experiences what Tymieniecka identifies as one of the possible beginning points of the creative process, "the illuminating notion of the work to be accomplished before we undertake it" (198). Genest, now aware of his task, prepares to follow Adrian's path to eternal life through his own anticipated baptism and martyrdom. Although the Roman spectators believe Genest's performance exemplifies verisimilitude, Genest undermines the dramatic text. He demonstrates the actor's creative potential to become an author by originating and performing a new text which the Roman spectators accept as the illusion of reality.

When he creates his new being, Genest demonstrates his talent for improvisation, an actor's indispensable talent to abandon and return to the text at will and, consequently, be able to open the text to new and diverse possibilities.

The acting troupe's evaluation of Genest's improvisational performance not only identifies the function and value of improvisation to an actor but also highlights its potential to annihilate the dramatic text. Immediately after his baptism offstage by an angel, both Marcelle and Lentule agree that Genest is spontaneously adding lines and

improvising the text. Lentule observes: "Il les fait sur-le-champ" (4.5.1259). In Lentule's estimation, Genest's improvisation conceals his memory lapse from the Roman spectators. From a performance perspective, improvisation provides time for the performer to remember his lines and return to the dramatic text. Lentule, however, begins to suspect that something irregular is occurring; the actor Genest improvises "sans suivre l'histoire," (4.5.1259) which indicates to him that Genest is experiencing difficulty in returning to the dramatic text. Although Sergeste attests to Genest's assiduous preparation in rehearsal, Marcelle also points out this deterioration of the dramatic text: "Il ne dit pas un mot du complet qui lui reste" (4.7.1296). In spite of abandoning the dramatic text, Genest, an excellent actor, incorporates his newly-created lines without difficulty. Lentule remarks "Quoiqu'il manque au sujet, jamais il ne hésite" (4.7.1315). Genest's instantaneous intuition, his receptivity to sense experience, and his response to divine grace propel him to improvise his new life text effortlessly in his ultimate creative act.

Genest's talent for improvisation places him in charge of the play's unfolding and highlights his creativity by contrasting it with his troupe's inability to improvise. While the actors' evaluations of Genest's performance focus on his facility in improvisation, the Roman spectators praise Genest for his creation of verisimilitude.

Dioclétian, for example, marvels at Genest's performance art:

> Voyez avec quel art Genest sait aujourd'hui
> Passer de la figure aux sentiments d'autrui.
> (4.5.1261)

Two scenes later Valérie confirms Dioclétian's assessment by remarking that the illusion created by Genest could pass for reality: "Sa feinte passerait pour la vérité même" (4.7.1284). Speaking of Genest's superiority over the other actors, Camille points out to Valérie: "Comme son art, Madame, a su les abuser!" (4.6.1274).

In contrast to actors in the commedia dell'arte who thrive on improvising the canevas, Genest's troupe is immobilized by his departure from the dramatic text. Referring to act 4, scenes five and seven, Georges Forestier comments that Rotrou, in his function as a dramatist, recognizes the value of improvisation:

> Ainsi, le fait que les deux scènes les plus importantes de la pièce reposent sur la prétendue confiance des spectateurs dans le pouvoir--illimité--d'improvisation de tout bon acteur, nous paraît être le meilleur indice du point de vue de Rotrou sur l'art du comédien.[12]

An excellent actor knows how to adapt and performs according to the continually changing performance climate. Genest's improvisational talents provide a model of the qualities of adaptability and flexibility that the spectators will need if one day they themselves wish to convert.

This talent points out to the real spectators of the entire play that Genest could successfully return to the dramatic text, pretend to play Adrian's role and conceal his conversion to save his life. However, Genest, following Adrian's example, reveals his inner feelings and creative impulses in a concrete visual and auditory demonstration of his conversion. Tymieniecka describes the "being" and "function" of a creative work which explains, in part, Genest's drive to display his conversion:

> the work of art, a scientific theory, etc. essentially 'communicate' something, and their very being may be identified with their function of communicating and the unique type of message to be conveyed. . . . By fixing its message and perduring, the creative result affirms itself and is received into the intersubjective life-world. (185-186)

The force which pushes Genest to make his sudden and unexpected conversion visible reveals the need he feels to affirm his new being. Through the avowal of his metamorphosis, Genest communicates his own message expressing the significance of life to the Roman Spectators, and, by extension, to the spectators of the entire play.

In addition to spontaneity and the talent for improvisation, an actor's ability to transform himself easily enhances his art. In act 1 Dioclétian praises Genest's talent in metamorphosis by specifically referring to the number, diversity, and credibility of his transformations. Dioclétian has seen Genest "cent fois" representing "cent

sujets divers" and transmitting "de vrais ressentiments"; through his art heroes he portrayed were "plutôt ressuscités / Qu'imités" (1.5.233-40). Genest himself considers the actor's talent and ability to change into new characters both easy and fundamental to the actor's art: "L'art de nous transformer nous passe en habitude" (2.4.406). Recognizing that the actor's art consists in the ability to exchange one mask for another, Genest expressly reminds himself that for an actor to remain an actor "Il s'agit d'imiter et non de devenir" (2.4.420).

Although he has successfully portrayed hundreds of different characters, Genest recognizes his real metamorphosis into a Christian believer as the culmination of his creative effort. Valérie's comment to Genest points out that he has already established an excellent reputation mimicking the zeal and happiness Christians experience in conversion:

> Mais on vante surtout l'inimitable adresse
> Dont tu feins d'un chrétien le zèle et l'allégresse"
> (1.5.293).

These past representations of martyrs and heroes, however, are preparations or "stepping stones" to his ultimate creation. Tymieniecka's explanation of the evolution of a masterpiece illustrates Genest's need to reveal and display his conversion:

> Each new created work of the same maker is a stepping stone to the next one . . . all these dispersed solutions find their synthesis in a masterpiece. This masterpiece appears, then, as the aim toward which all the previous fragmentary efforts converge. (192-193)

While being sent to prison in chains, Genest is conscious that this metamorphosis is his masterpiece; it will result in his glorification and eternal life. He anticipates his final reward:

> Les Anges, quelque jour, des fers que tu m'ordonnes
> Dans ce palais d'azur me feront des couronnes.
> (4.8.1403-04)

By displaying his newly-created masterpiece, the Christian martyr Genest communicates his message of belief to the spectators.

Surpassing the Renaissance artist who aspired to achieve a truth, the baroque creative artist, such as Genest, demonstrates truth in order to stir the spectator to action. According to Germain Bazin, "the spectator enters the process as an essential element in a dialogue with the creator of the work."[13] After fusing with his character Adrian, Genest, subverting reason and his rehearsed role, abandons Adrian's lines, spontaneously creates his own life text, and boldly insists on demonstrating his act of faith to the spectators in order to move them to conversion. Genest now becomes a performer in God's theatre. Genest designates "le Ciel" as his "approbateur," and he identifies

himself as "son acteur" (4.7.1299-1314). In his role as an actor in God's theatre, Genest's final performance functions as a profession of his faith as well as a creative call to encourage the spectators to share his belief.

Since the speaker/improviser of baroque discourse intends to disclose the truth and to convince, persuade, move, and incite the receiver of the message to action,[14] Genest's discourse requires an audience. During the prison scene, in response to Marcelle's plea that he hide his conversion and save his life, Genest, reflecting the intent of baroque discourse, refuses to deceive the Roman court and declares his goal to proclaim his faith:

> Notre foi n'admet point cet acte de faiblesse;
> Je la dois publier, puisque je la professe.
> (5.2.1587-88)

Contrary to the characters of Renaissance tragedy and contrary to the passive characters of Racinian theatre who are "victimes de leur destin ou de leurs propres passions,"[15] Genest, a baroque hero, revolts against pagan norms and openly declares his faith.

During the performance of his role, the actor Genest is moved to assimilate Adrian's love for God through a spontaneous conversion. Genest, then invites the spectators to be moved by his own act of faith, to respond to God's grace, and to experience a similar spiritual fusion. According to Bernard Chédozeau, for the baroque dramatist, an interiori-

sation of the actor's passions by the spectator joins the spectator to the actor in a "forte volonté d'assimilation vécue."[16] Genest implies that this assimilation is possible for all spectators.

In a commentary which reflects the starting point of the famous quarrel between the Jesuits and the Jansenists, Genest points out to Marcelle that everyone receives sufficient grace from God to achieve his salvation, but not everyone responds to it:

> Ta grâce peut, Seigneur, détourner ce présage!
> Mais, hélas! tous l'ayant, tous n'en ont pas l'usage;
> De tant de conviés bien peu suivent tes pas
> Et pour être appelés, tous ne répondent pas.
> (5.2.1575-78)

Explaining that martyrdom destroys death by granting eternal life, Genest attempts to persuade Marcelle and the other Roman actors and spectators to react to God's grace by sharing his crime of conversion:

> Si d'un heureux avis vos esprits sont capables,
> Partagez ce forfait, rendez-vous-en coupables,
> Et vous reconnaîtrez s'il est un heur plus doux
> Que la mort qu'en effet je vous souhaite à tous.
> Vous mourriez pour un Dieu dont la bonté suprême,
> Vous faisant en mourant détruire la mort même,
> Ferait l'éternite le prix de ce moment
> Que j'appelle une grâce et vous un châtiment.
> (5.2.1487-94)

Genest differentiates his interpretation of martyrdom, "grâce," from the Romans' interpretation, "châtiment." By making this distinction, Genest highlights the differing

value systems of the Christians and the pagan Romans and the difficulty of converting the pagans. Later, in an accusatory directive characteristic of sermons, Genest exhorts Marcelle to convert: "Lâche! sauve ton âme" (5.2.1604).

Through the play-within-the-play structure, Le Véritable Saint Genest also reaches out to move all potential converts plagued by uncertainty and doubt; it incites these undecided viewers to accept God's invitation. During the rehearsal of "Le Martyre d'Adrian" Genest's initial spontaneous response to the first Voice highlights his openness to sense experience and change, but it also later discloses his questioning, indecision, and uncertainty:

> Prenez, dieux, contre Christ, prenez votre parti
> Dont ce rebelle coeur s'est presque départi
> Et toi contre les dieux, ô Christ, prends ta défense
> Puisqu'à tes lois ce coeur font encor résistance.
> Et dans l'onde agitée où flottent mes esprits
> Terminez votre guerre et m'en faites le prix,
> Rendez-moi le repos dont ce trouble me prive.
> (2.4.439-45)

In this passage accessible only to the spectators of the entire play, Genest recognizes his internal conflict and implores the gods and the Christian God to terminate their war and make him the prize. While revealing his uncertainty, Genest discloses that reason does not motivate him to respond to God's grace.

Genest's dilemma reflects Mathieu-Castellani's assessment of baroque discourse which, according to her, locates uncertainty not only in the spectator/listener but also in

the speaker: "Au coeur de tout grand texte baroque, naît une incertitude," which is corrected "par un acte de croyance qui échappe à la raison, mais n'est que certitude incertaine."[17] Like Pygmalion who believes in the gods' power to animate the statue he just created, Genest believes in God's power to grant him eternal life. In advance of the Pascalian wager by several decades, Genest bases his uncertain certainty on a foundation of uncertainty. Through his example, Genest beckons the spectators to identify with his uncertainty and then to assimilate his belief.

In act 5, scene 1 Genest's "Stances," audible only to the spectators who view the entire play, address all spectators who experience doubt and uncertainty. Reminiscent of Bernini's "Ecstacy of Saint Teresa," the actor displays his great lyrical exaltation contemplating his martyrdom and the prospect of eternal life. During this emotional outpouring, Genest denies the world's false values, professes his faith, and extols martyrdom. Genest's creative call to believe, expressed in his role as an actor of God, summons the viewers to be moved by their senses and emotions and to experience a spiritual fusion with him in order to attain salvation:

> Mourons donc, la cause y convie;
> Il doit étre doux de mourir
> Quand se dépouiller de la vie
> Est travailler pour l'acquérir;
> Puisque la céleste lumiére
> Ne se treuve qu'en la quittant
> . . . . . .

Courons au bout de la carrière
Où la couronne nous attend. (5.1.1461-1470)

Genest's "Stances" reflect Poussin's baroque canvas "The Martyrdom of St. Erasmus" c. 1628[18] which, through the painter's emphasis on diagonals, draws the spectators viewing the painting to move their eyes from the horror of the saint's martyrdom and to focus on the rewards consisting of the palm of the martyrdom, the crowns of laurel, and eternal life in heaven represented by the celestial rays of light. While Poussin's use of diagonals attracts the viewer's gaze into his painting to encourage him to participate emotionally in the faith experience, Genest's use of the "nous" form of the imperative in the "Stances" invites all viewers to participate in his experience, to assimilate his passion, to convert and to share his foretaste, his "Essai de la gloire future" and his "douceur extreme" (5.1.1433, 1449).

"Gloire," a multi-faceted term with political and religious connotations, promotes the baroque aesthetics' propensity for the marvelous and the need to display. While the emperors Dioclétian and Maximin attain their "gloire" through military conquest, Genest expects his martyrdom to result in "gloire éternelle" in paradise, "un séjour de la gloire" (5.2.1600, 1610). During the interior play, Anthyme, while encouraging Genest to convert, paints a picture of the heavenly glory and the laurel crown awaiting Adrian:

> Va donc, heureux ami, va présenter ta tête
> Moins au coup qui t'attend qu'au laurier qu'on t'apprête;
> Va de tes saints propos éclore les effets,
> De tous les choeurs des Cieux va remplir les souhaits;
> Et vous, Hôtes du Ciel, saintes légions d'Anges
> Qui du nom trois fois saint célébrez les louanges,
> Sans interruption de vos sacrés concerts,
> A son aveuglement tenez les Cieux ouverts. (4.5.1223-30)

In the "Stances" Genest's words mirror what Anthyme has just affirmed in the preceding quotation; however, Genest also attempts to persuade the spectators to join him in seeking salvation and glory.

Genest's creative work, his metamorphosis into a Christian believer and martyr, establishes itself and endures in this life-world through his performance as a pagan actor changing into and performing as God's actor, "son acteur" (4.7.1314). Genest the pagan actor was the "plus brillant éclat" (1.5.232) of the theatre in Rome; Genest, God's actor, achieves eternal glory as a saint. Chédozeau notes that the baroque envisions history as a series of <u>exempla</u> which promotes "une participation proche de la fusion, ici du poète et de son héros mythique, ailleurs du spectateur avec . . . le saint dont la vie est représentée."[19] Committed to propagate the faith, Genest through his fusion with Adrian and in his performance as God's actor, attempts to persuade not only the Romans but also countless spectators of any era to assimilate his passion and to convert.

Genest's portrayal reflects the baroque age in which man seemed to act his life. For example, the Chevalier de

Méré (1610-1689), a moralist and letter-writer, wrote that "one should be a 'good actor in life,' 'regard what one does as a play, and imagine one is acting a part.'"[20] Genest's enactment of his metamorphosis and martyrdom becomes a model for all spectators to imitate. In order to convert, the Romans, like Genest, have to suppress reason and overthrow their value systems. The spectators themselves, the Romans, the unbelievers, and the undecided, have to react spontaneously to their feelings and sense experiences, improvise their own new life texts, re-create themselves in an ultimate baroque metamorphosis to become a Christian believer, and display their conversions for others to imitate.

NOTES

[1] Cited in Minguet 45.

[2] Cited in Minguet 45.

[3] Cited in Minguet 45.

[4] Argan 9.

[5] Fernand Hallyn, Formes métaphoriques dans la poésie lyrique de l'âge baroque en France (Genève: Droz, 1975) 22.

[6] Hallyn, footnote 57, p. 27.

[7] Hallyn 220-21.

[8] Forestier 227.

[9] Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, Logos and Life: Creative Experience and the Critique of Reason (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988) 420. All further references, unless indicated, refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text in parentheses.

[10] Chédozeau 75-76.

[11] See Floeck 198. According to Floeck, irrational passion and chance determine the movement of baroque theatre.

[12] Forestier 222.

[13] Bazin 40.

[14] Mathieu-Castellani 58.

[15] Floeck 184.

[16] Chédozeau 107. For a differentiation between the classical and baroque aesthetics with respect to spectator emotional response to the theatrical representation, see 133-135 of this dissertation.

[17] Mathieu-Castellani 71.

[18] See 23-25 of this dissertation.

[19] Chédozeau 107.

[20] Bazin 48.

CHAPTER 5

THE 1988 PRODUCTION OF LE VÉRITABLE SAINT GENEST AT THE COMÉDIE FRANÇAISE

A relatively unperformed play,[1] Le Véritable Saint Genest entered the repertoire of the Comédie Française in the Winter/Spring season of 1988 through the efforts of Jean Le Poulain, the theatre's "Administrateur général," and under the direction of André Steiger. While a student at a "conservatoire de province," Le Poulain's first play to direct was Saint Genest. Intrigued by its "côtés métaphysiques et par le jeu du théâtre dans le théâtre,"[2] he contacted Steiger to direct it. Steiger's direction and Claude Lemaire's scenery do not promote the play's "appel créatif" to believe characteristic of the "baroque de persuasion." While maintaining a strong interest in Rotrou's exploration of the art of the actor and theatrical representation, the director envisions the life significance of Le Véritable Saint Genest as a commentary on tolerance versus intolerance in order to appeal more directly to a 1980's audience.

As a result of Steiger's shift in focus, some major changes occur in the production:[3]

1. Elements of the "merveilleux chrétien," such as the appearance of flames representing the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are eliminated.

2. A manuscript fragment, discovered by Jacques Schérer in a 1648 edition of Le Véritable Saint Genest and not definitively attributed to Rotrou,[4] is incorporated in the performance text following line 371. In this fragment

Marcelle decries Adrian's conversion as that of a "fou" and expresses her inability to understand and portray Natalie who would prefer Adrian to be a martyr than to remain her living "bel époux."

3. The Roman spectators leave the stage after the completion of act 4, scene 1; they do not witness the critical moment when Genest announces his conversion. They return to the stage immediately after his initial revelation of his conversion at the end of act 4, scene 5 in the Sanchez text.[5] The suppression of the "merveilleux chrétien," Marcelle's verbal attack against Adrian and Natalie, and the absence of the Roman spectators at the point of Genest's conversion reinforce Steiger's interpretation.

Through excerpts from interviews, the director André Steiger and the principal actors Michel Aumont (Genest/Adrian), Francine Bergé (Marcelle/Natalie), and François Chaumette (Dioclétian) describe the creation of this 1988 production at the Comédie Française.

Development of Focus and Life Significance

Ruoff: Pourquoi vouliez-vous jouer le rôle de Saint Genest? Ça a été votre choix de jouer ce rôle ou est-ce que la direction à la Comédie Française vous a donné un choix de rôles à jouer?

Aumont: Alors, ça a commencé comme ça . . . la Comédie Française enregistre beaucoup de radio. Dans une année,

elle a lu environ une cinquantaine de pièces . . . ce qui fait évidemment beaucoup et on est donc obligé de prospecter dans tous les répertoires pour trouver toujours des pièces, et entre autres, on est donc tombé un jour sur cette pièce de Rotrou qui est pratiquement inconnue, il faut bien le dire. Elle a été jouée il y a quelques années en périphérie autour de Paris, puis, elle a été jouée au début du siècle à l'Odéon, je crois, enfin, elle est pratiquement inconnue, donc on l'a faite à la radio et l'expérience nous ayant plu, on s'est dit, tiens, après tout, si on la montait, si on la mettait en scène, ça pourrait être intéressant. A ce moment-là est arrivé Jean Le Poulain comme Administrateur qui a disparu maintenant, vous savez, et on lui a parlé de ça, et il a été emballé parce qu'il connaissait très bien la pièce. Il l'avait travaillée lui; c'était au Conservatoire et il l'avait montée, je crois, avec les élèves du Conservatoire, alors ça lui a beaucoup plu et puis voilà. . . .[6]

Ruoff: Quels étaient les rapports entre les acteurs, le metteur en scène, M. André Steiger, et Claude Lemaire? (Elle est décoratrice.)

Aumont: Je crois qu'ils ont beaucoup travaillé ensemble. Ils se connaissent très bien. Ils se sont choisis l'un l'autre une nouvelle fois.

Ruoff: Qu'est-ce que le metteur en scène a fait exactement pour la représentation de cette pièce? Le travail commence bien des mois avant la représentation?

Chaumette: D'abord, il a son travail à lui qui est un travail de réflexion sur la pièce, mais c'est un travail qu'il avait déjà fait, puisque c'est une pièce qu'il avait beaucoup étudiée à une époque où il enseignait à l'école de Strasbourg. Alors, il avait beaucoup réfléchi sur cette pièce. Il avait même fait un exercice d'élèves, je crois, avec cette pièce, donc il la connaissait très, très bien . . . ensuite, quand il est venu ici et qu'il a travaillé avec nous, et bien il a profité des apports personnels de Michel Aumont, de Francine Bergé qui sont d'extraordinaires acteurs et qui sont des locomotives dans ce spectacle et qui obligent tout le reste de la troupe à tirer le même train et non pas à essayer d'aller s'égarer dans la campagne. Je crois que ça, ça a été l'essentiel du travail de Steiger, c'est de bien rassembler toute la troupe autour des deux phares.[7]

Ruoff: Depuis quand vous intéressez-vous à la pièce?

Steiger: Avant de travailler le théâtre à Paris, vous savez, j'avais lu déjà le Saint Genest et ça me paraissait être, dans la littérature du dix-septième siècle, une pièce clé, une pièce déterminante, d'abord parce qu'elle parle des conditions même de la représentation au dix-septième, pas à Rome, entendons-nous bien, mais au dix-septième, et que d'autre part, c'est une des pièces qui est peut-être la plus inscrite dans un contexte politique et d'une façon dangereuse. Il ne faut pas oublier que, au moment où le Saint

Genest se produit, celui de Rotrou singulièrement, qui est très, très subtil et très complexe (je ne parle pas du Saint Genest d'avant, de Desfontaines, par exemple, ou du Saint Genest des jésuites), il ne faut pas oublier qu'on est encore dans la pression des guerres de religion et que, ce que la scène montre, c'est-à-dire, des romains mettant à mort un chrétien, n'est ni plus ni moins que ce qui vient de se passer quelques années auparavant, mais, la conscience reste encore marquée par ça. En France, avec les guerres de religion ou ce sont alors des catholiques qui exécutaient des protestants au nom finalement de la même idéologie que l'idéologie païenne, c'est-à-dire que c'est une pièce sur la tolérance et sur l'intolérance et comment finalement le théâtre en rend compte. Ce sont les deux éléments déterminants de la pièce.[8]

Ruoff: Quelle a été l'influence de M. Jean Rousset dans votre représentation de Saint Genest?

Steiger: C'est un peu à cause du travail de Jean Rousset que je me suis intéressé au Genest de Rotrou. J'ai lu effectivement son texte sur la pièce.[9] Je connaissais la pièce, mais le texte de Rousset m'a ouvert complètement une lecture nouvelle, une lecture que je ne connaissais pas, plus peut-être subtile et c'est en tout cas, le texte de Rousset qui a été en grande partie à l'origine de mon désir de monter cette pièce.

Ruoff: Est-ce que vous avez eu des conversations avec lui?

Steiger: J'ai eu des conversations, mais vous savez, pas de travail, pas des conversations de travail, mais des conversations de repas, des conversations à batons rompus comme ça autour d'un repas. On a beaucoup parlé, mais il y a très longtemps, on a beaucoup parlé de Saint Genest, avant que--mais je l'ai déjà montée une fois avec les élèves de l'école de Strasbourg. Il y a une école au Théâtre National de Strasbourg, une école de théâtre très célèbre en France et avec les élèves, il y a environ six, sept ans j'ai monté le Saint Genest de Rotrou dans une toute autre mise en scène, dans une toute autre version, et à cette époque-là, j'avais parlé justement avec Jean Rousset. Voilà.

Ruoff: Lesquelles des idées de Jean Rousset sont les plus importantes dans votre représentation?

Steiger: Oui, alors là, je ne peux plus tellement faire la part des choses parce qu'au cours du travail, on part d'une idée pour faire une mise en scène, mais au cours du travail évidemment, d'autres matériaux s'accumulent; nos propres matériaux, nos propres réflexions viennent, un peu brouiller les pistes, mais je pense que ce qui est resté de la lecture de l'article de Rousset, ce qui est resté en fait, c'est l'idée que ça se situe d'abord bien dans le contexte du dix-septième et que ça a très peu à voir avec la problématique romaine. . . .

Pour moi, tous les éléments sont à glaner un peu partout, et il y a des quantités d'éléments, il n'y a pas que Rousset là-dedans. C'est une influence, mais l'influence déterminante--c'est quand même, si vous voulez dans le même temps, je monte, ça se joue actuellement en Suisse dans le même temps je montais Les Nègres de Jean Genet qui est une pièce très proche du Saint Genest. C'est pourquoi j'ai monté les deux avec la même décoratrice. Nous avons monté les deux pièces à la suite parce que nous nous sommes posés, nous nous sommes penchés pas tellement uniquement sur le problème de Rotrou, pas uniquement sur le problème du dix-septième, mais sur le problème du système narratif qui fait que le théâtre s'utilise lui-même comme métaphore du monde.

Donc, pour préciser, la part de Rousset a été une part déterminante au départ, mais très vite, on a quand même débordé et dépassé ce travail-là pour partir sur des pistes, je disais, beaucoup plus modernes, maintenant, beaucoup plus contemporaines, c'est-à-dire le travail notamment, effectivement de ces espèces de mise en danger du théâtre par lui-même--aussi bien appartenir à l'univers de Rotrou dans le Saint Genest qu'à l'univers surtout de Genet dans Les Nègres et dans Le Balcon.

Ruoff: Pourriez-vous me résumer: "Quelle est la signification de cette pièce de nos jours?

Chaumette: Pour moi, de nos jours . . . c'est le procès de l'intolérance de quelque bord qu'il soit. Je

crois que nous vivons dans un monde ou nous sommes obligés de se supporter les uns les autres et de se respecter les uns les autres et que ça n'est pas sur les questions de foi, de convictions politiques, et de choses comme ça qu'il faut condamner les autres. Je crois que c'est par la solidarité et la générosité aussi bien vis à vis de la personne des autres que l'on doit faire un monde meilleur et que ça n'est plus du tout dans la croyance, dans des dieux ou dans les choses comme ça que--Pour moi, c'est une pièce qui est profondément un plaidoyer contre l'intolérance et le fanatisme.

Ruoff: Et la conversion de Saint Genest représente--

Chaumette: représente un moment, mais il est évident aussi que la conversion de Saint Genest peut être un danger manifeste si au nom de cette foi qu'il découvre, il veut annihiler toutes les autres convictions. Il est bien que Saint Genest ait sa foi et qu'il croit en quelque chose mais à condition de ne pas empêcher les autres de croire en autre chose.

Costumes and Staging

Ruoff: Lesquelles des idées de Jean Rousset sont les plus importantes dans votre représentation?

Steiger: C'est l'idée que ça se situe d'abord bien dans le contexte du dix-septième et que ça a très peu à voir avec la problématique romaine. C'est-à-dire que l'ensemble

finalement des éléments, ressortissent bien de toute l'époque où Rotrou écrit la pièce; c'est cette inscription finalement dans l'époque d'une littérature plus que dans l'histoire d'une anecdote, l'histoire d'une fable . . . qui a perduré au cours du travail. C'est pourquoi, par exemple, j'ai gardé l'idée des costumes avec la décoratrice, l'idée des costumes qui sont empruntés à toute la sensibilité du dix-septième siècle beaucoup plus qu'à Rome, la façon dont le dix-septième siècle interprète.

Ruoff: A la première scène de l'Acte II, Genest parle au décorateur. Comme acteur principal dans cette représentation, vous intéressez-vous au décor, à la mise en scène, aux costumes ou, ça vous est égal, et vous laissez cela à la décoratrice?

Aumont: Eh bien, je ne m'intéresse probablement pas assez. Ça, c'est mon problème personnel; c'est moi qui ai tort. Je devrais peut-être. Quand on me confie des rôles aussi importants, je devrais peut-être participer plus à ce qu'on appelle la mise en scène, mais j'avoue que je ne sens pas très fort là-dessus. Je doute de moi. J'ai toujours peur de ne pas voir clair, de dire des bêtises, de me tromper. Alors, c'est vrai que je suis un peu passif. Je laisse faire un petit peu. Cela dit, moi, quand j'ai vu le décor, on nous présente la maquette du décor pendant les répétitions . . . je me suis dit, tiens, c'est simple, c'est

beau, ça me paraissait bien. Maintenant, il y a des gens qui le critiquent beaucoup. . . .

Ruoff: Est-ce qu'il y avait des considérations de budget au sujet des costumes, de la mise en scène ou c'est un sujet dont le metteur en scène n'a pas parlé?

Aumont: On est très au courant. Les acteurs sont très au courant des problèmes de la troupe en ce moment. Et bien, si on a des problèmes économiques assez graves, alors, c'est certain que dans la fabrication du décor on a fait attention. Je crois que c'est un spectacle qui ne coûte pas très cher; on a été obligé de penser à ça. Mais je ne pense pas que ça se voit de la salle, qu'on se dit, "Oh, là, là! Qu'est-ce que ça fait pauvre."

Ruoff: Et votre impression des costumes?

Aumont: L'idée de Steiger et de sa décoratrice d'habiller les romains en Louis XIII, moi, j'ai vu ça aux premières répétitions.[10] On nous a montré les maquettes, on nous a parlé de cette idée. J'avoue que je n'ai pas du tout été choqué; je ne me suis pas dit, "Ah, ça ne veut rien dire." C'est encore une idée intellectuelle, ou pas du tout. Alors, maintenant, j'apprends qu'il y a des gens après chaque représentation, des gens du public qui disent "mais on ne comprend rien. Pourquoi les romains ne sont-ils pas habillés en romains?"

Ruoff: Je me demande pourquoi on a décidé de mettre les romains en costumes Louis XIII?

Aumont: C'est un peu un clin d'oeil. Il faut que le public soit très cultivé pour comprendre une chose comme ça. C'est un clin d'oeil par rapport bien sûr à l'époque où ça a été joué, Corneille, bien sûr, mais c'est vrai que ce n'est pas très clair. Moi, ça ne me choque pas beaucoup. Je vous dirai, c'est le genre de choses qui ne me choque pas beaucoup.

Ruoff: Je me demande si le metteur en scène et la décoratrice ont fait ça pour montrer une différence entre les acteurs et les spectateurs. Si les deux sont dans les mêmes costumes, des romains--

Aumont: Oui, mais alors, elle nous parlait de l'idée que la cour était très riche, très, très noble comme ça alors que les acteurs étaient évidemment des gens un peu plus du peuple, plus simples. Mais elle aurait peut-être pu faire ça avec des costumes romains, non? Je ne sais pas. Par contre, ça revient un peu à la question précédente.

Ce que j'ai remarqué tout de suite dans le travail c'est le côté extrêmement statique de la mise en scène, bien sûr. Les spectateurs romains sont assis là. Ils ne bougent plus. De temps en temps, ils se grattent le nez c'est tout, et nous, les acteurs en train de jouer, on est quasi immobiles, enfin c'est très, très--ça, moi, je me suis dit, en fait, j'ai laissé faire, je me suis dit, "C'est dangereux." J'ai pensé, "c'est dangereux."

Ruoff: Etes-vous content de la mise en scène et des costumes? J'ai été un peu choquée que les spectateurs romains--

Chaumette: Soient en costumes du dix-septième siècle?

Ruoff: Oui, c'est ça.

Chaumette: C'est la vieille querelle. C'est un des reproches qui a été fait par certaines personnes au spectacle, alors que d'autres trouvent que c'est . . . La pièce est tellement dix-septième siècle, elle est tellement peu romaine que la volonté est, de Steiger, en tant que metteur en scène, et de Claude Lemaire, en tant que décoratrice, la volonté a été de bien montrer que c'était une fausse romanité, et qu'au fond, le problème de la tolérance ou de l'intolérance est un problème qui pouvait concerner aussi bien l'empire romain que le dix-septième et que le monde contemporain.

Ruoff: Je comprends maintenant.

Chaumette: En plus, c'est une référence historique si l'on songe que le dix-septième siècle a été un siècle où les guerres de religion étaient très fortes en France. L'action de Richelieu contre les protestants, la révocation de l'édit de Nantes, ça c'était antérieur, mais, enfin, il y avait un contexte religieux dans toute cette époque.

Pour nous, français du vingtième siècle, il y a entre Henri IV et Louis XIV, par exemple, ce qui représente quand même une certaine durée, il y a de grands, vrais problèmes

religieux et où la religion d'Etat s'est trouvée transformée par la réforme, etc. Je pense que c'était la volonté de Steiger et de Claude Lemaire de bien montrer que cette pièce romaine était faussement romaine, mais qu'elle était bien aussi témoin du dix-septième siècle et si nous la montons, nous, c'est qu'elle est aussi témoin de notre époque.

Ruoff: J'ai remarqué dans la représentation que le metteur en scène a diminué l'importance de l'assistance romaine, par exemple, au moment où Genest parle à Anthyme. Quel est l'effet du manque des spectateurs romains sur la scène?

Chaumette: Je crois que ça a un effet de concentration sur l'action au moment où l'action devient plus tragique, plus dramatique. C'est le moment de la conversion réelle de Genest, et je crois qu'il a voulu justement épurer la chose et d'en faire plus qu'un débat entre la troupe de Genest et Genest. Ça permet au metteur en scène comme ça de concentrer bien l'action sur la conversion de Genest et, en même temps, de ménager l'irruption des spectateurs romains de la cour au moment où l'action atteint son paroxysme, l'action de conversion atteint son paroxysme, et où le dénouement se prépare.

Ruoff: J'ai remarqué que le metteur en scène a supprimé un peu l'assistance sur scène. Dans le texte de la pièce, je ne parle pas du texte de la Comédie Française, les spectateurs romains sont en scène au quatrième acte pour

être témoins de la conversion de Genest. Dans cette mise en scène à la Comédie Française, les spectateurs romains sont partis au début du quatrième acte.

Aumont: Oui, oui. Absolument.

Ruoff: Je me demande pourquoi il a décidé de laisser partir les spectateurs?

Aumont: Je crois que les spectateurs ne comprennent pas, n'est-ce pas? Les spectateurs de maintenant de la salle, les vrais ne comprennent pas bien pourquoi les romains ne sont plus là.

Ruoff: Oui, exactement.

Aumont: Il [Steiger, le metteur en scène] nous disait que pour lui ça représentait des changements de plan. Comme si on était au cinéma et que le spectateur, le vrai, le spectateur réel qui regarde la pièce de Rotrou, lui, changeait de place. . . .

Ruoff: Des moments comiques dans la pièce où Marcelle--au deuxième acte il y a une scène qui n'est pas dans le texte original.[11] Il s'agit de quelques remarques de Marcelle au sujet du fard, de sa difficulté de comprendre et de bien jouer le rôle d'une chrétienne.

Aumont: Ah si, si, c'est une scène qui avait été enlevée probablement par Rotrou lui-même ou alors peut-être à une autre représentation, on ne sait pas. C'est une scène qui avait été enlevée. . . .

Ruoff: Il y a souvent une différence entre le texte littéraire et le texte qu'on joue finalement. Par exemple, dans le texte que j'ai lu, les directions disent que des flammes apparaissent sur scène. Dans cette mise en scène, il n'y a pas de flammes, [symbole de l'intervention miraculeuse de Dieu]. Le metteur en scène a diminué l'importance du merveilleux chrétien. Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres choses dans cette pièce, dont vous êtes conscient, qui sont changées depuis des siècles?

Chaumette: Oui, bien sûr, parce que les symboles, tous les symboles n'ont pas la même valeur. Il y a des choses qui sont symboliques d'une époque et qui, le siècle suivant, ne veulent rien dire du tout. Alors le travail, justement des gens de théâtre, des metteurs en scène, de ces gens là, c'est de redonner la même valeur, en changeant les symboles. Il est certain que certains symboles ne veulent plus rien dire pour des tas de gens. Alors, il faut trouver les équivalences. Alors, les flammes, ça peut être un rayon laser, ça peut être, je vous dis, n'importe quoi; l'apparition d'un satellite, par exemple, peut avoir la même valeur que l'annonciation faite à Marie. Enfin, je dis n'importe quoi, exprès, mais vous voyez ce que je veux dire, c'est que les symboles changent.

Ruoff: Et enfin le metteur en scène--

Chaumette: Puis il a sa propre imagination et sa propre vision des choses, c'est pour ça qu'on le choisit, en général.

The Role of the Director

Ruoff: Quel est le véritable rôle du metteur en scène? Qu'est-ce qu'il fait avec les acteurs?

Aumont: C'est une bonne question. Ah! C'est difficile. Qu'est-ce qu'il fait avec les acteurs? On peut--on ne va pas décrire ce que devrait être un metteur en scène idéal en ne parlant que de celui-là qui est donc M. Steiger.

Ruoff: Et certainement avec cette pièce.

Aumont: Avec cette pièce-là, son intervention a consisté surtout en une très, très bonne et très, comment dirais-je, très, très nourrie explication de texte, explication littéraire du texte. Pour nous situer Rotrou dans son époque, il parlait de la langue, etc. Voilà, tout ce travail-là ce qu'on appelle en fait c'est le travail à la table, vous savez, les lectures à la table avant qu'on commence à jouer. Alors, là, ça a été très long; il nous a vraiment beaucoup expliqué la pièce.

Et après, une fois qu'on a commencé à répéter sur la scène, disons qu'il s'est un peu effacé pour ne plus s'occuper que de tout ce qui était alors la présentation, un peu, disons technique alors, naturellement les éclairages, les effets de musique, les problèmes de décors, de costumes, de

placement des spectateurs sur la scène, des spectateurs romains. Voilà surtout ça ce qu'il a--dont il s'est préoccupé--je veux dire par là qu'il ne s'est pas beaucoup, il ne s'est plus beaucoup occupé du jeu des acteurs. Une fois qu'il nous a bien expliqué la pièce il s'est dit, ça suffit maintenant; ils vont se débrouiller.

Ruoff: C'est à dire que vous, vous-même, avez créé le rôle après avoir entendu les explications de Steiger.

Aumont: Voilà, si vous voulez.

Ruoff: Comment est-ce que vous êtes arrivé à jouer? Gestes, voix, déclamation, etc. . . . C'était le metteur en scène qui vous a indiqué la manière de jouer ou est-ce que vous avez créé le rôle? Est-ce que vos gestes étaient spontanés ou préparés à l'avance?

Bergé: . . . je crois qu'elle [la question] a trait à toute la représentation théâtrale, à tout l'art de l'acteur si j'ose m'exprimer ainsi, c'est-à-dire, je crois qu'on se met d'accord avec le metteur en scène à travers le style de l'écriture sur la façon dont il faut jouer. Bon, par exemple, dans un premier temps on pensait qu'on allait jouer les personnages de la tragédie, c'est-à-dire, Adrian, Natalie et les autres d'une manière assez emphatique et les personnages de la comédie, c'est-à-dire, Marcelle, Genest, et les autres d'une manière beaucoup plus simple, et puis finalement on a abandonné ça. Je ne sais plus pourquoi on l'a abandonné. Je pense qu'on l'a abandonné aussi parce que

dans quelques passages, il est difficile de savoir qui parle, surtout dans le cas de Genest/Adrian et que le déterminer d'une façon tranchée aurait été tout à fait arbitraire, ce qui fait qu'on a plutôt fait des différences dans l'humeur. Il est bien évident que l'humeur des comédiens n'est pas l'humeur des personnages qui jouent la tragédie.

Mais ça se fait au cours des répétitions. C'est tout d'un coup un acteur trouve un geste; le metteur en scène en suggère un autre. Il n'y a pas eu, si vous voulez, dans ce cas précis, ni un metteur en scène, qui nous a indiqué tous les gestes, ni nous les acteurs qui avons tout proposé, ça a été un travail de collaboration.[12]

Ruoff: Même avant le commencement de la représentation de la pièce, par exemple dans la répétition, est-ce que le metteur en scène a dit qu'il faudrait souligner ces mots par quelques gestes?

Chaumette: Bien entendu, mais ça c'est pendant la période des répétitions. Il a dit, "Méfie-toi, là, à ce moment-là, tu as une attitude qui pourrait laisser croire que tu es désintéressé de ce que tu fais ou qu'au contraire, tu prends trop à coeur ce que tu dis," ou des choses comme ça. Mais ça c'est le travail des répétitions et plus quand les répétitions sont terminées et qu'on passe au public, tout à coup, le metteur en scène est effacé, mais tout son travail est réalisé. C'est comme pour nous, la plupart du travail est réalisé; ce qu'il faut c'est chaque soir,

retrouver une spontanéité et essayer de restituer l'esprit du travail qui a été fait. . . . si j'ai le pied droit en avant au lieu du pied gauche, ça peut ne rien changer à l'inflexion, ne rien changer aux sentiments du personnage à ce moment-là.

Ruoff: Après la première représentation, est-ce que le metteur en scène est effacé ou est-ce qu'il était là pour vous donner encore des directions?

Chaumette: Oui, non, c'est à dire que le gros de son travail est terminé. Après la dernière répétition, au moment où le rideau se lève pour la première fois devant le public, le travail du metteur en scène est terminé. Mais son devoir et son rôle c'est aussi de contrôler que le travail ne s'égare pas, ne soit pas déformé, parce que ça, ça peut arriver. Alors, le metteur en scène ne vient pas tous les soirs, mais il vient de temps en temps; il fait un sondage. Il dit, "Attention mes enfants, vous avez décalé à tel moment"; au contraire, "Ça, ça s'est amélioré, et ça, ça va beaucoup plus dans le sens que nous souhaitions," etc.

Il exerce un droit de contrôle, mais il n'est plus partie active dans le spectacle, alors qu'il a été partie active et la principale participation active pendant l'élaboration du spectacle.

Conceptions of Character Portrayal and Acting

Genest/Adrian

Ruoff: Le rôle de Genest est très exigeant, je crois. Vous jouez deux personnages différents qui se fondent en un seul personnage. Quelles ont été les différentes étapes dans la préparation de ce rôle difficile? Décrivez un peu la progression de sa foi et comment vous avez décidé de montrer cette progression sur scène.

Aumont: C'est très difficile à expliquer. On s'est surtout basé nous, comment dirais-je, avec le metteur en scène et moi--on a moins cherché à exprimer l'arrivée de la foi sur un être humain que le problème qui paraissait intéresser surtout le metteur en scène, qui était l'identification de l'acteur à son rôle. C'est surtout ça qu'on a voulu montrer. Cela dit, je pense que ça revient au même résultat, c'est la même chose, mais si vous voulez, l'expression de la foi chrétienne elle coule de source; elle vient avec le texte, bien sûr, parce qu'il ne dit que ça. Alors on n'a pas cherché ou bien à faire une évolution dans la foi qui monterait, par exemple, qui serait de plus en plus grande. On ne s'est occupé que du problème de l'acteur en train de jouer et puis tout d'un coup comme s'il devenait un peu fou en somme, mélangeant la réalité et le jeu théâtral. Voilà. Mais je pense que ça revient au même finalement.

Ruoff: J'ai lu dans le programme de la Comédie Française, d'après Jean-Loup Rivière qui cite Genest "Ce n'est plus Adrian, c'est Genest qui respire"[13] que "C'est un moment où Genest renonce à être acteur en choisissant le martyre qu'il devient, pourrait-on dire, absolument acteur."[14] C'est ce que vous dites.

Aumont: C'est assez obscur. Evidemment, il y a un paradoxe complet. Il devient absolument acteur; c'est qu'il sort complètement du théâtre pour devenir, du fait qu'il est complètement investi par la foi chrétienne, pour devenir un être humain vrai, c'est-à-dire l'acteur dans le sens d'acteur de lui-même. C'est ce qu'il dit dans la pièce. "Je suis devenu acteur de moi-même". C'est-à-dire, il devient complètement un être réellement agissant et acteur puisqu'il est tout à fait occupé par la foi chrétienne. Mais en même temps il sort complètement du théâtre. Le théâtre devient impossible. Alors, c'est bizarre comme situation.

Ruoff: Dans la pièce, Dioclétian parle du rôle de l'acteur, de ce que l'acteur fait. Il dit:

> Le comique, où ton art également succède,
> Est contre la tristesse un si présent remède
> Qu'un seul mot, quand tu veux, un pas, une action
> Ne laisse plus de prise à cette passion,
> Et, par une soudaine et sensible merveille,
> Jette la joie au coeur par l'oeil ou par l'oreille.
> (1.5.245-50)

Pourriez-vous commenter sur cette citation. D'après ce que je comprends, une partie de l'acte de jouer consiste en un changement de voix, de gestes pour bien souligner les idées. Vous souvenez-vous des gestes, des changements de voix en particulier que vous avez utilisés, que vous avez ajoutés pour faire comprendre au spectateur que vous êtes en train de jouer un rôle, puis que vous êtes en train de vous convertir, que vous ne jouez plus Adrian mais que la conversion a pris place, et que vous jouez le rôle de Genest lui-même?

Aumont: Je ne sais pas quel est votre avis personnel à vous qui avez vu le spectacle. On n'est pratiquement pas passé par le corps. Je dois dire qu'il n'y a eu aucun travail sur le fait, par le physique, par le corps, et c'est peut-être à tort. Mais enfin, c'est comme ça. Ça a été voulu par le metteur en scène, c'est comme ça. Donc, tout ce qui est gestuel est venu avec le texte, avec les mots. On s'est contenté de dire, si vous voulez, psychologiquement les mots et naturellement il y a des gestes qui suivent naturellement, mais il n'y a pas eu de recherches du tout pour exprimer avec le corps quelque chose. Par exemple, la première fois qu'il [Genest, acte 2, scène 4] entend la voix, vous savez, il est en train de répéter tout seul et puis il entend la voix. On aurait pu peut-être imaginer une chose avec le corps plus expressive; là, il n'y a pratiquement rien. Je regarde en l'air, puis je continue à parler, vous voyez. Cette recherche n'a pas été faite volontairement.

Ruoff: C'est tout à fait naturel ce qui arrive avec les gestes.

Aumont: Oui. Voilà.

Ruoff: Après la première représentation de la pièce est-ce qu'on a changé des choses ou est-ce que la pièce est restée en grande partie identique?

Aumont: A chaque représentation? Je crois très peu, très peu. S'il y a des choses qui ont pu changer, ça viendrait surtout de moi, mais c'est quand même sur des nuances. Ça, ce n'est pas des grands changements. Mais c'est des nuances, c'est-à-dire que moi, je travaille tout le temps. Je ne m'arrête jamais. Une fois que le spectacle est passé au public je ne me dis pas, "Bon, maintenant ça y est, c'est fait." Alors, pour la représentation suivante je retravaille, je recommence. Je fais ça pratiquement à chaque fois. Alors, ça amène forcément des modifications. Il y en a qui sont assez importantes. Par exemple, les premiers temps, les premières représentations, je jouais, j'essayais d'être plùs vrai et pour être plus vrai j'oubliais un peu les vers. J'oubliais un peu de dire le vers pour donner l'impression de parler plus naturelle. . . . On me l'a reproché alors, bon. J'ai essayé de donner plus la musique du vers, par exemple, de le faire plus lyrique.

Ruoff: Je ne comprends pas comment les acteurs peuvent se souvenir des vers, des rimes, du rythme.

Aumont: Ce texte-là est particulièrement difficile. Et c'est vrai qu'on a souvent des petits ennuis de mémoire parce qu'il est très difficile.

Marcelle/Natalie

Ruoff: Quelle image, quel portrait, quels aspects de caractère vouliez-vous souligner dans le rôle de Marcelle/ Natalie?

Bergé: Dans la mesure où Marcelle est une tragédienne qui joue une tragédie dans laquelle il y a peu de moments ou pas du tout de moments de bonheur ou de joie, j'ai eu envie pour Marcelle qu'elle soit la plus gaie, la plus coquette, la plus légère possible pour pouvoir avoir des choses différentes à jouer, parce que je trouve que c'est plus intéressant pour ça, mais pas forcément toujours dans l'absolu.

Quant à Natalie . . . j'ai surtout eu envie de montrer son amour pour Genest. En fait, et dans les deux personnages, je voulais que se retrouvent l'amour et la complicité pour Genest. Parce que moi, c'est une des choses qui m'intéresse le plus à jouer, c'est l'amour. C'est même la chose qui m'intéresse le plus à jouer, et c'était très difficile dans cette pièce qui n'est pas une pièce d'amour. Mais je pense que Marcelle et Genest sont un grand couple du théâtre. Ils sont en tout cas unis par l'amour du théâtre, et je pense que Natalie et Adrian, c'est aussi un vrai

couple. Ce sont aussi des gens qui s'aiment. Donc, c'est ça surtout que moi, j'avais envie de montrer.

Ruoff: Comment est-ce que vous avez montré la différence entre Marcelle, actrice romaine, Natalie masquée comme païenne chez les romains, et Natalie démasquée à cause de la conversion de son mari?

Bergé: Etant donné qu'il y avait peu de moments de détente possible dans le rôle de Natalie, j'ai voulu, le metteur en scène a voulu, nous avons voulu d'un commun accord que Marcelle soit la plus heureuse, la plus gaie, la plus frivole, la plus superficielle, et la plus coquette possible. Il n'y a pas grand-chose. Il y a une toute petite scène,[15] mais moi, j'ai essayé moi de faire le maximum de ça. Et puis dans un côté, si vous voulez, j'ai essayé de parler les vers le plus possible. Ensuite, bon, effectivement, elle est complètement affolée par ce qui arrive [la conversion de Genest] . . . , mais j'ai essayé d'en faire la chose la plus censée, la plus terre à terre, les pieds sur terre le plus possible.

Et Natalie démasquée s'épanouit dans une espèce de masochisme de bonheur d'aller vers ce sacrifice qui est le comble de l'exaltation pour elle. Je pense que c'est un personnage très exalté qui n'a aucun problème matériel comme je suis sûr que--par exemple, Marcelle. Elle doit avoir des problèmes d'argent, des problèmes de savoir quelle robe elle va acheter; ce sont sûrement des problèmes importants pour

elle. Et puis elle a des problèmes d'actrice, mais je crois que, et puis on avait décidé aussi qu'elle allait très bien jouer Natalie, que ce n'était pas du tout une mauvaise actrice. Elle [Marcelle] avait des problèmes pour comprendre [la conversion de Genest], mais une fois que c'était parti, ça allait tout seul.

Ruoff: Est-ce que vous avez essayé de montrer des différences de jeu et des différences de gestes entre Marcelle et Natalie?

Bergé: Natalie, elle est, je ne sais pas--c'est une exaltée. Donc, peut-être un ton un peu plus lyrique, un ton, même si je crois qu'on a fait aucune emphase dans le ton il y a une manière très terre à terre comme ça de dire des choses et puis une manière beaucoup plus . . . quelqu'un qui vit dans la poésie. . . . J'essaie de le vous faire comprendre aussi par mon ton. J'espère que vous l'avez senti à la représentation.

Alors, le jeu, et bien, ça amène le geste, ça amène le ton de la voix, ça amène la sonorité de la voix, ça amène le fait qu'on utilise davantage peut-être la métrique pour Natalie, c'est-à-dire, les brèves et les longues, les allitérations. Il y en a beaucoup, beaucoup d'ailleurs dans cette pièce . . . avec des consonnes, avec les syllabes. C'est une chose dont je ne me suis absolument pas préoccupée pour Marcelle. Il y a des différences de jeux, différences de gestes, donc, je vous dis quelque chose d'autre mais ça

serait des différences de sonorité. C'est-a-dire plus un appui sur les brèves et les longues et les allitérations et les sonorités dans Natalis, en plus du sens et un souci de justement ne pas m'en occuper pour Marcelle. Si j'ai laissé Natalie faire de grands gestes, j'ai, au contraire, ramassé les gestes de Marcelle.

Ruoff: Dans la variante du texte dans l'édition de la Comédie Française Marcelle dit:

> Car ce rôle me trouble, et j'aurai de la peine
> A feindre à notre gré cette amour surhumaine.[16]

Est-ce que vous avez rencontré des difficultés particulières en jouant ce rôle très difficile de Marcelle/Natalie? Quelles étaient ces difficultés?

Bergé: Les difficultés particulières de ce rôle très difficile Marcelle/Natalie . . . viennent de la difficulté du texte. C'est un texte qui est très archaïque, très rocailleux, très difficile à apprendre, très difficile à articuler, très difficile à comprendre. Alors, il fallait, disons que le travail a commencé par bien élucider phrase à phrase, vers à vers, le sens de ces vers et de ces phrases, pas facile. Ensuite, il a fallu l'apprendre parce qu'il y a des périphrases, il y a des choses qui veulent dire la même chose; c'est très, très compliqué. Effectivement, très difficile, mais . . . à cause du texte. Il fallait . . . donc trouver un sens, une musique. Il fallait que ça soit compréhensible, d'abord pour nous, ensuite pour le

spectateur. Le travail sur le texte uniquement a été un énorme travail, et on a même eu des problèmes pendant la représentation. Ça, c'est la première fois que je rencontrais un texte, pas un rôle, un texte d'une aussi grande difficulté.

Et puis, c'est vrai que vers la fin de la pièce, il y a vraiment des moments où on ne sait pas très bien dans quel sens les phrases sont dites, si c'est Marcelle ou Natalie, si c'est Adrian ou Genest et qu'il a fallu faire des choix et que ça contribuait à la difficulté. Sinon, ce n'est pas spécialement difficile à jouer.

C'est d'abord une comédienne qui est ravie--non, qui n'est pas ravie, plutôt qui est ravie d'être comédienne et qui n'est pas ravie du tout d'avoir ce rôle-là à jouer. Et puis, qui ensuite, ce qui était très intéressant, c'est que justement devant Genest qui devient chrétien elle ne comprend pas. C'est un truc qui la dépasse complètement, et elle dit "Bien, au moins, si vous êtes vraiment chrétien, bien, faites semblant." Alors que Natalie, au contraire, elle dit, "C'est formidable que vous êtes chrétien." Moi aussi, il faut le dire . . . C'est totalement l'opposé. Il y en a l'une qui est complètement idéaliste, qui n'a pas du tout les pieds sur terre et l'autre qui est complètement terre à terre et qui est vraiment bien entrée dans la réalité. C'est très excitant et, au contraire, ce n'est pas forcément difficile; c'est un tremplin très exaltant.

Dioclétian

Ruoff: Quelle image, quel portrait, quel aspect du caractère voulez-vous souligner dans le rôle de Dioclétian?

Chaumette: J'ai essayé, sans aucune référence historique, mais j'ai essayé de montrer un Dioclétian qui est une espèce d'humaniste un peu léger, qui finalement est une espèce de monstre aussi; c'est quand même l'instrument d'un pouvoir autoritaire. . . . Je l'ai un petit peu rapproché de Ponce Pilate, en ai fait un homme de pouvoir, un homme d'autorité, mais qui, en même temps, s'en lave les mains. C'est un très bon proconsul; il exécute les ordres tels qu'il les a reçus, et lui, il essaie d'être le mieux possible au milieu de tout ça.

C'est une situation qu'on connaît de tout temps, de toutes époques. On a vu des proconsuls ou des gouverneurs de colonies, des gouverneurs de provinces qui, tout en appliquant les consignes du pouvoir central, essayaient de prendre le plus de plaisir à leur charge. Alors, c'est ce que j'ai essayé de donner. J'ai essayé de donner du départ l'aspect ludique du personnage qui, se trouvant confronté à un drame, à une tragédie qui est la conversion de Saint Genest, tout à coup est obligé de prendre des mesures définitives et expéditives, des mesures qui peut-être ne correspondent pas à sa propre sensibilité, mais il est l'instrument d'un pouvoir. Il se doit de faire appliquer ce pouvoir. C'est un bon fascho [fasciste].

Ruoff: Vous souvenez-vous des moments particuliers où le metteur en scène vous a dit de changer votre direction d'interprétation?

Chaumette: Oui, il y a eu des moments lorsqu'on avait défini les lignes générales. Il y avait des moments où, par exemple, je parle pour mon expérience personnelle, je lui faisais des propositions vers l'allégement de Dioclétian, par moments, je l'ai peut-être un petit peu trop tiré vers la comédie . . . vers un personnage un petit peu, pas grotesque, mais un petit peu extérieur. Alors, il me disait, non, c'est bien, l'idée est bonne, mais il faut que tu fasses attention aux moyens que tu emploies, parce qu'il ne faut pas non plus qu'on tombe dans la farce, il ne faut pas non plus qu'on tombe dans la caricature, des choses comme ça. Bien, certains jours, il me disait: "Ah, aujourd'hui, tu as le ton exact, alors maintenant, c'est à toi de le retrouver demain, etc." Voilà, c'est comme ça que le travail progressait. Sur des propositions que je faisais, il me faisait revenir en arrière, ou, au contraire, il me donnait un peu plus d'élan qu'il avait mis dans les rôles principaux.

Ruoff: Dans la pièce, comme Dioclétian vous dites: "Le comique ou ton art également succède--

Chaumette:

Est contre la tristesse un si pressant remède
Qu'un seul mot, quand tu veux, un pas, une action
Ne laisse plus de prise à cette passion

Et par une soudaine et sensible merveille
Jette la joie au coeur par l'oeil ou par l'oreille.
(1.5.245-50)

Ruoff: Vous souvenez-vous des gestes particuliers, des changements de voix que vous avez faits, que vous avez ajoutés pour souligner une action, une idée? Vous êtes conscient--

Chaumette: Non, je ne suis conscient de rien du tout. Je suis conscient de ce que le personnage dit à ce moment-là, je suis conscient des rapports de place et des rapports de lieu que le metteur en scène a souhaités. Le travail des répétitions, cela a été justement d'assimiler tout ça et à la représentation mon souci, c'est de le restituer avec le maximum de spontanéité et de présence au moment où j'ai à l'exprimer.

C'est une idée qui m'est chère d'ailleurs, et que je défends souvent, c'est que ce qu'il y a de merveilleux dans le théâtre c'est que c'est l'art de l'instantané. La représentation que nous avons jouée l'autre soir, que vous avez vue n'était sûrement pas la représentation que l'on avait donnée la fois précédente et n'était certainement pas la représentation que nous donnerons la prochaîne fois, parce que mille et mille choses peuvent arriver. Il faut donc que l'acteur soit bien dans sa peau d'homme pour parer à tous les aléas de la scène et à toutes les choses comme ça, alors si vous me demandez si je suis conscient d'un geste ou de ceci ou d'une inflexion, non, absolument pas.

Ruoff: Vous avez rencontré des difficultés en jouant ce rôle? Est-ce qu'il y avait quelque chose particulièrement difficile pour vous?

Chaumette: Oui, Oui, enfin, je crois que ça a été général, d'ailleurs. La plus grande difficulté, ça a été la difficulté du langage. Le langage est un peu archaïsant. Il est difficile et l'écriture de Rotrou n'est pas aussi rigoureuse et aussi limpide que celle de Corneille, par exemple, . . . et nous avons eu beaucoup de difficultés pour extirper le sens de certaines phrases. Les phrases sont quelquefois un peu compliquées. . . .

Il y a eu cette rupture à peu près à cette époque. C'est ce qu'on a appelé "La Querelle des anciens et des modernes" en France, où on fait débuter le français moderne de cette époque-là. Il y avait des gens qui avaient un langage archaïsant et puis des gens qui ont commencé à se pencher vers un français plus moderne. Bien sûr, le langage évolue tous les jours, vous le savez aussi bien que moi, cela doit être la même chose en anglais, mais cette époque-là était particulièrement sensible; entre le seizième et le dix-septième siècle, il y a eu une grande différence de langage; alors Rotrou est un petit peu tiré en arrière, par rapport, je vous dis à Corneille ou à Molière ou a des gens comme ça.

Ruoff: Quelle est votre orientation comme acteur? . . . On m'a dit qu'il y a des influences de M. Barrault ou de M. Artaud.

Chaumette: Bien sûr. Ça, je crois que c'est l'histoire du théâtre. Le théâtre n'est pas un art immobile. Le théâtre est un art qui est en perpétuelle évolution; il y a des tas de gens qui ont eu beaucoup d'influence dans le théâtre en France et qui les uns après les autres apportent des choses.

Moi, j'ai travaillé avec beaucoup de metteurs en scène et des metteurs en scène très différents. On peut parler effectivement de l'influence de Jean-Marie Chéreau, de Roger Blin, de Jean Vilar, comme on a parlé avant la guerre de l'influence du théâtre . . . avec Louis Jouvet. . . . Il y a actuellement des gens comme Antoine Vitez au Palais de Chaillot qui ont beaucoup d'influence sur les jeunes acteurs. . . .

Mais je crois que ce qu'il faut d'abord et avant tout c'est que l'acteur se mobilise complètement pour être disponible et être capable de travailler avec aussi bien Vitez que Steiger que Jean-Pierre Vincent que les gens qui sont bons metteurs en scène et qui attendent que les acteurs leur apportent quelque chose. Alors, plus l'acteur est maniable, plus il est souple, plus il a réfléchi à son métier, plus il a regardé les expériences des autres--moi, j'ai beaucoup travaillé avec des gens comme. . . Jean Vilar. . . .

Ruoff: Qu'est-ce vous avez fait comme préparation avant de jouer le rôle?

Chaumette: Je ne peux pas parler d'une préparation particulière, vous savez, quand on est un vieil acteur comme moi on a une expérience, une malléabilité, une disponibilité que l'on met au service d'un metteur en scène. C'est le metteur en scène qui cherche d'abord à trouver le personnage tel qu'il fera avancer son intrigue et qui en même temps cherche à enrichir l'acteur dans la mesure ou cet acteur peut avoir des lacunes. Je crois que le principe pour un professionnel, pour un acteur professionnel, c'est d'être disponible, d'être ouvert à toutes les suggestions et d'essayer de trouver en soi les ressources nécessaires, soit par ce qu'on appelle la mémoire affective, soit par ce qui est le sens de l'observation, soit ce qui est la réflexion etc. C'est à cet acteur d'essayer de satisfaire au maximum les exigences du metteur en scène.

Audience Reaction

Ruoff: Vous vous souvenez dans la pièce de Saint Genest des remarques, des commentaires du metteur en scène après avoir représenté la pièce plusieurs fois, des commentaires qui vous ont poussé à changer la façon de représentation, ou non?

Chaumette: Non, je dois dire que les remarques qu'il a faites la plupart du temps étaient des remarques positives

et louangeuses, en disant, "Et bien, maintenant, vous avez très bien assimilié les choses." . . . il y a toujours une période d'accoutumance si vous voulez, parce que le public modifie un petit peu l'émission de la pièce. Le public réagit, soit dans un sens, soit dans un autre, etc. ce qui fatalement influence l'acteur qui est sur le plateau. Il se dit, "Tiens, là, ils ont tendance à rire; il faut peut-être que j'évite qu'ils ne rient ou il a tendance à un peu s'appesantir un peu, s'endormir un peu. . . ." Il faut donc donner un peu plus de vigueur, un peu plus de panache, un peu plus de fougue.

Mais je dois dire qu'on a eu toujours des salles assez receptives pour cette pièce et que les dernières fois que le metteur en scène est venu il s'est déclaré tout à fait satisfait de l'évolution du spectacle. Il disait, non seulement c'est bien, mais vous avez très bien évolué, . . . vous avez évolué dans le bon sens, ce qui est un compliment formidable pour les acteurs parce qu'il y a beaucoup de spectacles, qui se décalent dans le mauvais sens. Là, si vous voulez, puisque vous me posez la question, à partir de ce spectacle, je peux vous dire que le metteur en scène s'est montré relativement satisfait des évolutions qu'il y avait eues dans le spectacle.

Ruoff: Dans la pièce, comme Marcelle, vous décrivez le comportement de quelques spectateurs. Marcelle dit:

> Je crains plus que la mort cette engeance idolâtre
> De lutins importuns qu'engendre le théâtre,
> Et que la qualité de la profession
> Nous oblige à souffrir avec discrétion.
> (2.3.361-64)

Est-ce que vous souffrez des importunités comme un devoir lié à votre profession?

Bergé: Pour moi maintenant, c'est ce qu'on appelle la promotion du spectacle. C'est maintenant une chose indispensable. Il y a un budget publicité dans le montage d'un spectacle qui est quelquefois énorme par rapport au coût total du spectacle quand il s'agit d'une petite compagnie ou d'une petite troupe. L'argent qui est réservé à la promotion du spectacle est souvent proportionellement assez énorme.

Alors, en quoi ça consiste pour un comédien? C'est qu'au moment où la comédienne aurait le plus besoin d'être tranquille et de n'avoir à s'occuper que de son rôle, de ses partenaires, de son metteur en scène, du spectacle, c'est à ce moment-là qu'il faut donner des interviews, faire des photos, passer à la télévision pour les journaux, pour la radio, etc.

Ça, pour moi, c'est vraiment une importunité parce que c'est vraiment le moment où, si j'ai du temps, j'ai envie vraiment, si je ne travaille pas, j'ai envie de me reposer, de me récupérer, de me détendre, mais non, à ce moment-là, il faut quelquefois traverser tout Paris pour aller faire une émission de radio, pas aller se coucher après la

répétition, pour aller faire une émission de télévision ou l'inverse. Il faut, quand on joue, quand on est fatigué pendant la représentation, il faut consacrer parfois une après-midi entière à faire un tournage pour la télévision. Il faut s'arrêter parce qu'il y a un journaliste qui vient. Enfin, bon, mais maintenant, c'est absolument indispensable pour assurer la promotion d'un spectacle, promotion sans laquelle un spectacle, même si c'est un spectacle de la Comédie Française, peut ne pas marcher. Voilà.

Ruoff: Et du point de vue du spectateur, est-ce que vous avez entendu quelques commentaires des spectateurs? Quelles étaient les réactions principales des spectateurs?

Chaumette: Il y a des réactions totalement divergentes; ce qui est très bien d'ailleurs. Il y a des gens qui adorent le spectacle, qui d'abord découvrent la pièce, parce que c'est une pièce peu connue du répertoire, qui découvrent la pièce, qui sont heureux de découvrir cette pièce, en particulier. Il y en a d'autres qui ont des restrictions en disant que c'était un peu froid, que ça manquait, peut-être un tout petit peu de passion, de clinquant, de pittoresque, quelque chose comme ça. Mais je crois que c'était la volonté du metteur en scène de faire une espèce d'épure et de laisser les acteurs s'exprimer par eux-mêmes--du metteur en scène et de son décorateur--d'ailleurs le décor est une espèce de lieu très simple et très ouvert. Mais il y a des gens--ça, on n'empêche pas les

opinions personnelles--il y a des gens qui souhaitent plus de spectaculaire, d'autres qui souhaitent, au contraire, une concentration plus grande. Donc, les avis sont parfois divergents, mais je crois que dans l'ensemble, le spectacle a été reconnu pour être un bon spectacle.

Ruoff: Quelle est l'influence des spectateurs. Vous êtes conscient des spectateurs ou non pendant une représentation?

Aumont: Dans une pièce comme cela on est surtout sensible à la sensation qu'on a du public plus ou moins attentif. Alors, évidemment quand on n'entend aucun bruit, même pas des gens qui toussent, on se dit, "Tiens, c'est bon" parce que ça c'est un assez bon signe. Vous me direz qu'ils sont peut-être en train de dormir, ça n'est pas exclu. Mais, non, non, sinon, évidemment dans une pièce comique on reçoit immédiatement; là, on ne peut pas attendre que les gens hurlent de rire, il n'y a pas de quoi. Alors, on ressent plus ou moins nettement l'attention du public.

Bon, alors, à part ça, ce qui nous est venu de la salle après les premières représentations, bon, c'est que ça n'est pas un succès public. Alors, c'est évidemment une indication négative puisque nous avons constaté qu'il y avait des gens qui partaient à l'entracte, que la salle n'est pas pleine du tout. Alors, évidemment, est-ce que ça modifie notre jeu? Non! Ça ne modifie pas notre jeu, mais disons que ça nous enlève un peu d'enthousiasme.

Ruoff: Et ce n'est pas la faute des acteurs que les gens partent à l'entracte. C'est une pièce--

Aumont: Je pense que c'est beaucoup la pièce.

Ruoff: C'est difficile pour l'assistance. . . . Je crois que la plupart des spectateurs ne comprennent pas très bien ce qui se passe.

Aumont: C'est sûr, bien sûr. Mais vous savez que la langue de Rotrou est très difficile à suivre, même pour des Français qui parlent, qui comprennent très bien le français. C'est très difficile à suivre, très compliqué.

Ruoff: Est-ce qu'il y a des réactions différentes de représentation à représentation. Par exemple, samedi soir, la salle n'était pas complète, mais quand-même il y avait beaucoup d'applaudissements, on a crié "Bravo!" "Bravo!" Ils ont beaucoup apprécié la représentation. Le jour d'après, le dimanche, j'ai vu Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard. Il y avait beaucoup de monde là, mais les gens, les gens ont applaudi, mais pas aussi fort que samedi soir. Il y avait une différence. Les gens samedi soir ont applaudi plus longuement, c'est-à-dire, qu'il n'y avait pas beaucoup de monde là, mais les gens qui sont restés jusqu'à la fin ont beaucoup apprécié la représentation.

Aumont: Vous voulez savoir si c'est toujours comme ça?

Ruoff: Oui.

Aumont: Non. Vous êtes très bien tombée. C'était une très bonne salle. C'est vrai que les gens avaient l'air très contents, vraiment. Ils applaudissaient beaucoup.

Ruoff: Et ils ont dit--

Aumont: "Bravo!" beaucoup. Absolument.

Ruoff: Et pendant l'entracte, j'ai entendu parler des gens; ils étaient contents.

Aumont: Mais écoutez. Vous êtes vraiment très bien tombée.

Ruoff: C'est-à-dire qu'à chaque représentation ça change.

Aumont: Mais là, c'est probablement le meilleur accueil du public qu'on ait eu depuis le début. J'ai pensé moi, en saluant, j'ai pensé que c'était vous qui étiez venue avec des amis.[17]

Ruoff: J'étais seule. Ma famille est aux Etats-Unis.

Ruoff: C'est seulement le point de vue du spectateur qui compte--

Chaumette: Oui, puis de toutes façons, deux spectateurs différents dans la même salle, le même soir, donc, deux spectateurs différents peuvent recevoir les choses de façon tellement différente qu'on ne peut pas cibler un spectateur en particulier ou une catégorie de spectateurs en particulier; ce qu'il faut c'est d'essayer d'avoir une expression universelle qui satisfasse le plus grand nombre

sans courir à des moyens vulgaires ou à des moyens de facilité.

Ruoff: Il y a toujours une tension entre la décision de plaire au spectateur et d'être fidèle au texte littéraire. Est-ce que vous avez senti une sorte de tension comme ça?

Chaumette: Sur le Saint Genest?

Ruoff: Oui.

Chaumette: Ah, non, sur le Saint Genest, pas du tout, pas du tout. Je trouve que les acteurs ont vraiment respecté le travail tel qu'il avait été fait et n'ont pas cherché à tirer à eux quoi que ce soit. Ça je trouve qu'en ce sens-là, c'est un spectacle exemplaire; je n'en dirais pas autant de tous les autres.

Ruoff: Il y a cependant de la communication de la part des spectateurs qui vous influence dans une représentation. Etes-vous conscient des spectateurs?

Chaumette: Bien sûr, bien sûr. C'est d'ailleurs ce que je vous disais tout à l'heure; c'est que le spectateur modifie l'acteur. Il est certain que ce que je vous disais, c'est général. Si le public a tendance à trop rire, on fait ce qu'il faut pour intérioriser le jeu et faire passer telle ou telle autre chose; mais ça, c'est à chaque représentation différent. C'est en cela que je dis toujours, c'est à l'acteur de bien sentir, de bien avoir la perception de ce qui se passe en face. On ne joue pas la comédie tout

seul. Enfin, . . . il y a l'auteur, l'acteur, et le spectateur; c'est à eux trois qu'ils font la pièce.

NOTES

[1] See 4-8 of this dissertation for the performance history.

[2] "Saint-Genest," Le Généraliste 1 avril 1988: N. pag. Unfortunately, Le Poulain died two days before the production opened; thus, he began and ended his theatrical career with the same play.

[3] Jean Rotrou, Le Véritable Saint Genest, ed. José Sanchez (Paris: Sand for the Comédie Française, 1988). The 1988 production follows the text produced for this Comédie Française staging. It is based on the 1648 edition rather than the 1647 edition which the editor feels is particularly filled with errors. Corrections made to the 1648 edition are indicated in brackets in the Comédie Française text.

[4] Rotrou, Saint Genest, ed. Sanchez 9. Steiger wished to incorporate the variant discovered by Jacques Schérer in 1950. The variant is included on 111-114 of this edition.

[5] According to my investigations of the 1647 edition located in the rare book room at the Bibliothèque Nationale and labeled Res. VF 277 and according to the 1648 edition YF 431 located at the "hémicycle" of the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Roman spectators are present during act 4 scenes 2, 3, 4 and 5. In these editions, scene four contains Genest's initial revelation of his conversion to Lentule. In the Sanchez edition, this revelation takes place in scene 5.

[6] Michel Aumont, interview by author, 9 May 1988, at the Comédie Française, Paris, tape recording. All further quotations of M. Aumont in this chapter are taken from this interview.

[7] François Chaumette, interview by author, 11 May 1988, at the Comédie Française, Paris, tape recording. All further quotations of M. Chaumette in this chapter are taken from this interview.

[8] André Steiger, interview by author, 12 May 1988, Geneva, tape recording of telephone interview. Further quotations of M. Steiger in this chapter are taken from this interview.

[9] Rousset "Le Comédien et son personnage," L'Intérieur et l'extérieur, 151-164.

[10] See John Lough, Seventeenth-Century French Drama: the Background (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979) 70-75. To represent Antiquity, actors and actresses dressed in costumes somewhat reminiscent of Greece or Rome; costumes were not known for historical authenticity. However, they did not simply wear the contemporary dress of seventeenth-century France. Lough says, "It seems clear that until well into the eighteenth-century the average theatregoer was quite content to see actors and actresses dressed in a vaguely Graeco-Roman costume even if the men wore it with wigs and plumed hats" (73). In the 1988 production, however, the Roman court is dressed in Louis XIII costumes; there is no attempt to relate their costumes to Rome.

[11] This fragment was inserted after line 371 and is on 111-114 of the Comédie Française edition of the play. The variant was discovered by Jacques Schérer in 1950 in the 1648 edition. I examined the variant in the 1648 edition at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and it is hand-written and simply inserted. Sanchez points out that this fragment has not been definitively attributed to Rotrou. See the footnote in the Comédie Française edition, 111.

[12] Francine Bergé, interview by author, Tape recording, Paris, France, May 1989. All further quotations of Mlle Bergé in this chapter are taken from this interview.

[13] Rotrou, Saint Genest, ed. Sanchez 4.5.1247. All further references, unless indicated, refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text in parentheses.

[14] Jean-Loup Rivière, "L'Heur et l'art," Comédie Française mars 1988: 20.

[15] Francine Bergé is speaking of the variant included in the Sanchez Comédie Française edition of the play.

[16] Rotrou, Saint Genest, ed. Sanchez, 111.

[17] Jean-Pierre Dubreuil, "Jean de Rotrou, un Drouais à la Comédie-Française," La République du Centre 15 mars 1988: N. pag. According to this article, the city of Dreux, Rotrou's birthplace and place of heroic death during an epidemic in 1650, reserved buses and tickets for the representation on May 7, 1988 referred to by Aumont. This probably accounts for the enthusiastic response that night.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights fundamental political, artistic, literary, and performance aspects influencing theatrical production in mid-seventeenth-century France, and it anchors Rotrou's Le Véritable Saint Genest to baroque theatrical representation. As a result, we are prepared to see how the 1988 Comédie Française production differs in perspective from a baroque staging emphasizing Genest's creation of his new being, a Christian believer and martyr. Reflecting the baroque tendency to promote diversity and change and to incorporate the spectator in the spectacle, Rotrou, through the play-within-the-play structure, focuses on an actor's talent for spontaneity, improvisation, and facile metamorphosis as examples for spectators to emulate while assimilating Genest's passion and then enacting their own spontaneous conversions to Christianity.

In contrast, Steiger, in order to appeal to twentieth-century audiences, envisions the play as a commentary on tolerance versus intolerance and on theatrical representation. The 1647 dramatic text, the 1988 theatrical production, and the interviews reveal that the performance itself creates and communicates meaning through the

interaction of the dramatic text, performance text, and audience reaction.

In Rotrou's text, Genest praising Corneille's plays, distinguishes between the dramatic text and the performance and incorporates audience reaction in his assessment of the text:

> Ces poèmes sans prix, où son illustre main
> D'un pinceau sans pareil, a peint l'esprit romain,
> Rendront de leurs beautés votre oreille idolâtre,
> Et sont aujourd'hui l'âme et l'amour du théâtre.[1]

Genest's words, "main," "pinceau," and "a peint" describe Corneille's creation of the dramatic text while Genest's reference to "oreille idolâtre" points out his awareness of the performance itself and audience reaction. Why does the audience experience a reaction "idolâtre"? The actors and actresses perform well, communicate meaning, and arouse the passions of the audience; as a result, they stimulate positive audience reaction.[2] Dioclétian identifies the abilities that contribute to Genest's success as an actor:

> Avec confusion j'ai vu cent fois tes feintes
> Me livrer malgré moi de sensibles atteintes;
> En cent sujets divers, suivant tes mouvements,
> J'ai reçu de tes feux de vrais ressentiments;
> Et l'empire absolu que tu prends sur une âme
> M'a fait cent fois de glace et cent autres de flamme.
> (1.5.233-38)

Rotrou, through Dioclétian, verifies Genest's facility in transformation from one character to another and the

powerful influence and even control an actor exerts on the spectator's emotions.

Since Rotrou takes the spectators behind the scenes to examine some technical aspects of production, he demonstrates the importance of stage setting and decoration. The privileged-position audience viewing the entire play witnesses the creation of the performance text.[3] While speaking to the stage designer, Genest critiques the design:

> Il est beau, mais encore avec peu de dépense,
> Vous pouviez ajouter à sa magnificence,
> N'y laisser rien d'aveugle, y mettre plus de jour,
> Donner plus de hauteur aux travaux d'alentour,
> En marbrer les dehors, en jasper les colonnes,
> Enrichir les tympans, leurs cimes, leurs couronnes,
> Mettre en vos coloris plus de diversité,
> En vos carnations plus de vivacité,
> Draper mieux ces habits, reculer ces paysages,
> Y lancer des jets d'eau, renfronder leurs ombrages,
> Et surtout en la toile ou vous peignez vos cieux
> Faire un jour naturel, au jugement des yeux;
> Au lieu que la couleur m'en semble un peu meurtrie
> (2.1.314-25)

Genest's terminology and description are based on the essay "De la platte peinture" in the Jesuit René Binet's Essai des merveilles de nature;[4] far stupir, to astonish the spectators in order to create pleasure, is Binet's ultimate goal. Genest's description identifies his interpretation of stage design with baroque aesthetics by reinforcing the importance of creating magnificence, an interplay of light and shadow, diversity, proper coloring, and trompe l'oeil.

In contrast to Genest's description of an ornate baroque staging including water fountains, countryside views,

and tympanums ornamented with statues, Claude Lemaire, the stage and costume designer for the 1988 production, attempts to interpret the baroque through a stark, barren stage setting. According to Claude Lemaire "le baroque naît finalement de la mise en relation, de façon artificielle, de formes différentes perçues sous des angles de vue différents."[5] Theoretically, her perspective recalls baroque poetry water reflections in which, for example, the viewers see birds swimming and fish flying.[6] To illustrate the baroque structure of the dramatic text, the play-within-the-play, she devised a "péristyle classique en amorce" which surrounds a space reminiscent of a theatre in Antiquity. This space corresponds to the space of the interior play. The Roman court sits on the stepped rows of seats while Genest and his troupe perform in the arena. She juxtaposes two historical eras, Roman Antiquity and the seventeenth century in France. In addition, the antique theatre is placed on diagonal to the series of classical columns. The stage designer specifically intends to distort and create different viewpoints:

> j'ai aussi voulu travailler sur une sorte d'anamorphose . . . sa plantation [the antique theatre] est en diagonale par rapport au péristyle et commande donc un autre point de vue. Le geste anamorphique me paraît éminemment baroque.[7]

Above the stage, rays of light periodically accent a very blue sky.

The pagans and the Christians, in Le Véritable Saint Genest and in the interior play "Le Martyre d'Adrian," believe that the heavens intervene in the real world.[8] Using the technique of foregrounding, in which the author or director focuses on a conspicuous setting or unusual lighting, Rotrou highlights the action of "le Ciel" by emphasizing its striking and spectacular interaction with the world.[9] "Le Ciel" becomes another actor in the play. In act 2, scene 4 the stage directions state: "Le ciel s'ouvre avec des flammes, et une voix s'entend, qui dit." In act 4 the "merveilleux chrétien" intervenes once again in the form of flames and an angel, and Genest joyfully describes the celestial apparition:

> Un ministre céleste, avec une eau sacrée,
> Pour laver mes forfaits fend la voûte azurée;
> Sa clarté m'environne, et l'air de toutes parts
> Résonne de concerts, et brille à mes regards.
> (4.5.1251-54)

The influence of God and the supernatural permeates the dramatic text and functions as an important part of the "baroque de persuasion."

Although there is no description of the staging of Le Véritable Saint Genest in Le Mémoire de Mahelot, authors and stage representation in the first half of the seventeenth century cater to the public's taste for the "merveilleux," both pagan and Christian.[10] Angels on stage, voices heard, magnificence and display all contribute to a play's success.

While describing the setting of Rotrou's Hercule mourant (1634), Laurent Mahelot, stage designer and machinist at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, highlights its magnificence, the importance of painting, and the "merveilleux." He states:

> Le theatre doit estre suberbe. . . . Plus, au milieu du theatre, doit avoir une salle à jour, bien parée de ballustres et plaques d'argent et autres ornemens de peinture. Au cinquiesme acte, un tonnerre, et aprés le ciel s'ouvre et Hercule descend du ciel en terre dans une nue; le globe doit estre emply des douze signes et nues et les douze vents, des estoilles ardantes, soleil en escarboucle transparente et autres ornemens à la fantaisie du feinteur.[11]

Lavish decor machine plays, such as Pierre Corneille's Andromède (1650), also exhibit the baroque use of coextensive space which introduces the supernatural into the world.

Incorporating the Christian supernatural, references to angels and the Divine Presence in the dramatic text and stage directions in the 1647, 1648, and 1666 editions[12] of Le Véritable Saint Genest reflect religious depictions in baroque painting and architecture. Examples such as Poussin's "The Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus" (c. 1628) and the baroque church Val-de-Grâce (1645-1667), in which the baldachin points to Pierre Mignard's fresco celebrated by Molière in his poem "La Gloire de Val-de-Grâce" (1669), incorporate open heavens inhabited by angels, saints and God. According to a lease of 1616, the Hôtel de Bourgogne contained a theatre, often called the theatre of Jupiter, which had a small stage above suitable for heavenly intervention.[13] The

1645 staging at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, listed by Laurent in Le Mémoire de Mahelot probably visually emphasized God's intervention in the world to satisfy the spectators' thirst for the spectacular. At the same time, however, a visual representation of the Christian supernatural on stage parallels baroque artistic creation of the era and reinforces the "appel créatif" to believe evident in the text of the play. Through his stage directions calling for a heavenly Voice and the appearance of flames, Rotrou introduces the divine into the natural world and encourages the spectator to envision the joys and glory of eternal life, to assimilate with Genest's passion, and to achieve this happiness with God.

The Sanchez Comédie Française edition of the dramatic text retains the stage directions in act 2, scene 4: "Le ciel s'ouvre avec des flammes, et une voix s'entend, qui dit" and in act 4 "Regardant au ciel, dont l'on jette quelques flammes," but the stark and minimal 1988 staging does not include the spectacular visual manifestation of God's presence in the form of angels and flames. Instead, the audience hears a Voice and organ music and sees rays of light in the sky. During his interview,[14] the actor François Chaumette (Dioclétian) explained the absence of flames; in Catholic teaching flames represent the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. According to his testimony, symbols may change because they lose their signification

through the course of time as audience values and beliefs change. As a result, directors are forced to find equivalents that are understood by contemporary audiences.

Rotrou recognizes the existence of changing value systems and points out differing spectator responses to theatrical signs. For example, both the Roman audience admiring Genest's acting in "Le Martyre d'Adrian" and the real audience viewing the entire play, witness the appearance of flames in act 4, but the two audiences react differently. Semiotics explains that the religious, social, moral, and ideological values of the actors and spectators determine their understanding of theatrical signs such as the flames. These values color the spectators' interpretations of every aspect of performance: the costumes, the set, the lighting, and the actor's body movements and speech.[15]

Flames evoke different connotations for a seventeenth-century French audience than they would for a pagan Roman audience. For the Catholic world flames symbolize the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and, in Rotrou's play, they function as a visual manifestation of God's intervention in the world. The Christian French spectators notice and understand the cues leading to Genest's metamorphosis into a Christian believer yearning for martyrdom in order to attain eternal glory in God's realm. In contrast to the Roman

spectators, they observe Genest's reaction to the initial appearance of flames during the rehearsal, and they understand the significance of the flames. Finally, the Christian spectators value conversion and admire martyrs.[16] They attend the performance with a positive and receptive mindset to Genest's conversion which predisposes them to notice cues leading to his transformation. Since the Roman spectators do not view evidence of Genest's possible conversion during the rehearsal and since they are accustomed to viewing his superb portrayal of Christian martyrs, Dioclétian and his court do not suspect their illustrious performer's impending conversion.[17] They do not recognize that illusion has become reality.

Dioclétian's blindness to Genest's conversion exemplifies a spectator's theatrical incompetence. Keir Elam states:

> The spectator is called upon not only to employ a specific dramatic competence (supplementing his theatrical competence involving knowledge of the generic and structural principles of the drama) but also to work hard and continuously at piecing together into a coherent structure the partial and scattered bits of dramatic information that he receives from different sources. The effective construction of the dramatic world and its events is the result of the spectator's ability to impose order upon a dramatic content whose expression is in fact discontinuous and incomplete.[18]

While viewing a performance, the spectator is compelled to free his mind from the limiting connotations associated with his own background in order to seek and explore all possible

cues and meanings. In addition, a theatrical performance demands the constant and alert attention of the spectator who does not have the luxury of continuously re-reading the text.[19] This is especially relevant in Genest's performance of Adrian's conversion and martyrdom because the performance subverts the dramatic text and illusion becomes reality.

In order to appreciate the 1988 staging of Le Véritable Saint Genest, the spectators must appreciate baroque aesthetics, then understand it in relationship to a modern interpretation of this rarely-performed play, and finally, untangle confusing performance cues. Five major innovations contributed to the spectators' confusion and discontent.

1. The stepped semi-circular rows of seats placed on a diagonal within a classical peristyle reflect the play-within-the-play structure and the baroque interest in changing forms and differing points of view. However, the average spectator misses the point of this sophisticated interpretation and views the play as a classical representation.

2. Since the director Steiger does not focus on Genest's response to grace, his conversion, and his attempt to convert others, he suppresses the magnificence, the "merveilleux," and the far stupir characteristic of baroque theatrical production so evident in Rotrou's dramatic text. The opening of the heavens and the appearance of angels, saints, and God in his glory, although not expected to lead

to the spectators' conversion, might create much more audience appeal, be visually more exciting, add to an understanding of Genest's conversion, and function as a relief from the static character of the play.

3. According to the testimony of Michel Aumont (Genest/Adrian) and François Chaumette (Dioclétian), members of the Roman court dressed in Louis XIII costumes confused the spectators.

4. The added manuscript fragment, discovered by Schérer and inserted in act 2, scene 3, bewildered spectators who had read a standard edition of the play.

5. In act 4, the audience did not understand the departure of the Roman spectators from the stage before the critical point of Genest's conversion.

The 1988 production challenges the dramatic competence of the French spectator, schooled in seventeenth-century classical dramatic theory and literature, to decipher Steiger's subtle cues intended to lead the spectator to question his own tolerance of beliefs contradictory to his own.

Records of paid attendance from the Archives of the Comédie Française confirm the play's poor reception, probably the result of the spectators' inability to understand and relate to the production. During its opening month, February, 1988, paid attendance reached its peak at 50.80% of capacity. March attendance was 45.10%; April, 35.10%;

May 33%; and June, 45.90%. Attendance at Le Véritable Saint Genest was consistently the lowest of the eleven productions staged in the first six months of 1988.[20]

In addition to the dramatic text's archaic language, a number of play reviews pinpoint aspects of staging that detract from the play's success. Claude Lemaire's set, the "théâtre désaxé" of Antiquity placed in the classical peristyle, attempts to transform Rotrou's baroque text into a visual representation of the artificiality of fiction and to highlight Steiger's idea of the baroque as a "tourment des formes," for example, comedy within a tragedy or the play-within-the-play. She explains: "Ce qu'il fallait mettre en évidence, c'était l'espace littéraire de ce texte, composé de la superposition de deux registres de formes, de deux fictions, de deux géométries."[21] Many spectators, including experienced reviewers, do not see the staging as an expression of the baroque. André Lafargue in Le Parisien, remarks that the staging "paraît davantage respecter la forme de l'oeuvre que son fond."[22] Although he compliments Michel Aumont's acting, Pierre Marcabru in Le Figaro, March 7, 1988 calls the staging "austère et glaciale" and states that the production "ne doit rien au baroque. . . . On aurait souhaité, et le texte le permettait, un peu plus de liberté, d'audace, de fantaisie."[23] Régine Koppe criticizes Steiger and Lemaire for a sceneography "aux antipodes du baroque" which results in a "mise-en-scène assez froide" while Le

Généraliste of April 1, confirms her opinion by describing the 1988 interpretation as "claire, épurée, toute classique."[24]

The March 18th edition of Le Nouvel Observateur explains the play's poor reception:

> Méconnue, jamais jouée, la tragédie chrétienne de Rotrou exigeait une mise en scène qui l'éclairât. Il fallait montrer, comme l'indique bien ce contemporain de Corneille, la différence entre la pièce édifiante que joue l'acteur Genest devant la cour de Dioclétien et le reste de l'action. Il fallait montrer les apparitions célestes qui aident Genest à se convertir et exprimer, malgré la préciosité des vers, la violence de ce martyrologe. Au lieu de cela, tout est joué sur le même ton.[25]

Similar to the Roman spectators unable to recognize and comprehend Genest's conversion because of their differing value system and inadequate and misconstrued cues, the 1988 French viewers, formed by a secular society, need explicit visual and auditory expressions of the "merveilleux" to follow and understand Genest's conversion. In his interview Michel Aumont points out that the director was not attempting to show an awakening and evolution in Genest's faith; he was trying to demonstrate the problem of an actor who becomes "un peu fou" and identifies with his role.[26] Consequently, it is not surprising that Steiger and Lemaire do not capitalize on the "merveilleux chrétien" to dazzle the spectators and facilitate their comprehension of the play.

Play reviews confirm Michel Aumont's testimony. André Gunthert in Politis, March 17, 1988, identifies three interwoven themes in Rotrou's play: questions of faith, performance, and absolutism. Basing his assessment on Steiger's "exacte mesure de l'acuité de ces questionnements" on performance and absolutism, he considers Le Véritable Saint Genest "la toute relative réussite de Steiger" and calls the production a "discret joyau." However, he points out the staging does not elucidate Genest's conversion:

> La question de la grâce nous demeure assurément plus lointaine et ni la mise en scène, trop mesurée, ni l'interprétation de Michel Aumont ne nous permettent d'en comprendre l'ineffable mystère.[27]

Odile Quirot in Le Monde supports Gunthert's assessment:

> La 'sensible et sainte volupté' qui saisit le comédien Genest au moment de sa conversion n'a visiblement pas passionné outre mesure le metteur en scène André Steiger. Michel Aumont ne la joue pas, mais reste sur un même registre pendant la quasi-totalité du spectacle: passé le premier moment, emphatique, où il fait que porter sa voix, face au public, comme il était de mise autrefois à la cour, il persiste dans une attitude ambiguë, à mi-chemin du comédien qui ne sait pas son rôle par coeur, et du converti. . . . La tragédie repose sur lui, il ne la transfigure pas.[28]

La Croix, March 16, 1988, emphasizes that the dramatic text tackles "résolument le thème de l'illumination et de la grâce dans la plus pure tradition du XVII^{e} siècle"; however, Steiger's et Lemaire's staging does not highlight this theme:

> Jeu des miroirs, de l'illusion, de la représentation, théâtre dans le théâtre, perte de l'acteur en quête de lui-même dans l'imaginaire, dédoublement de la personalité en attendant Pirandello . . . les thèmes se mêlent, multiples, denses, dans une étrange confusion: Cette confusion . . . André Steiger a choisi de la contenir, sinon même de l'ignorer. Et de fait, emprisonée dans le décor savant, peut-être un peu froid mais fort beau de Claude Lemaire, la tragédie de Rotrou y perd de son pouvoir de persuasion. Evidemment, la mise en scène d'André Steiger, très policée sans folie, ni spiritualité, tient complètement l'émotion à distance.[29]

According to this reviewer, the 1988 production lacks spirituality, suppresses the emotional involvement of the spectators characteristic of the baroque, and consequently, loses the power of persuasion evoked by the "baroque de persuasion."

Steiger justifies this production in his explanation of Rotrou's theatre and its relationship to the baroque:

> La fiction, chez Rotrou, est en train de se faire . . . il n'y pas clôture du sens. . . . Le théâtre de Rotrou est un théâtre allusif: il ne s'agit pas d'y faire signifier chaque élément de la représentation, mais d'accumuler un nombre suffisant de traces de signes pour que chaque spectateur puisse faire de ce qu'il voit une lecture qui lui est propre. D'ailleurs, dans cette pièce, tout peut toujours être envisagé sous des angles différents. C'est le propre même du baroque.[30]

Similar to Rotrou in his portrayal of Roman spectator response versus Christian response, Steiger recognizes that the spectator brings his background to a performance, de-

codes the cues, and interprets the dramatic information according to his value system and dramatic competence.

Since he hopes to relate to a contemporary secular society, Steiger does not address the play's "appel créatif à la croyance." Because striking elements of the "merveilleux chrétien," such as the appearance of angels and flames are eliminated, the spectacle and the far stupir characteristic of the dramatic text and of the baroque disappear in his staging. For Steiger, this play highlights theatrical representation and functions as a commentary on intolerance. Several scenes before the critical moment when Genest's conversion takes place, the Roman spectators leave the stage, and they do not return until immediately after his moment of conversion.[31] The present-day spectators are to mentally take their place and ask how they themselves would react not only in the face of religious, but also political, or moral convictions completely opposite to their own. According to Steiger, "Saint Genest est une pièce qui ne délivre pas de message; elle ne dit pas ce que la salle doit penser. . . . Il s'agit donc de renvoyer les spectateurs à leurs propres interrogations."[32] His production attempts to lead the spectators into the play, to have them identify with the Romans and question their own tolerance to divergent views.

The 1988 Le Véritable Saint Genest does not ask the spectator to be moved by Genest's passion, does not high-

light the value of the actor's spontaneity and receptivity to sense impressions as opposed to his dependence on reason and rules, and does not encourage the spectator to assimilate Genest's act of faith and become a believer. Changes in audience perspectives and values through the course of almost three hundred and fifty years influence the director's and decorator's interpretation and staging of the dramatic text and spectator comprehension and appreciation of the performance.

NOTES

[1] Rotrou, Saint Genest, ed. J. Schérer 1.5.283-86 emphasis added. All further references in this chapter, unless indicated, refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text in parentheses.

[2] Ruoff 212-213.

[3] Ruoff 215.

[4] René François Binet, "De la platte peinture," Essai des merveilles de nature, et de plus nobles artifices (Rouen: n.p., 1621) 190-207. For example, Binet points out the importance of shadows and night to contrast with day-light and make the colors and day more brilliant. "Ombres, ou ombrager les ouvrages; faire des nuits, des ombrages pour faire esclatter les autres; reculer les paisages bien loing, & en petit volume. L'ombragement & le jour s'entremeslent, afin que la diversité des couleurs face rehausser & arrondir l'une & l'autre" (194-95). Floeck in L'esthétique de la diversité (12) calls Binet's work "un véritable mine d'or pour chaque spécialiste baroque." According to Floeck, in these Essais Binet glorifies "la diversité de la création . . . comme expression de la toute puissance et de l'immensité du Dieu créateur" while his work "représente à la fois un point culminant dans la dissolution de l'idée d'ordre et d'harmonie" (35).

[5] Terje Sinding, "Le tourment des Formes," Comédie Française mars 1988: 7.

[6] See 143-147 of this dissertation.

[7] Sinding 7.

[8] Speaking to Camille, Valérie concludes that a dream can function as an oracle and points out the influence of "le Ciel" in the world:

> Le Ciel, comme il lui plaît, nous parle sans obstacle;
> S'il veut, la voix d'un songe est celle d'un oracle.
> (1.1.9-10)

Near the beginning of act 2, after discussing the scenery with the stage designer, Genest rehearses the Christian Adrian's lines:

Si la gloire te plaît, l'occasion est belle;
La querelle du Ciel à ce combat t'appelle.
(2.2.337-38)

[9] Ruoff 217-18.

[10] See 50-58 of this dissertation for a description of baroque staging and the Abbé d'Aubignac's guidelines for staging and decoration.

[11] Lancaster, Le Mémoire de Mahelot 102-03.

[12] The 1647 edition, Réserve Yf 277 is located in the rare book room of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and the 1648 edition Yf 431 and the 1666 editions are both located at the "hémicycle" in the B.N. All three contain the following explicit stage directions:
1. Act 2 - "Le Ciel s'ouvre, avec des flâmes & une voix s'entend qui dit."
2. Act 4 - "Regardant au ciel dont l'on jette quelques flâmes."

[13] Dubois 27.

[14] See dissertation 135.

[15] Elam 10.

[16] Ruoff 218.

[17] Ruoff 219.

[18] Elam 98-99.

[19] Ruoff 222.

[20] If we examine the February and March attendance records of Noëlle Guibert, the "Conservatrice" of the Archives of the Comédie Française, it is evident that Le Véritable Saint Genest was not a popular success.

FEBRUARY

Esther	71.00%
M. De Pourceaugnac et La Poudre aux yeux	76.30%
La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu	91.30%
Le Véritable Saint Genest	50.80%

MARCH

M. De Pourceaugnac La Poudre aux yeux	88.10%
Esther	81.10%
La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu	88.20%
La Songe d'une nuit d'été	85.70%
Le Véritable Saint Genest	45.10%

[21] Sinding 7.

[22] André Lafargue, "Le Véritable Saint Genest," Le Parisien 7 mars 1988: N. pag.

[23] Pierre Marcabru, "Une solennelle rhétorique," Le Figaro 7 mars 1988: N. pag.

[24] "Saint-Genest," Le Généraliste 1 avril 1988: N. pag.

[25] "A Voir," Le nouvel Observateur 18 mars, 1988: N. pag.

[26] See 187 of this dissertation.

[27] André Gunthert, "Le Poulain, comédien et martyr," Politis 17 mars 1988: N. pag.

[28] Odile Quirot, "Une Curiosité," Le Monde 9 mars 1988: N. pag.

[29] "Le Martyre du théâtre," La Croix l'Evénement 16 mars 1988: N. pag.

[30] Sinding 8.

[31] See Aumont 181 of this dissertation. He notes that the present-day spectators do not understand the disappearance of the Roman spectators. As a result, today's spectators probably do not place themselves in the position of the Romans to question their own tolerance levels.

[32] Sinding 8.

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