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The Major Themes and their Presentation in the
Plays of Jean Giraudoux

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the
University of Durham by D.R.Garrard, B.A.

September 1973

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ABSTRACT

Title:- The Major Themes and their Presentation in the Plays of Jean Giraudoux.

First of all in this piece of research, the notion of 'Tragedy' is discussed and Giraudoux's conception of it is revealed. Rather than use the word 'Tragedy' it is better to say that his plays are 'Debates'. The major debate being that between Humanity and Destiny.

Then the concept of the Supernatural is studied. Giraudoux demonstrates the impotence and apparent immorality of God and the Gods. There is, however, a strong feeling of an exterior force, Fate, which must not be disturbed, and which is symbolised by the sleeping tiger in La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu. It becomes clear that this force stems from within man himself, and is revealed especially in his inner desire for war. Some characters become suddenly aware of the role which they must play, and they are known as the 'elect', and the moment when they become aware of this role is described by the verb 'se déclarer'.

War is the next theme studied, and it is seen that the only hope for mankind in overcoming his warlike nature lies in the power of love, and in particular in the power of the 'couple'.

What Giraudoux expects from the 'couple' is examined next, and what special type of woman is required to form this 'couple' is discovered by studying the female characters in each of the plays.

The fifth chapter deals with the major symbol in Giraudoux's work, Dawn. It is the symbol of his hope for the future of mankind.

In the sixth chapter the principles upon which Giraudoux bases his theatre are examined, and this is followed by a study of the linguistic and theatrical devices which he employs in order to present his themes. The effect of his partnership with Louis Jouvet is also seen, and in conclusion the relationship of Giraudoux to the dramatists who have preceded him and succeeded him is considered.

INTRODUCTION.

Sometimes one is instinctively attracted by a work of art without being able to say precisely what it is that attracts one to it. This was the experience of the author of this study in the case of the play La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu by Jean Giraudoux. It first appealed when the text was simply read and studied, but something was felt to be missing. It was only after being able to see the play staged that the full magic was experienced. This instinctive attraction acted as the springboard for this study, and it is for this reason that it is mentioned here. The author was at once aware of the risk of being too subjective in his analysis, and has therefore tried not to express his personal feelings except in the Conclusion. The fact remains that to appreciate Giraudoux's theatre one must be a 'believer', since it will be seen that his theatre is a kind of religious communication. If Giraudoux is to be criticised at all, it is that he is sometimes 'précieux', and his imagery is often either obscure or too fanciful. It cannot be denied, however, that he achieved his purpose, which was to create a universe in which the struggles of humanity could be seen in their various forms, to view the world, as it were, from a terrasse. Closer scrutiny only serves to increase one's admiration for the penetrating intellect of this remarkable dramatist.

There are two major aims to this study. Firstly to trace the major themes which Giraudoux treats in his plays, to see how they develop, to see whether they are common to most of his work and whether they undergo any change with time. Secondly to show how these themes are presented, what theatrical or linguistic devices are employed in their presentation.

There are also two secondary considerations. Firstly to try to see why a not very popular and rather 'précieux' novelist and essayist

should turn to the theatre at the age of 46 and become a highly successful dramatist. Secondly to see how Giraudoux fits into the over all picture of twentieth century French drama.

The first theme treated has been given the title 'Tragedy & Debate'. It will be seen that Giraudoux only gave the title 'Tragedy' to one of his plays, Judith. To understand what is the essence of Giraudoux's theatre it will be necessary to consider how Giraudoux's concept of tragedy differed from that of the Greeks. Tragedy, for Giraudoux, arises out of the moment when man is confronted with his destiny. He freezes the action at a moment when man can be seen to be caught between two equally valid but mutually exclusive courses of action. Out of this situation arise a number of conflicts or debates. It is for this reason that it is preferable to talk of Giraudoux's plays as 'Debates'. The chief debate which is played out in so many different forms is that between Humanity and Destiny. It is essential to begin with this theme, because it is so fundamental to understanding the other themes.

If Greek tragedy involves man being confronted by an exterior force called 'Fate', then the next theme which must be studied is the role of the supernatural in Giraudoux's work. It will be seen that he deliberately mocks God and the Gods and shows their impotence. They are referred to in Sodome et Gomorrhe as 'stériles', and as 'inconsicients' and as 'grandes indifférences' in Electre. The idea that they can control man's fate is totally discounted, but there is still present the strong feeling of an exterior force against which man is powerless. In La Guerre de Troie, it is referred to as a sleeping tiger. It is implied in all the plays that if the tiger, or the Gods or the natural order, is disturbed, then the consequences for man could be disastrous.

It becomes clear that Giraudoux believes that man creates his own fate or destiny, albeit unknown to himself. There are certain characters

who receive a moment of enlightenment, when they see clearly the course which lies before them. This moment is described by the verb 'se déclarer', and these characters are known as the 'elect'. Fate is shown to be comprised of man's past actions and thoughts and of his inner desires, both expressed and unexpressed. The most obvious example of this is seen in man's desire for war.

Now that the more philosophical aspects of Giraudoux's work have been treated, it is possible to look at two rather more straightforward themes, War and Love.

War is seen to be the theme of La Guerre de Troie in particular, but it is a theme which occurs also in other plays, especially in Siegfried and Electra. The problem of Franco/ German relations is important to Giraudoux, not only because it was the desire to treat this theme effectively which made him turn to the theatre in 1928 to write Siegfried, but also because of the times in which he lived and wrote, in between the two World Wars. War, it is suggested, is due to man's inner desire for it, and the atmosphere in a city before a war is seen to be heavy with self-deception and false values. It becomes evident that the one hope for man in combating 'Fate' in general and war in particular, lies in the power of love, especially in the love of the human 'couple'. This theme is treated in chapter 4.

Since many of the characters known as the 'elect' are women, this chapter also studies the female characters in order to see what qualities they possess or lack. In order to put these characters into the proper perspective, the role of the 'couple' is dealt with first. This theme reaches its fullest expression, and its purest, in Amphitryon 38 and Intermezzo. Sometimes it is treated with great optimism and sometimes Giraudoux is more pessimistic about the power of the 'couple', but his basic belief in it never wavers.

These are the four major themes which run through all the plays. There is, however, one other theme which is dealt with in chapter 5. The theme of Dawn. In fact Dawn is just a major image or symbol which has an important place in Giraudoux's thinking. It certainly strikes one as occurring repeatedly in the plays. It is seen to be the chief symbol of the hope which Giraudoux has for the future of humanity, and would, therefore, seem to merit a chapter to itself.

The other symbols which Giraudoux uses are dealt with in chapter 6, 'Style & Technique'. To study a style which is so exquisitely elegant, and so imaginative and intuitive, could form the basis of a separate study, and therefore, for the present purposes it must suffice to trace the main principles of his method of presentation and the linguistic devices which he employs, in general terms. Fortunately he expressed many of his views on the role of the theatre in L'Impromptu de Paris. This is studied first in order to discover what his aims and objectives are, and it is followed by an examination of the techniques which he uses to present the themes which have been studied in the previous chapters. It is, above all, interesting to note the part Louis Jouvet, Valentine Tessier and Madeleine Ozeray played in his characterisation, and what a debt he owed to Jouvet for his interpretation of the text.

Finally, it is the purpose of the Conclusion to summarise the essence of Giraudoux's magic and to see how he relates to the great dramatists who preceded him and what influence he may have had upon those who have succeeded him. It will be seen that Giraudoux possessed five great qualities, which when balanced perfectly produce a great dramatic experience. Balance is, perhaps, the key word to unlock the secrets of Giraudoux. The two poles between which his characters are held erect balance each other. Nowhere does he provide answers to the questions which he raises. This balance is achieved by a series of paradoxes which

combine to create a perfect harmony.

The five qualities are; 1) He chooses great and universal themes, not ones of immediate significance, which enable him to present universal truths.

2) Aided often by knowing who the actors or actresses were for whom he was writing, his characterisation was excellent.

3) He had the ability to imagine plot and its development.

4) He used great imagination, and he had control over his style and its effect upon the audience.

5) He understood and relied upon the interaction of the three essential parts of any dramatic experience, all of which must be balanced the one with the other. The text, the actors and the audience.

In conclusion it must be pointed out ~~what part~~ the early novels have played in this research. The answer is that the piece of research is concerned with the plays, and it is the view of this study that there is such a vast difference in quality between the novels and the plays that the novels are only interesting in so far as the germs of the themes later to be treated in the plays can sometimes be found in them. Where this has been considered worthy of note, it has been noted. To justify the opinion expressed above, and to compare in detail the novels and the plays would again necessitate a separate study, and is a subject which is far beyond the scope of this work.

Chapter 1

TRAGEDY & DEBATE.

It is surprising when many of Giraudoux's themes are taken from Classical models, which have been treated by other writers as tragedies, that he should have given the title 'tragedy' to only one of his plays, Judith. It is clearly important, therefore, to examine what is generally meant by the term 'tragedy', and what Giraudoux's notion of it was.

According to the Oxford Classical Dictionary, the tragedy of the three great Greek poets, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides and their contemporaries was:

always religious in the sense that the interest was not simply in the action as an exciting series of events, nor simply in the study of striking characters (though both these interests were strong), but in the meaning of the action as exemplifying the relation of man to the powers controlling the universe, and the relation of these powers to his destiny.....the spectator or reader is always in contact with the ultimate problems of human life and world-order. (1)

It will be seen that Giraudoux's plays are closely concerned with the relation of man to his destiny. Euripides differed slightly from the other two in that he concentrated more upon the psychological analysis of his characters.

The earliest poets did most of their teaching by means of the chorus. By the fourth century when Aristotle was writing about tragedy, the role of the chorus had lessened, and consisted mainly of the singing of interludes. This feature was sometimes used by Giraudoux. Notably in Electre (The Mendiant, the Jardinier and the Euménides), but also in Intermezzo, Ondine, and Sodome et Gomorrhe. It is, however, not in the form of the plays that any similarity with Greek tragedy can be found, because neither does Giraudoux adhere to the three unities. Any similarity lies in the notion of tragedy. It is necessary to consider, therefore, what are the hallmarks of 'tragedy' as the word is commonly used.

(1) Oxford Classical Dictionary 1949, P.917 sec.8.

Aristotle regards as the ideal plot one in which each step arises out of what precedes it as its necessary or probable consequence, and everything irrelevant to the main causal sequence is excluded, though the poet's skill is shown in so arranging the sequence that pity, fear, and surprise are aroused in the highest degree. (2)

Aristotle's views on 'tragedy' were generally accepted by most European writers. A Greek tragedy sought to evoke these emotions of pity and fear in the audience. There is a progression through sufferings, terror and pathos towards the final liberation and joy of death, which then takes on a sacrificial quality. Death is the great moment of tragic triumph over the forces which have generated the conflict.

Later Nietzsche thought that tragedy arose when a character was in a situation where he must choose between two courses of action each of which excludes the other, and each of which has an absolute value. Thus a most frequent theme in all forms of tragedy, especially in the French tragedies of Racine and Corneille, is the conflict between love and duty.

To examine Judith. It is immediately evident that the ingredients of tragedy are present, in the choice between two mutually exclusive courses of action. The question revolves round her purity: (Act 1 sc.8)

ma virginité ... n'est pas celle d'une vierge niaise. Elle n'est pas l'innocence, pas même la pureté. Elle est ma pureté. (3)

Her purity, then, is not of the traditional, noble kind, but is the purity of trueness to herself. The close link between her virginity and her purity serves to enable Giraudoux to cast doubt upon her purity more easily: (Act2 sc.2)

Sarah: Aucune virginité n'a été désirée et frôlée de plus près. Mais c'est encore une virginité. Elle a même des certificats du grand prêtre. (4)

So Giraudoux deliberately sets out to remove from Judith any of the noble qualities which would give her stature and enable her to be regarded as a tragic heroine. Her purity is indeed forfeited when she kills Holopherne for the wrong reasons and then renounces the emotions which

(2) Ox.Class.Dic. op.cit. P.918 sec.16

(3) Jean Giraudoux Théâtre, Grasset, 1971, Vol.1 Judith P.205.

(4) Ibid. P.214.

informed her deed. She fails to remain true to herself and admit that she killed for love. Judith the saint, as history would have us believe, becomes Judith the prostitute. Her first act of prostitution is to sacrifice herself to an ideal which turns out to be God's game, and the second, flowing from the disillusionment of the first, is her renunciation of her true emotions. There is no ideal informing her life. Judith lives, she does not come to the liberation and joy of death. Faced with the two courses of action, she compromises. If this is the only play to which Giraudoux gave the title of 'tragedy', then it is possible to assume what his notion of tragedy was. Tragedy must lie not in death, but in soiled ideals and a life of compromise. Although the city has been saved, purity has died.

In this context it is worth considering Lucile in Pour Lucrèce, because she is the representative of absolute purity. She has the ability to see moral flaws in others. As Eugénie says to her: (Act 1 sc.2)

Tu redonnes à la ville le péché originel. (5)

After she is led to believe that she has been raped, she finds that she is unable to accept the moral implications of rape. Her power of detection fails her as far as she herself is concerned and she believes that she has been defiled. As soon as she discovers that it was a hoax, she realises that she has lost her purity, in that the symbol is lost because it did not remain itself symbolically. As Paola says: (Act 3 sc.4)

Elle n'est plus la pureté, puisqu'elle n'a rien deviné à sa pureté. (6)

Although Lucile commits suicide, this play is not given the title of 'tragedy', because, as has been seen, tragedy lies in a life of compromise, but she remains true to herself and thus regains her purity. In no other play of Giraudoux does the hero or heroine sacrifice himself for his ideals. Tragedy is not, for him, the noble death of a tragic hero, unable to accept imperfection. He gives his own definition in Littérature - Bellac et la tragédie:

(5) Jean Giraudoux Théâtre, op.cit. Vol.2 Pour Lucrèce P.371.

(6) Ibid. P.429.

Qu'est-ce que la tragédie? C'est l'affirmation d'un lien horrible entre l'humanité et un destin plus grand que le destin humain: c'est l'homme arraché à sa position horizontale de quadrupède par une laisse qui le retient debout, mais dont il sait toute la tyrannie et dont il ignore la volonté. (7)

The leash which holds man erect is formed by the two equally valid courses of action between which he has to choose. Tragedy is, therefore, the movement by which Siegfried finds his past, Judith her act, Isabelle her supervisor, Troy its war or Electre her bloody dawn. As Zelten says in Siegfried: (Act 3 sc.2)

Regardez le visage d'Eva, Ledinger, et vous verrez que nous ne sommes pas dans la comédie. Cette pâleur des lèvres, cette miniscule ride transversale sur le front de l'héroïne, ces mains qui se pressent sans amitié comme deux mains étrangères, c'est à cela que se reconnaît la tragédie. C'est même le moment où les machinistes font silence, où le souffleur souffle plus bas, et où les spectateurs qui ont naturellement tout deviné avant Edipe, avant Othello, frémissent à l'idée d'apprendre ce qu'ils savent de toute éternité. (8)

The last part of this quotation is important. Giraudoux, for the most part, chooses themes which are well known to the public, so that the spectator is not really in any doubt as to the outcome. Sometimes, indeed, the certainty is deliberately reinforced, as in Electre, when Electre herself says as early as Act 1 sc.8:

J'avais pitié de cet Egiste, cruel, tyran, et dont le destin était de mourir un jour misérablement sous tes coups. (9)

It is known from the start that Siegfried is Forestier, that the Trojan War will take place, that Sodom is destroyed, that Judith kills Holopherne and becomes a saint, and that Hercules will be born. The drama lies in the conflicts and the study of the motives, in the freezing of the action between the two equally valid but mutually exclusive poles, so that all the forces which are at work can be revealed. This leads to the second part of this section, Debate.

(7) Littérature, Grasset, 1941. P.246.

(8) Jean Giraudoux Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Siegfried P.51.

(9) Ibid. Electre P.548.

If a play deals simply with the resolution of a crisis and produces a fantastic ending, and grips the audience with mystery, then it is rather like a postage stamp or a kamakazi pilot, it can only operate once. Giraudoux has managed to create a drama where the thought of playing with the nerves of the audience has no place, where the spectator is an accomplice more of the author than of the hero, where the shadow of eternity always is, and where it is certainty itself which is dramatic. Each play has an atmosphere of language, style, imagery, conflicts and tensions, which is unique. Each play has its own universe. It is not Giraudoux's purpose to create some plot or action in which we are expected to believe, but to create this universe, the existence of which is the whole 'raison d'etre' of the play. Jouvet says in L'Impromptu de Paris that one should leave the theatre: (sc.4)

sans rides au front, sans rides à l'âme, maître du soleil et de la lune, marchant ou volant, apte à tout, prêt à tout. (10) *

Giraudoux is considered by some critics to have just missed greatness, because these critics compare his theatre with their preconceived ideas of what good theatre should or should not be, without accepting the fact that an author must have the right to create his own universe. One example of this is to be found in an article by the American critic, John Gassner. He views La Guerre de Troie merely as brilliant satire, but not a great dramatic experience. He accuses Ondine of being atmospheric rather than exercising dramatic pressure, when, in fact, the author's whole purpose was to create an atmosphere. He says that Giraudoux:

runs head-on to confront an issue, then sprints away from it with equal brio. He raises a clamor and runs away from its consequences. (11)

This statement is indeed true, but if adverse criticism is implied, then it reveals a misunderstanding, because Giraudoux is the last person to want to

(10) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 L'Impromptu de Paris P.77

(11) Tulane Drama Review, May 1959 Vol.3 no.4 At War with Electre P.45

* For a more detailed discussion of this see chapter 6 'Style & Technique'.

resolve the issues for the spectator.

Because of the freezing of the action between these two equivalent poles, numerous paradoxes are to be found in his work. Perhaps this is one of the first things which strikes a casual reader. Siegfried is frozen between France and Germany, Judith between sainthood and whoredom, Argos between 'justice intégrale' and 'justice humaine', Alcmène between divinity and humanity, and Hans and Isabelle between their humanity and their destiny. They are all frozen as if held erect by a leash.

The debates are not discussions, but two equally valid and contrary definitions coexisting at the same moment. In Judith the guard says that it is a question of lighting: (Act 3 sc.7)

Judith: Pourquoi de cette nuit de parjure et de stupre faire tout à coup une nuit sainte!

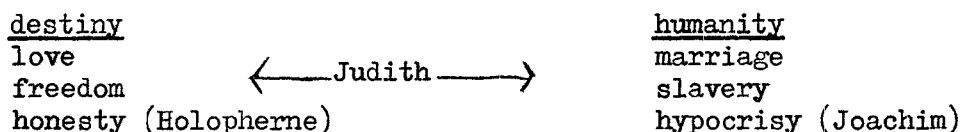
Le Garde: Ne t'inquiète pas de cela. Dieu se réserve, à mille ans de distance, de profeter la sainteté sur le sacrilège et la pureté sur la luxure. C'est une question d'éclairage... (12)

The spectator must accept the simultaneity of both lightings.

The debate can be reduced in its essence to one between humanity and destiny. This point is made by R.Cohen.* To see clearly what is meant, each play must be studied in turn from this point of view.

In Judith, destiny has nothing to do with the Gods, but is represented by Holopherne. He is Judith's destiny. He stands for freedom, love and honesty. On the other side is Judith herself, and linked with her world is slavery to God and the Priests, marriage and hypocrisy.

It can be represented graphically thus:-



Giraudoux's treatment of the Gods is to be the subject of the next chapter, but it should be noted here that in this play God is seen mostly in his representatives, Joachim and the priests. They are shown to have a stultifying

(12) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Judith P.250.

* R.Cohen, Three faces of Destiny, Univ.of Chicago, 1968

influence on Judith, who, after her encounter with Holopherne and all that he represents, loses all faith which she ever had in God. She eventually kills him out of love, and says: (Act 3 sc.6)

J'ai tué au nom d'un autre Dieu que lui, et il n'en laisse rien paraître. (23)

She is faced with the choice which is expressed by Joachim: (Act 3 sc.6)

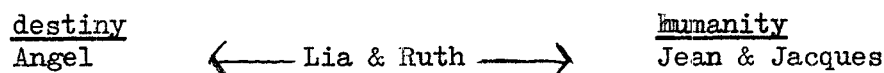
c'est hésiter entre Dieu et celui que Dieu haïssait.

Judith: Je n'hésite pas. J'ai choisi. J'ai choisi contre la haine. (14)

So Judith is caught in the grip of this conflict. Where it would have been possible for Giraudoux to have built his play around the question of whether or not Judith could find the courage to go and kill Holopherne, he declines to do so, because this is not the essence of his theatre. He chooses a well-known theme. The audience should be well aware at the outset that Judith is going to kill Holopherne and that she is going to attain sainthood. The play centres upon the way in which all these expected events come to pass. (It should, however, be noted that this play was the only real failure that Giraudoux had in the theatre - not because of the characteristics mentioned above, because other plays with these same characteristics were great successes.)

In Sodome et Gomorrhe the conflict is between marriage, an institution of humanity, and love, an ideal in human destiny. Humanity, represented by Jean and Jacques (the equivalent of Tom, Dick and Harry) is insufficient, and destiny, represented by the angel, is unavailable. The resultant atmosphere of this struggle is one of almost complete pessimism.

Graphically:-



This play is again very atmospheric. The action is bathed in gloom and foreboding from the start. Once again, the fate of the cities of the plain is known, so that, rather than there being any plot or action, the whole

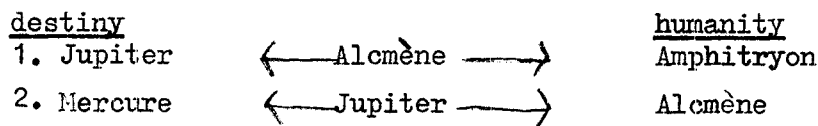
(13) Théâtre op.cit. Vol 1, P.244.

(14) Ibid. P.245.

play consists of a debate about marriage and the human couple, an important theme which runs through Giraudoux's work and which is the subject of a later chapter.*

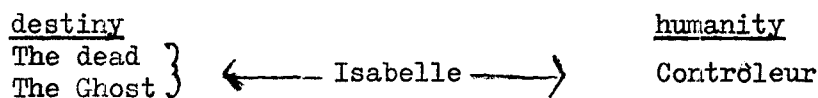
In Amphitryon 38 the confrontation is not static, because on the one hand there is Jupiter and his promise of immortality, representing destiny, and on the other Amphitryon, representing humanity. But Jupiter himself is also seen to be torn between the heights of Olympus, represented by Mercure, and the human world, represented by Alcmène. Thus there are two groups of relationships.

Graphically:-



It should, however, be noted that in this play not a great deal is made of these tensions from a dramatic point of view. The play is essentially a comedy, and is interesting mainly for the creation of the character of Alcmène.*

In Intermezzo the conflict is clear:-



The Ghost is handsome, spiritual, all-knowing. The Contrôleur is ordinary, simple-minded and kind.

This play is another which is interesting mainly for the light which it sheds upon the subject of love.* The whole play is rather like the moment in the tent of Holopherne, when time stands still and man can take a calm look at his situation and fate. Harmony between the conflicting elements is the keynote of this play. It is also a play in which Giraudoux seems to express some of his humanism. Isabelle, after falling into a dead faint is reawoken by the loud human noises made by her friends, the sounds of everyday.

* See chapter 4 'Love'.

Before moving on it should be mentioned that in this play is a hint that pride may be one of the factors which lead to tragedy. In Act 3 sc.4 the Ghost says:

Mais soudain l'homme arrive.... Il se tient debout sur ses pattes de derrière, pour recevoir moins de pluie et accrocher des médailles sur sa poitrine. (15)

This reminds one of man being held erect as if by a leash.

Whereas in Intermezzo the protagonist is a young girl and destiny is represented by a male spirit, in Ondine the protagonist is a man and destiny a beautiful and spiritual maiden.

Graphically:-

<u>destiny</u> Ondine	← Hans →	<u>humanity</u> Bertha.
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As Hans says of his lot: (Act 3 sc.6)

J'étais né pour vivre entre mon écurie et ma meute...Non. J'ai été pris entre toute la nature et toute la destinée, comme un rat. (16)

This illustrates precisely the kind of conflict under discussion. Hans is held erect and frozen for a time between the two poles. Why he is in this position is difficult to say, and Giraudoux certainly does not tell us. Perhaps he is troubled by his own idealised vision of woman and of love, perhaps Ondine is only the incarnation of his dreams. The play is also full of examples of the type of paradox which has already been mentioned as being a feature of Giraudoux's work.* (Act 3 sc.2)

Premier pêcheur: sa voix est merveilleuse, sa peau est de velours, elle est faite à ravir: c'est elle le monstre! (17)

The paradox is due to the juxtaposition of the two worlds, and is used here to enhance the atmosphere.

Since this play is compared above with Intermezzo, it is worth noting that the word 'velours' is used to describe the skin of Ondine (who is the representative of destiny) and it is also used in Intermezzo, firstly

(15) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Intermezzo, P.319

(16) Ibid. Vol.2 Ondine, P.193

(17) Ibid. P.178

* see P.6 above.

when the Ghost first appears on stage, and he is described as:

Bel homme jeune. Pourpoint velours. (18)

Secondly, in Act 3 sc.6 when the actual word which brings Isabelle back to consciousness is 'velours' (18).

In the other plays the conflict of man's destiny and his human condition is in a political situation, and the main protagonist is found held erect, or frozen in the centre of the conflict.

In Siegfried, which is Giraudoux's first play, the conflict which we have been studying, between humanity and destiny, is not so clearly defined, although the basic tension between two opposite and equally valid poles does exist.

France, the past
simple, provincial life.

← Siegfried →

Germany, the future
popular and honoured
Chancellor.

In one respect this play is unique in that the conflict is clearly resolved, since Siegfried/Forestier decides to return to France in the hope that he will be able to do something to bring France and Germany closer together. This is perhaps because Giraudoux was very deeply and personally involved in this problem. It would, indeed, seem reasonable to assume that it is only because of his intense feelings on the subject of Franco/German relations that Giraudoux became a playwright at all. There must be some reason why a not very popular and rather 'précieux' novelist and essayist should turn to the theatre so late in life. The theme had already been the subject of a novel Siegfried et le Limousin, and with a second conflict with Germany threatening, he must have been persuaded that the necessary disciplines of the theatre would force him to omit many of the digressions of which the novel was full, and thus give the theme greater impact. The play is full of remarks which point to the differences and the similarities of France and Germany: (Act 3 sc.2)

Zelten: J'ai découvert que celui qui juge avec son cerveau, qui parle avec son esprit, qui calcule avec sa raison, que celui-là n'est pas allemand. (19)

(18) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 P.278 (18) Ibid. P.324.

(19) Ibid. P.51.

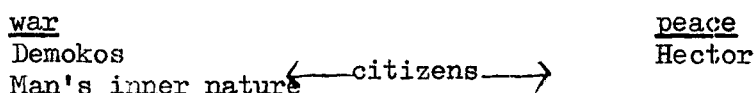
and: (Act 4 sc.3), where Siegfried expresses the core of Giraudoux's message:

Il serait excessif que dans une âme humaine, où cohabitent les vices et les vertus les plus contraires, seuls le mot 'allemand' et le mot 'français' se refusent à composer. (20)

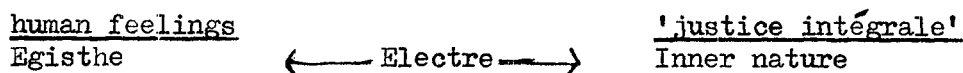
and in the same speech he says that he hopes to return to France:

comme le bénéficiaire d'une science nouvelle, ou d'un coeur nouveau... (20)

La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu depicts the tragedy inherent in human life. War is the occasion, Troy is the land of anywhere and antiquity measures the age of the conflict. The people of Troy are frozen at the point immediately preceding war. The debate is concerned with the whole subject of war and the reasons for it. It turns out, as will be shown in the chapter which deals with this subject; that war is, in fact, in men's hearts. The principle is the same; the peace-loving citizens of Troy, represented by Hector are held in the balance between two opposites.



Likewise, in Electre, Electre is held erect between her human feelings, represented by Egisthe and others, and her 'justice' and 'vérité'.



It can be seen, therefore, that one of the key concepts in Giraudoux's work is what we have called 'debate'. His notion of tragedy might be called an extension of Nietzsche's, in that the individual is shown held in the balance between two equally valid but opposite poles. In the plays the conflict is particularised into specific, recognisable conflicts. France/Germany, Man/The Gods, Man/Woman, War/Peace, Hector/Ulysse, Lia/Jean, Electre/Egisthe, Isabelle/the Ghost, Alcmène/Jupiter. Each hero carries his universe about with him and

(20) Théâtre op.cit. Vol 1 Siegfried, P.70.

* See chapter 3 'War'.

opposed to it is something which prevents him from giving order and form to his world. The spectator is involved not so much with the particular characters, but with the conflicts and the debates which those characters occasion. Giraudoux expresses what he considers to be one of the differences between French tragedy (that is to say His tragedy) and others in his chapter Bellac et la tragédie in Littérature:

Le noeud de vipères, qui est chez les Grecs la tête de la Méduse, chez les Allemands le grouillement des instincts et des velleités individuelles, est, dans ce pays, l'enchaînement indissoluble des cousins, oncles et tantes,..... (21)

This basic pattern of conflict which has been seen in the plays is strengthened by the use of linguistic paradox, as well as by the relations of the characters who are set in opposition to one another.* The characters play roles which are set in different keys, rather as if each play were a musical composition. These characters coexist but are unable, or sometimes even refuse, to communicate. A duality, therefore, faces each individual, and to be able to see only in one direction is, for Giraudoux, a deplorable infirmity. He is fascinated by his own power of double vision, and he creates for his audiences different universes existing at the same time on different planes. It is the creation of these universes which is his purpose. He intertwines the eternal with the temporal, destiny with humanity. He invites the participation of the spectator in the conflict, and shows him that life may be unsolvable, but it is livable.

It should be noted at this stage that in his early plays the discussion is concerned with contemporary problems, in particular the Franco/German and the War/Peace issues, and it moves later onto a more philosophical plane, where the language of the dialogue assumes a greater importance. It is most important that these basic principles relating to Giraudoux's work be understood and born in mind throughout any study of his work.

(21) Littérature op.cit. P.247.

* See chapter 6 'Style and Technique'.

Chapter 2

THE SUPERNATURAL

This chapter is intended to be a study of those forces outside man which seem to control or have an influence upon his actions. These forces fall into two groups. Firstly the force referred to as God or the Gods, and secondly what is commonly called Fate.

Whether this first force is called God or the Gods by Giraudoux makes little difference. He is certainly not propounding a theological thesis anywhere in his work, and one must be wary of drawing conclusions as to what his own religious beliefs were. Whether the term is used in the singular, God, of the plural, the Gods, depends entirely upon the play and the time in which the play is set. For example, in a play like Judith, which is set in biblical times, he obviously refers to God, being the God of the Old Testament, whereas in plays like Electre and Amphitryon 38 reference is made to the Gods. It is not necessary, therefore, for the purposes of this study to make any distinction between the two terms, since the concept behind them is the same.

Judith is the play in which God plays the greatest part, because He or His representatives, are Judith's antagonists..

The conception of God in the first act is very vague. He is apparently omnipotent, but seems to be non-participant, and to be indifferent both to man's pleas and his insults: Jean says in Act 1 sc.5:

Notre Dieu s'est toujours retiré à point des causes maudites. Il nous saura gré, du fait que nous l'insultons, de ne pas le compromettre dans notre chute. Judith est encore là, d'ailleurs, si je vous comprends bien, pour sauver la mise de Dieu. (1)

Judith tells how as a little child she used to think that she heard the voice of God, but now she begs for a word from him and even insults him to provoke a response, but there is nothing but silence.

(1) Théâtre op.cit. Vol. 1 Judith, P.195.

To which Joachim replies: (Act 1 sc.4)

Ce grand silence, cette grande absence ne t'atteint pas? (2)

and Jean in Act 1 sc.1 says:

Quel sinistre silence! (3)

God seems to be characterised by his silence. He appears, therefore, to need to be roused to action. He also appears to have certain established laws which he expects to be obeyed. In Act 1 sc.8 Judith says she is:

prête à braver. pour mieux leur obéir, toutes les lois de Dieu. (4)

In the same scene it appears that she thinks that God is causing her to compromise:

Pourquoi Dieu a-t-il voulu m'enlever mon mérite en me comblant de gloire? Ce Dieu, qui a toute l'éternité pour lui, s'amuse à m'enlever mes effets pour une minute. (5)

He is also treated with cynicism:- (Act 1 sc.6)

Judith: Quel est le mot de passe?

Jean : Tu ne le devines pas? C'est ton nom. Et le nom de Jehovah a la chance de commencer par la même lettre. On l'a choisi pour mot de ralliement. Il est en train, là-haut, de s'en féliciter. (6)

In Act two God is shown as apparently immoral, in that he requires a sacrifice from his creatures but then abandons them. Judith says in Act 2 sc.7:

Dieu m'a abandonnée, je ne sais pourquoi, mais il m'a abandonnée... ..il aime chez ses créatures l'idée du sacrifice, il les y pousse, mais les détails lui en répugnent. (7)

He neglects the intentions of those who serve him, it is only their attitude which matters: (Act 2 sc.6 Judith)

Dieu s'occupe de l'apparence et de l'ensemble, non du détail. Dieu exige que notre oeuvre ait la robe du sacrifice, mais il nous laisse libres, sous cet ample vêtement, de servir nos propres penchants, et les plus bas. (8)

It is from this absolute indifference that arises the immorality of God. Judith seems to be left with the eighteenth century deist's view of God as a clockmaker who has set the world in motion and now just lets it continue to run, out of his control.

(2) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Judith. P.191. (3) Ibid. P.185

(4) Ibid. P.205 (5) Ibid. P.206 (6) Ibid. P.200

(7) Ibid. P.230 (8) Ibid. P.226

Judith says in Act 2 sc.6 also:

Si tu crois que Dieu suit les affaires jusqu'au terme, comme un banquier, tu te trompes! Il demande de nous l'acte initial, et c'est tout. En ce qui concerne les Juifs, les jeux sont faits. (9)

Feeling herself marked by the false kiss of God, and now abandoned by him, Judith turns to Holopherne. Sarah says to her in Act 2 sc.2:

Appelle ton Dieu!

to which Judith replies:

Holopherne! Holopherne! Au secours. (10)

Holopherne is God's worst enemy. In Act 2 sc.4 he says:

Je suis l'ami des jardins à parterre, des maisons bien tenues, de la vaisselle éclatante sur les nappes, de l'esprit et du silence. Je suis le pire ennemi de Dieu. (11)

and:

Je t'offre ton vocabulaire d'enfant, les mots de cerise, de raisin, dans lesquels tu ne trouveras pas Dieu comme un ver. (12)

His tent is like a corner of Eden before the Fall. He says it is:

un des rares coins humains vraiment libres. Les dieux infestent notre pauvre univers, Judith. De la Grèce aux Indes, du Nord au Sud, pas de pays où ils ne pullulent, chacun avec ses vices, avec ses odeurs... ...l'atmosphère du monde, pour qui aime respirer, est celui d'une chambre de dieux. (13)

He is God's worst enemy because he stands for liberty, pleasure and calm, and he lives without God. He offers Judith:

pour une nuit cette villa sur un océan éventé et pur. (14)

He thinks how much more beautiful her day would be if she were freed from the terror of prayers, thoughts of hell, of mortal sin, of angels and of demons. His attitude is like a breath of spring in a stifling atmosphere. The point being made is that religious faith, as pure superstition, becomes the principle obstacle to human happiness, because it opposes and destroys the idea of liberty.

(9) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Judith P.226

(10) Ibid.P.219

(11) Ibid. P.223

(12) Ibid. P.224

(13) Ibid. P.223

(14) Ibid. P.223

Finally Holopherne says:

Je t'offre le plaisir, Judith...devant ce tendre mot, tu verras
Jehovah disparaître. (15)

In Act three God intervenes directly, in the scene with the guard. This raises the question why God should need human aid if he is, in fact, omnipotent. God is only apparently omnipotent. The result is achieved, namely, Holopherne is killed, but for the wrong reasons. Judith is not the saint that history would have us believe. This is another aspect of Giraudoux's work, of which other examples can be found. It has already been noted that many of the themes of his plays are well known, and that he has the ability to deal with situations the outcome of which is known to the audience, and still maintain interest. Part of the reason for this becomes clear when one realises that a twist is often given to this outcome, so that although the expected result occurs it is not for the expected reasons. Thus Jupiter appears to achieve his end in Amphitryon 38, but he fails to achieve his real purpose, because he has to deceive Alcmène. The Trojan war takes place, but not for the reason one would expect (the refusal to return Héléne).

Judith says that she is going to tell the people the truth, that she killed for love, but Joachim points out that: (Act 3 sc.5) the people:-

connaissent la vérité de Dieu. La vérité de Judith peu leur importe. (16)

She still feels herself to be very far from God. Speaking of herself in the same scene, she says:

elle était si comblée de lui (Holopherne), qu'il ne restait en elle
aucune place, même pour Dieu. (17)

The immorality and hypocrisy of God is again demonstrated when Judith makes it clear that she killed for love and that God turned her act to

(15) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Judith P.224

(16) Ibid. P.241

(17) Ibid. P.242

his own profit; (Act3 sc.6)

J'ai tué au nom d'un autre Dieu que lui, et il n'en laisse rien paraître. Et il s'arrange hypocritement pour tout prendre à son compte. Et si je voulais, il m'accepterait comme sa première déléguée dans la ville, avec nimbe au front jusqu'à ma mort, quitte à se rattraper plus tard. (18)

God is shown in this play, therefore, as a petty tyrant, apparently immoral, supposedly omnipotent, but non-participant, indifferent to man's pleas and his insults. In fact, the play admits of God's existence, but not his intellectual or ethical superiority. It also reflects three different images of God, so that God only exists by virtue of these three different conceptions. The characters, in other words, create their own God. Firstly, the priests, who consider him as an instrument for vengeance. Secondly, Judith, for whom he is an image evolved from her childhood catechism, who remains obstinately silent, and who later becomes her personal opponent. Thirdly, Holopherne, who thinks of God as the human conscience, as a worm, the enemy of pleasure.

In Amphitryon 38 God again seems to be indifferent, impotent, and opposed to human happiness. Jupiter is the God in this play. He seems to think that human happiness lies in the promise of immortality, and because he completely fails to understand what human happiness is, he risks destroying this happiness through his own selfish desire. Thus the apparent immorality of God is again manifest. He fails to have Alcène yield to him, and she is thus able to retain her innocence.

In contrast to Judith, this play is a comedy, and because it is so amusing, the situation becomes almost farcical. It does, however, contain some very important scenes between Alcène and Jupiter. (Act 1 sc.6; Act 2 sc.2; Act 3 sc.5;) They engage in verbal battle. Jupiter has a longing for the earth, which Mercury refers to in Act 1 sc.1 as:

la planète où il est le plus doux d'atterrir et de séjourner. (19)

(18) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Judith P. 244

(19) Ibid. Amphitryon 38 P.106

Alcmène seems to have a longing for heaven, because she spent her youth making signs to the Gods. She says to Mercury in Act 2 sc.5:

Toute ma jeunesse s'est passée à les imaginer (les dieux), à leur faire signe. Enfin l'un d'eux est venu!... Je caresse le ciel!... J'aime les dieux. (20)

The clockmaker view of God seems to apply to this play also. Jupiter never gives the impression of knowing all about the universe. The Gods find an earth which has turned out very differently to what they had created. The Gods have so far been depicted as merely throwing humanity into confusion, into a terrible muddle in which it has to struggle on as best it can. Alcmène says of Jupiter in Act 2 sc.2:

Qu'il n'a rien fait! Que nous plonger dans un terrible assemblage de stupeurs et d'illusions. (21)

In the same scene is another good example of how humans view the Gods in the light of their experience:

Jupiter: Je vois que les femmes aussi emploient le mot 'divine'?...
Alcmène: Après le mot appréhension, toujours. (22)

There is another way in which this play resembles Judith. In the same way that Judith looked upon Holopherne as her God, so Alcmène says of Amphitryon in Act 2 sc.2:

Tu as modifié pour moi le goût d'une cerise, le calibre d'un rayon: c'est toi mon créateur. (23)

Just as Judith's avowals of guilt did not change history's verdict of innocence, so Alcmène's rejection of Jupiter is forgotten by history. This is emphasised by Giraudoux in giving the play 37 precedents. In both these plays, therefore, the image of God is very similar, but in Judith God is sinister, whereas in Amphitryon 38 the treatment is light-hearted. It is difficult to say exactly what Giraudoux's opinion is on the subject of the existence of God. These are the two main plays in which the subject is treated, although the Gods appear episodically

(20) Théâtre op.cit Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.144

(21) Ibid. P.133

(22) Ibid. P.131

(23) Ibid. P.134

in other plays. Giraudoux clearly seems to have been a little puzzled by the problem, probably because such a large section of the human race does believe in the existence of an after-life and a divine presence. What has emerged so far is that the picture of God which is revealed shows that he is impotent, and yet the divine purpose is still achieved somehow, even in the face of love, which God seems eager to destroy. This indicates the existence of the second force, which may be referred to as 'fate' and which will be studied in detail after the portrayal of God in the other plays has been examined.

Whereas God has been seen in Amphitryon 38 to risk breaking up the human couple, in Sodome et Gomorrhe, he appears to want to reunite the couple. In both cases he is impotent. In the biblical conception of God, the human is seen to be dependant upon divine intervention. In this play divinity waits until the last minute for human intervention. In Act 2 sc.10 Lia says:

C'est touchant: un ange attend un miracle des hommes. (24)

In Act 1 sc.1 it is made clear that God is looking for the power of the human couple, in a scene between the Gardener and the Archangel:

Jardinier: Je ne comprends pas pourquoi Dieu me haïrait.

Archange : Tu es marié?

Jardinier: Non. Comme mes frères.

Archange : Pourquoi?

Jardinier: Nous aimons bien être seuls.

Archange : Tu es fiancé? Tu te promènes avec les filles?

Jardinier: Non. J'aime bien me promener seul.

Archange : Alors, Dieu te hait. (25)

Never is man so helpless as in this play, and never is heaven drawn in such a state of chaotic ignorance and disorder. Here God appears much more sinister again. As Jean says in Act 2 sc.2:

Je sais bien que Dieu s'amuse à lier le sort du monde, et celui de chaque humain, à de petites conditions, à des mots de passe, à des détails. Il exige, comme des jetons pour notre entrée dans la réussite, des paroles et des actes sans rapport avec elle. (26)

(24) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 Sodome et Gomorrhe P.252

(25) Ibid. P.202

(26) Ibid. P.232

He is sinister in his very impotence, and he is completely unavailable to man. God reveals through his two spokesmen, the angel and the archangel, that his creation had not worked out as planned. In giving freedom to the couple, he has seen that freedom abused, and his vision of the blissful couple has been destroyed. God is seen to make threats, which, when they fail, leave him no alternative but to destroy the species.

In Electre the Gods are treated with biting satire and with scorn.

The following examples illustrate the point: (Act 1 sc.3) Egisthe:

Je crois aux dieux. Ou plutôt je crois que je crois aux dieux. Mais je crois en eux non pas comme en de grandes attentions et de grandes surveillances, mais comme en de grandes distractions. Entre les espaces et les durées, toujours en flirt, entre les gravitations et les vides, toujours en lutte, il est de grandes indifférences, qui sont les dieux....Ils sont inconscients au sommet de l'échelle de toutes créatures comme l'atome est inconscient à leur degré le plus bas. (27)

and:

Cela correspond bien à ce que nous pensons des dieux, que ce sont des boxeurs aveugles, des fesseurs aveugles, tout satisfaits de retrouver les mêmes joues à gifler et les mêmes fesses. (28)

and:

Jardinier: Il a bu, c'est un mendiant.
President : Il rabâche, c'est un dieu. (29)

The same verb is used to describe the supernatural powers in Sodome et

Gomorrhe Act 2 sc.8:

Jean: Et ces anges et ces prophètes qui rabâchent.... (30)

and:

Egisthe : Singulière divinité...Les prêtres n'ont pas su voir encore si c'était un gueux ou Jupiter?
Serviteur: Les prêtres demandent qu'on ne leur pose pas la question. (31)

In La Guerre de Troie the Gods are again seen to be impotent, and even farcical. As, for instance, in Act 2 sc.12 where Isis reports that the Goddess Aphrodite commands that Paris and Hélène must not be separated

(27) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.529

(28) Ibid. P.530 (29) Ibid. P.533

(30) Ibid. Vol.2 Sodome et Gomorrhe P.247

(31) Ibid. Vol.1 Electre P.528

or else there will be war, and the Goddess Pallas commands that they must be separated or else there will be war. In this play also, therefore, the Gods are mocked, and man's misfortunes are not attributed to any divinity. A final example of this mockery can be found in Act 1 sc.9:

Messenger: Hector, Priam te reclame! Les prêtres s'opposent à ce que l'on ferme les portes de la guerre! Ils disent que les dieux y verraient une insulte.

Hector: C'est curieux comme les dieux s'abstiennent de parler eux-mêmes dans les cas difficiles. (32)

If the Gods are deliberately mocked, then this gives more strength to the feeling that another force is present working amongst humanity, a force which appears to be outside humanity, a force which will be referred to here as 'Fate'.

Before it is possible to define this concept as used by Giraudoux, it is necessary to try to understand two other important ideas which are fundamental to an understanding of Giraudoux's theatre: the 'elect', and the meaning of the verb 'se déclarer'.

The term 'elect' is used to describe a certain type of character. The term is not necessarily used by Giraudoux himself always to describe these characters. He used the term in his last novel Choix des Elues. In this novel everything points towards the possibility of a happy life for Edmée, but, rather like Electre, she senses that her position is false, although she does not know why:

Et peu à peu le voile s'était levé, elle avait compris: cette vie sans but de femme sans homme, c'était là sa couronne, c'était là son métier. Solitaire, anonyme, pure, elle goûtait cette joie de l'élection que les autres femmes ne trouvent que dans l'encerclement, le nom et le plaisir... C'était cela, sa destinée: une intrigue sans parole et sans geste, mais durable, mais intime, avec une présence qui manifestement n'était pas celle des hommes. (33)

The difference between the two types of woman is best illustrated by comparing Electre with Agnes in L'Apollon de Bellac. Agnes is the simple home-loving type, who when she smells gas, goes to alert the concierge.

(32) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.476

(33) Choix des Elues, Grasset, 1939 P.224

Electre, by contrast, would search for the leak herself: Figuratively speaking, she goes after the smell until thousands of innocents die.

Another example from Choix des Elues makes the point very clearly:

La femme est rare. La plupart des hommes épousent une médiocre contre-façon des hommes, un peu plus retorse, un peu plus souple, un peu plus belle, s'épousent eux-mêmes. Ils se voient eux-mêmes passer dans la rue, avec un peu plus de gorge, un peu plus de hanches, le tout enveloppé à leur usage de jersey de soie, ~~alors~~ ils se poursuivent eux-mêmes, s'embrassent, s'épousent..... La femme est forte, elle enjambe les crues, elle renverse les trônes, elle arrête les armées.... .. Quand il y en a une elle est l'impasse du monde..... Où vont les fleuves, les images, les oiseaux isolés? Se jeter dans la femme. Mais elle est rare. Il faut finir quand on la voit, car si elle aime, si elle déteste, elle est implacable.....Sa compassion est implacable. Mais elle est rare. (34)

Electre is the best example in all Giraudoux's work of this type of woman.

There are two examples in Act 1 sc.2, both said by the President:

S'il y a des malédictions, des brouilles, des haines, la faute n'en revient pas à la conscience de l'humanité, qui est toute propension vers le compromis et l'oubli, mais à dix ou quinze femmes à histoires.(35a)

and

D'où vient que dans l'un l'existence s'écoule douce, correcte, les morts s'oublient, les vivants s'accomodent d'eux-mêmes, et que dans l'autre c'est l'enfer?.....C'est simplement que dans le second il y a une femme à histoires. (35b)

'Se déclarer' is the expression which Giraudoux has found to describe the moment of illumination which some characters are fortunate enough to have, when the scales fall from their eyes and they can see clearly.

It is what happens to Hector to turn him into a man of peace. When he is kneeling over an adversary on the battlefield, he suddenly feels as though he is kneeling over a mirror, because the adversary he is about to kill is a fellow human being. (Act 1 sc.3)

Cette mort que j'allais donner, c'était un petit suicide. (36a)

He becomes aware of a discordant note:

La lance qui a glissé contre mon bouclier a soudain sonné faux, et le choc du tué contre la terre, et, quelques heures plus tard, l'écroulement du palais. Et la guerre d'ailleurs a vu que j'avais compris. Et elle ne se gênait plus... les cris des mourants sonnaient faux. (36b)

(34) Choix des Elues op.cit. P.237

(35a) (35b) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.525

(36a) (36b) Ibid. La Guerre de Troie. P.458

It is what happens to Egisthe on a hill outside Argos at dawn, which results in him realising that he must make the best of things and try to stop Electre upsetting the balance. It is what happens to Electre in the arms of her brother, which explains the unease which she has felt from the start. The beggar says of her in Act 1 sc.3

Une fille comme elle.....se déclarera. (37)

The actual term is first used in Electre, but the concept behind it is present in all the plays. The philosophy in its simplest form is, that each of us has an archetype or a pattern to which we have to conform. It is not clear exactly how this archetype is formed. Giraudoux is certainly not expressing a belief in predestination, but it would seem that somehow earlier actions and unexpressed thoughts go out and combine to form this pattern to which we must conform. Not everyone, however realises what this pattern is for their life.

The purpose of life, therefore, becomes to find out who or what one is, and having done this to remain true to oneself. This is what Alcmène means when she says in Act 2 sc.2:

Je me solidarise avec mon astre. (38)

It has been seen how Judith does not remain true to herself, and this is why this one play is called a 'tragedy'.*

To summarise:- Only certain characters are able to discover what their archetype is, and these characters are called the 'elect'. Most of the 'elect' are women characters.+ The moment at which they receive the illumination is described by the verb 'se déclarer'. It is now possible to study this force of 'fate'. The two concepts above have to be understood, because it is necessary to see if there is any link between man's own inner nature and the force of 'fate'. In the plays this force is sometimes referred to as 'le destin'.

(37) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre. P.534

(38) Ibid. Amphitryon 38 P.134

* See chapter 'Tragedy & Debate' P.3

+ See chapter 'Love & Women' for more detailed discussion.

Atmosphere is again seen to be of great importance in this context. Giraudoux builds up a feeling of powerful forces which are beyond man's control. This is most strongly the case in La Guerre de Troie. The very title La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas Lieu is dramatic, because if it is not going to take place then it can not be called the Trojan War. The opening line of the play adds to the feeling of external forces being present:

La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu, Cassandre. (39)

It is the addition of the word 'Cassandre' at the end of the sentence which is dramatic. She was condemned by Apollo to prophesy woe, to be disbelieved and then proved correct, because she rejected his love. She is convinced that the war will take place. She introduces Destiny as the destroyer of human happiness. Note that it is she also who announces Andromaque's pregnancy, the arrival of Hector and of Helene, and the final words of the play. In Act 1 sc.10 she says of herself:

Moi, je ne vois rien coloré ou terne. Mais chaque être pèse sur moi par son approche même. A l'angoisse de mes veines, je sens son destin. (40)

She is prevented by her lucidity from taking refuge in the illusions which make human life tolerable, hence her anguish and pessimism.(Act1sc.1)

Je ne vois rien, Andromaque, je ne prévois rien. Je tiens seulement compte de deux bêtises, celle des hommes et celle des éléments. (41)

So this external force is introduced in the very first scene of the play, and by a character who is powerless to influence the course of events.

In her discussion with Andromaque she refers to destiny as:

la forme accélérée du temps. (42)

This is a very obscure and abstract notion which demonstrates that her thinking is on a much higher level, because she realises that there are different scales of time between the Gods and man. She also refers to it as a sleeping tiger, an image given even greater emphasis in the english translation by Chistopher Fry, which is entitled Tiger at the Gates.

(39) Théâtre op.ci#. Vol.1 La Guerre de TroieP.453

(40) Ibid. P.477

(41) Ibid. P.453

(42) Ibid. P.453

In their discussion, whereas Andromaque is interested in her own situation, Cassandre has a more cosmic view of the world. She says that the tiger is woken by cocksure statements, or what she calls 'affirmations'. These cocksure statements waken the tiger, and the kind of statement which is also an example of 'La bêtise des hommes' is: (Act 1 sc.1)

le monde et la direction du monde appartient aux hommes en général et aux Troyens ou Troyennes en particulier. (43)

Time can not be stopped at the moment when it best suits us, it ploughs relentlessly on.

The image of the tiger which must not be woken is especially strong in French, if one remembers that the equivalent proverb to the English, "let sleeping dogs lie" is, "ne réveillez pas le chat qui dort." Fate, symbolised by the sleeping tiger, lurks in the background, and Giraudoux makes one constantly aware of its presence. For example the ending to the first scene, in which Andromaque and Cassandre have been having the discussion mentioned above. Cassandre says that Hector is returning in glory and:-

Il est aujourd'hui une chance pour que la paix s'installe sur le monde....Il se pourlèche.....Et Andromaque va avoir un fils! Et les cuirassiers se baissent maintenant sur l'étrier pour caresser les matous dans les créneaux!... ..Il se met en marche!

Andromaque:Tais-toi!

Cassandre: Et il monte sans bruit les escaliers du palais. Il pousse du mufle les portes ... Le voilà ... Le voilà.

la Voix d'Hector: Andromaque.

Andromaque:Tu mens! ... C'est Hector!

Cassandre: Qui t'a dit autre chose? (44)

The same idea, that terrible consequences may follow if the tiger is woken, or if the Gods are disturbed, is found in two other plays. In Electre, the Gods are referred to as "boxeurs aveugles", as "grandes indifférences" and as "inconscients". Egisthe is determined that they should not be wakened out of their lethargy to go rampaging murderously around. A picture emerges of the human race shrinking from any course

(43) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.454

(44) Ibid. P.455

of action which may occasion the wrath of the Gods. Egisthe says in Act 1 sc.3 that he has been fighting a war against those who make signs to the Gods and:

Il n'est pas deux façons de faire signe, président: c'est de se séparer de la troupe, monter sur une éminence; et agiter sa lanterne ou son étendard. On trahit la terre comme on trahit une place assiégée, par des signaux. Le philosophe les fait de sa terrasse, le poète ou le désespéré les fait, de son balcon ou de son plongeur. (45)

The other play where a similar image can be found is Intermezzo. In Act 3 sc.2 the Druggist (who, as his name implies is very close to understanding nature and plants) says to Isabelle:

Il y a des pas de vous qui mènent à la mort et que vous entremêlez dans vos danses mêmes. Il y a dans vos conversations les plus gaies des phrases du vocabulaire infernal. Un jour, en sa présence, le hasard vous fera dire le mot qui ouvrira pour lui la porte du souterrain, à moins que vous ne l'y ameniez par un de ces élans ou de ces abandons du genre de ceux qui conduisent les vivants à la passion ou à l'enthousiasme? (46)

To return to La Guerre de Troie. As the play proceeds it seems that the issue is simply whether or not Héléne will be returned to the Greeks. One by one Hector's opponents are overcome by his arguments. He is convinced that Héléne herself is the direct cause of a possible war, but when he finally manages to persuade her, the issue becomes confused again as she says: (Act 1 sc.8)

Mais n'allez pourtant pas croire, parce que vous avez convaincu la plus faible des femmes, que vous avez convaincu l'avenir. Ce n'est pas en manoeuvrant des enfants qu'on détermine le destin. (47)

There is, however, the thought that true passion might be able to do something against the power of fate. In Act 2 sc.8 Andromaque is telling Héléne that war would just be acceptable to history if it had been in the cause of a great love between herself and Paris, and she says:

Personne, même le destin. ne s'attaque d'un coeur léger à la passion. (48)

In the scene between Hector and Ulysse (Act 2 sc.13) the idea of Fate is again strengthened. Ulysse says that it is customary before a war for

(45) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.531

(46) Ibid. Vol.1 Intermezzo. P.310

(47) Ibid. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.474 (48) Ibid. P.495

the two generals to meet and agree not to fight, but:

le lendemain pourtant éclate la guerre (49)

He also says that their conversation is merely:

un duo avant l'orchestre. (49)

and:

l'univers le sait, nous allons nous battre. (49)

He then argues that destiny has, in fact, created both Greece and Troy to be perfect enemies, in order that they should come together one day for this war. Again it is made clear that the most insignificant thing can wake the tiger: Ulysse:

Ce n'est pas par des crimes qu'un peuple se met en situation fautive avec son destin, mais par des fautes. Son armée est forte, sa caisse abondante, ses poètes en plein fonctionnement. Mais un jour, on ne sait pourquoi, du fait que ses citoyens coupent méchamment les arbres, que son prince enlève vilainement une femme, que ses enfants adoptent une mauvaise turbulence, il est perdu. Les nations, comme les hommes, meurent d'imperceptibles impolitesse. C'est à leur façon d'éternuer ou d'écarter leurs talons que se reconnaissent les peuples condamnés... ..Vous avez sans doute mal enlevé Hélène... (50)

The fact that their opponent is really Fate, is made clearer still as Ulysse decides to go away, saying:

Je ruse en ce moment contre le destin, non contre vous..... Je pars.. .. Mais je ne peux me défendre de l'impression qu'il est bien long, le chemin qui va de cette place à mon navire. (51)

After such a serious discussion, the reason given by Ulysse for his decision to leave, is trivial:

Hector: Je le sais. La noblesse.

Ulysse: Pas précisément... Andromaque à le même battement de cils que Pénélope. (51)

The eventual reason for war is also trivial. All of which leads one to believe that no matter how hard anyone tries, no matter what arguments are raised, this force possesses an inexorable quality against which humanity is powerless. It is the present task to try to understand the nature of this force.

(49) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P. 508

(50) Ibid. P.510

(51) Ibid. P. 512

In Electre the role played by Fate is reduced, because the curse of the Gods upon the house of the Atrides, which is the most important element in the Greek version, is omitted from Giraudoux's version. Although the Gods are referred to as 'blind boxers', the element of blind fate is removed in so far as Electre is able to control her own destiny. There is a quality about her which makes her one of the 'elect'. Judith, although she compromises herself in the end, does control her moment of love with Holopherne. Alcmène is able to withstand fate. The pessimism of certain plays lies not in the fact that there is an inexorable force called fate controlling man's destiny, but in the fact that man prefers not to face his destiny, but to fulfil his social role with the greatest degree of comfort. It is in examining those characters who can be called 'elect' that the answer to the nature of this force will be found.

The 'elect' are characters who act as catalysts, without whom, and without whose actions there would be no drama, no conflict. Without Hélène there would have been no Trojan war; without Hector there would still have been a war, but no drama, because there would have been no opponent of war. Without the character of Alcmène, Jupiter would still have had his way and Hercules would still have been born, but there would have been no conflict. Without Electre, Egisthe would have continued to rule and rule well, but justice would never have been obtained for the assassination of her father, nor would Egisthe ever have reached his full stature. Without Ondine Hans' life would never have been disturbed, but Hans would never have experienced life to the full. Without 'La Folle de Chaillot' oil speculators may have destroyed half of Paris. Without the character of Judith, her people would have been conquered.

These characters are the instruments of fate, and they fall into two categories: those who have experienced the moment of 'self declaration' which alters their own lives and the lives of those with whom they come into contact; and those who remain unconscious of their role, or who seem

to be controlled by some outside agency of which they are unaware.

It will be seen that Hector, Electre, Egisthe and Judith fall into the first group. For each of them there is a moment when they suddenly see clearly the role which they must play, and their lives from that moment on can never be the same. As has already been suggested above*, everyone has an archetype into the pattern of which they should fit at some point in their lives. They are then in harmony with themselves and are able to fulfil themselves. Alcmène says:(Act 2 sc.2)

Je me solidarise avec mon astre (38)

And in Electre Act 1 sc.3 the Beggar says:

Quel jour, à quelle heure se déclare-t-elle? Quel jour devient-elle louve? Quel jour devient-elle Electre? (52)

and:

la question.....est de savoir si le roi se déclarera dans Egisthe avant qu'Electre ne se déclare dans Electre? (52)

The second group of characters fit into the pattern of their lives without being aware of doing so. This would seem to be particularly the case with Héléne,(of whom Ulysse says in Act 2 sc.13:

une des rares créatures que le destin met en circulation sur la terre pour son usage personnel. (53))

with Alcmène, and with some of the minor characters such as Demokos in La Guerre de Troie, who are sometimes so important. It is this second group of characters who give most strongly the feeling of the existence of an external force which might be called Fate. The first problem is to discover the origin and the nature of this 'archetype'.

Hector discovers his archetype one day as he kneels over an enemy whom he is about to kill.⁺ All the sounds of war from that moment on seem false, and he can not help but become a man of peace.

Electre's moment comes when she spends the night beside her brother Oreste, Act 1 sc.8. Although she already had an inexplicable hatred of

(52a,b) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.535

(53) Ibid. La Guerre de Troie P.511

* see P.23

⁺ see P.22

her mother, she suddenly realises:

Je les hais d'une haine qui n'est pas à moi. (54)

and:

Je sens que tu m'as donné la vue, l'odorat de la haine. La première trace, et maintenant, je prends la piste. (55)

Egisthe's discovery was made on a hill above Argos. This is made clear when he enters for the first time in Act 2, at sc.7:

Mendiant: vous vous êtes déclaré. (56)

Egisthe explains that as he returned to the city in the early morning, all the signs of nature passed on to him the message that he was indeed King.

Judith's moment came in the tent of Holopherne, where she first discovered freedom from the restrictions of the Gods and their representatives, the priests.

In Siegfried's case, the archetype is quite easy to understand. It is his French background. The patterns formed in his previous life come out in the end. In Act 3 sc.4 he explains that he feels as though everything has been taken away:

Songez, Geneviève, à ce que doit ressentir un enfant de sept ans quand les grands hommes, les villes, les fleuves de sa petite histoire lui tournent soudain le dos. Regardez-les. Ils me renient. (57)

In the same way that Hector changed from a man of war to a man of peace, Siegfried changed his whole outlook on life; (Act 3 sc.4)

Ce corps plein de santé et de force, c'est celui d'un Allemand qui meurt... Je n'ose pas remuer. Au premier mouvement, tout cet édifice que je porte encore en moi s'en ira en poussière... Je ne suis plus Allemand. Comme c'est simple! Il suffit de tout changer. Mes jours de victoire ne sont plus Sedan, Sadowa. Mon drapeau n'a plus de raies horizontales... Ce que je croyais les exemples de la loyauté suprême, de l'honneur, va peut-être devenir pour moi la trahison, la brutalité... .. Ce bruit autour de mes oreilles, ce papillotement, ce n'est rien! Ce n'est que soixante millions d'êtres, et leurs millions d'aïeux, et leurs millions de descendants, qui s'envolent de moi. (58)

(54) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.548

(55) Ibid. P.549

(56) Ibid. P.577

(57) Ibid. Siegfried P.55

(58) Ibid. P.55

In this first play Giraudoux is illustrating in the easily understood terms of the French/German conflict within Siegfried/Forestier, not only the basic differences between the two nations, but a basic philosophy which he uses in other plays: that man's past creates his future.

Very few characters are fortunate enough to experience this moment of illumination. Very few men and women have emerged in history who have been able to write their names for ever into the history books. An example in history of the sort of thing being discussed here, is to be found in the story of the conversion of St. Paul. Not many Christian people would claim to have had such an experience. For most people, and therefore for most of the characters in Giraudoux's plays, life just goes on and it is left to others to create destinies. Of the two groups of 'elect' mentioned above, it can be seen that those in the second group all possess a refreshing innocence. For example, Ondine, in whose case the feeling is strengthened by the fact that she is a creature of nature, which is itself a symbol of innocence. Alcmène, Isabelle and La Folle de Chaillot all possess this quality also, whereas the characters of the first group all possess greater stature and force of character, although they sometimes appear sinister and almost frightening.

Is this archetype merely a pattern for one's life created by an external mastermind, or is it something else? It is most important to remember that in every case the character in question is obeying natural impulses and feelings. Even before Electre sees clearly, she has had these feelings of hatred for her mother and father which she has been unable to explain to herself. On the one hand Giraudoux deliberately builds up a feeling that malevolent forces are abroad, while on the other he deliberately ridicules the Gods and repeatedly shows their impotence. Bearing these two facts in mind it is possible to suggest an explanation which involves crossing the barrier of time.

If all history took place virtually simultaneously, as it would do to an observer placed outside time, (time being a purely terrestrial concept), then it would be possible for all the influences, happenings and experiences of early life especially, to build up a force and momentum of their own to form a pattern which, in fact, becomes the archetype, and into which the rest of one's life fits naturally, because it is in keeping with all that has gone before. In other words if one acted contrary to this pattern, then one would be acting 'out of character' and one's life would be constantly in a state of stress instead of in a state of harmony. Often, of course, it is more comfortable not to discover one's life pattern, or rouse the tiger, because until one does so, one has no way of knowing whether or not the tiger is friendly. This would discount any idea of a totally independent, external force. Man would, therefore, in theory be capable of creating his own destiny. However, since man is unaware that he has this ability, he can usually do very little about it. In this case, the existence of an external force in the plays would be due to the fact that Giraudoux is exteriorising, for dramatic purposes, a force which stems, in fact, from man's own inner nature.

It may still appear as if Giraudoux is presenting the spectator with an external force, when one considers remarks such as that of Judith in Act 2 sc.6 of the play:

En ce qui concerne les Juifs, les jeux sont faits..... le sort travaille pour eux ou contre eux en dehors de nous, et ni le puissant Holopherne, ni la misérable Judith n'ont plus rien à y voir. (59)

It must, therefore, be pointed out that Judith is not a character whom one is supposed to admire. She betrays herself, and she betrays her archetype. Remarks of characters such as Alcène carry much more weight, and she says in Act 2 sc.7 of Amphitryon 38:

(59) Théâtre op. cit. Vol.1 Judith P.226

Qu'on ne parle plus de la méchanceté du monde. Un simple jeu de
petite fille la rend anodine. Qu'on ne me parle plus de la fatalité,
elle n'existe que par la veulerie des êtres. (60)

The implication is that one can do anything if one really believes,
but pessimism clouds the horizon, because it is also implied that the
accumulation of man's wants and desires leads to disasters. Even though
these noble or 'elect' characters exist, they seem often to be powerless.
Indeed, although his view is often pessimistic, it is evident that Giraudoux
nowhere suggests that there is anything else to help man excepting man
himself. He creates certain characters with whom one can feel great
sympathy, such as Hector, Alcène, Holopherne, Isabelle and the Contrôleur.
He also suggests what power the human couple might have in affecting
'destiny'*. The only possible explanation is that man, by his collective
actions creates his own destiny by his interacting one with another, by
what he is, by what he has been, and by his deepest inner desires, and
that if there is any hope for the future it lies in educating and improving
the minds and the natures of all mankind.

Although this concept of Fate is rather obscure, it is, at least, an
attempt to explain a phenomenon which everyone has experienced to a greater
or lesser degree. To explain it by saying that there is an evil, independent
force abroad, is the easy way out of the difficulty, and, in fact,
explains nothing. It is as trite as explaining the existence of God
with the image of an old man with a white beard up in the sky.
It is, though, in this precise respect that the great strength of
Giraudoux's theatre lies. For other writers, such as Sartre and Malraux,
writing has become social and political as well as aesthetic. These
writers, on the one hand, do not want to be caught in the trap of the

(60) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.158

* See chapter on 'Love & Women'

ultimate, whereas Giraudoux does not want to become caught in the trap of the immediate. It is for this reason also that the concepts contained in Giraudoux's work are sometimes both harder to understand and harder to isolate.

Siegfried is the character whom we can most easily understand, because his situation is seen clearly in terms which are understandable. Our destiny is the result of all our inner longings, sometimes even of those longings which we never express because we are unaware of them. Some characters get a glimpse of what their destiny is, and these characters are called the 'elect'. These ideas should be born in mind as war is studied in the next chapter. A further illustration of how destiny is created in this way will be given then.

Chapter 3

WAR

The theme of war is particularly important, not only because Giraudoux was himself involved in the fighting in the first world war, but also because of the time at which he wrote most of his plays (between the two world wars), and because it is so closely involved in the first play which he wrote, Siegfried. It has already been mentioned * that it is curious to find someone becoming a successful playwright, who only wrote his first play at the age of 46. It must have been something important which made him change to writing plays at this age. It would seem to be not unreasonable to assume that he felt strongly about war and about the differences which still existed very strongly (1928) between France and Germany. The theme of Siegfried is not, however, specifically that of war, although it is a background of war which gives rise to the play. The theme is one which has already been seen to be central to Giraudoux's plays, that of a man in conflict with his destiny. There is also present a second theme, that of love. The play has developed through various versions. It was first a novel, Siegfried et le Limousin (1922), and then several manuscripts of the play, especially of the 4th. act, were written, One version of this 4th. act was published under the title Fin de Siegfried. It is only in the final stage version of the play that the love theme assumes any importance. The reason for this will be seen in the next chapter.

Giraudoux was personally very involved in the whole problem of Franco/German relationships. He had been a student in Germany in 1905, and he does himself embody the conflict in his own personality, in his logical French reasoning and clarity of thought and in his German romantic flights of fancy and poetic imagery. In Siegfried et le Limousin he ascribes to France the qualities of moderation, precision, realism, logic

* see Introduction P.iv

and a passion for reasoned criticism; to the Germans, romantic fervour, flights of fancy, irrational longings and a ~~desire~~ desire to possess the world. War featured prominently in his early writings, before he turned dramatist. His writings relating to his own experiences in the first world war are collected in three volumes, Lectures pour une Ombre (1917), Amica America (1919), Adorable Clio (1920). These works are not descriptive of the military struggle, but rather, an impressionistic portrait of war. War begins as an adventure on a note of enthusiasm, and ends on one of bitterness and disenchantment. The seed of Hector's conversion to man of peace is to be found in Giraudoux's own reaction to his first confrontation with violent death, which is to be found in the last words of chapter 2 'Périphe' in Lectures pour une Ombre:

Un tué...ma guerre est finie.

The next chapter develops this theme, showing that the realities of war have little to do with the romantic, idealised picture of it which one is given by poets and their veneration of heroes.*

In Adorable Clio, 'Mort de Drigeard', the idea of looking into a mirror which was the image used by Hector, is also suggested. Drigeard, like Giraudoux himself had studied in Germany:

Sept ans que j'habitais l'Allemagne, j'en suis revenu si vite voilà six semaines que je sens encore là-bas, au milieu des Allemands, ma forme vivre..... C'est sur elle que je m'amuse à tirer. (1)

Before the war a love of France and a love of Germany were not mutually exclusive.

Giraudoux had also faced the problem of Franco/German relationships personally. He became in 1922 the head of the Service des OEuvres Françaises à l'Etranger, and in this office for the next two years he became closely involved in the struggle for power in France between Aristide Briand and Raymond Poincaré, each of whom differed strongly in his opinion

(1) Siegfried. Harrap 1967 Introduction by Gerald V. Banks PP.26,27

* cf. later (P.42) role of Demokos in La Guerre de Troie.

concerning the policy which France should adopt towards Germany. Giraudoux was strongly opposed to the aggressive and nationalistic policies of Poincaré, by whom he was dismissed in 1924. It is perhaps to Poincaré that we owe the character of the warmongering Demokos in La Guerre de Troie, and Hector's famous discourse to the dead, (Poincaré was very fond of unveiling monuments in memory of the war dead) as well as the remark of Zelten in Siegfried Act 1 sc.6: *

les pays sont comme les fruits, les vers sont toujours à l'intérieur. (2)

In the play Siegfried, the conflict is reduced to its simplest terms in the character of Siegfried, a Frenchman who has lost his identity and his memory, and been brought up to be a powerful and influential German. Persuaded of his true identity by his fiancée, he eventually decides that, rather than looking for a third, neutral, country in which to live, he has a mission to bridge the gap and lay the foundations of a future United States of Europe. In Act 4 sc.3 he says:

Je ne rentrerai pas en France comme le dernier prisonnier relâché des prisons allemands, mais comme le premier bénéficiaire d'une science nouvelle ou d'un coeur nouveau. (3)

One is constantly reminded of the differences. His political rival, Zelten, says in Act 3 sc.2:

J'ai découvert que celui qui juge avec son cerveau, qui parle avec son esprit, qui calcule avec sa raison, que celui-là n'est pas Allemand. (4)

As Siegfried's true personality is revealed, one discovers the core of Giraudoux's message. Act 4 sc.3:

Il serait excessif que dans une âme humaine, où cohabitent les vices et les vertus les plus contraires, seuls le mot 'allemand' et le mot 'français' se refusent à composer. (5)

The play possesses little of the fanciful imagery which characterises some of the later plays, and the basic theme is, for the most part,

(2) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Siegfried P.22

(3) Ibid. P.70

(4) Ibid. P.51

(5) Ibid. P.70

* This information is taken from the introduction to Harrap's edition of Siegfried op.cit.

simply expressed. The whole is taut, sequent and consistent, and speech and action are motivated by character. It is at once apparent why the novelist turned to dramatist in order to present this important theme. Although there are not many other specific references to war in the play, much can still be found relating to war, in that the search for peace and harmony between the two nations is central.

In the case of Siegfried, the conclusion is one of optimism, which must be compared with the pessimism of later plays, and especially of La Guerre de Troie. In the manuscripts for Siegfried and in La Fin de Siegfried, as well as in the novel, Siegfried et le Limousin, the mood is one of pessimism. It is only in the final version that the mood changes, mainly due to the greater importance given to the role of Geneviève. In La Fin de Siegfried the situation is much the same until, at the Franco/German frontier Siegfried is murdered by two assassins, hired German nationalists, thus preventing the symbolic union of the two countries. Significantly Fin de Siegfried was published in 1934, which was one year after the rise to power of Hitler at the head of the German Nazi party. Giraudoux introduced it with these words:

L'acte quatrième joué habituellement dans les représentations de 'Siegfried' n'est pas l'acte primitif. L'auteur qui n'a jamais compris l'architecture dramatique que comme la soeur articulée de l'architecture musicale, n'avait pas voulu laisser passer l'occasion unique d'écrire une marche funèbre. Comme il ne prévoit pas, pour ses prochaines pièces, de personnages assez sympathiques pour qu'on puisse les tuer sur la scène même, il publie aujourd'hui cette fantaisie à laquelle l'actualité fournit d'ailleurs le décor le plus exact. (6)

Fin de Siegfried is clearly intended to imply that the self-interest of nationalism and the violence to which it is prepared to have recourse are destroying the possibility of future individual and collective peace and happiness. By increasing the importance of the love element Giraudoux is able to bring about the feeling of optimism and triumph in which Siegfried ends. True love, which is the subject of the next chapter in

(6) Théâtre op. cit. Fin de Siegfried P. 81

this study, is the highest and most powerful experience to which humanity can aspire, and is humanity's one hope. Both the theme of love and the pessimism of Fin de Siegfried are to be found in La Guerre de Troie, although in this case (published 1935) pessimism predominates.

A germ for the idea of this play appears also in an earlier work. In 1911 in L'Ecole des Indifférents, Bernard is found alone on a train imagining that he might be able to prevent the Trojan War from taking place. In fact when one considers the examples quoted in this chapter in the light of what was said in the previous chapter about 'archetypes', Giraudoux himself can then be seen to be an example of this very phenomenon. Events in his past life build up and fuse together until in 1928 he 'se déclare'. He turns dramatist and discovers his true role.

In La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu, the irony of the title introduces the main dramatic force of the play, that man is helpless against something greater than he is. In the light of what was said in the previous chapter about Fate, this 'something' would appear to be man's own inner nature, and his own inner desire for war. In this play it is also his sexual promiscuity, his economic greed, and his ready acceptance of what he chooses to call 'Fate'. So Giraudoux is not concerned with the immediately apparent question of whether or not war will take place, but with the whole question of war and its causes, of human relationships and of the role of 'Fate' in people's lives. The antiquity of the theme symbolises the age and the universality of the conflict, although, under the circumstances of the year when it was written, it is difficult not to think of it in terms of the impending second World War.

Similarities have already been noted between the experiences of

Giraudoux and Hector, and another can be singled out if one compares Hector's remark to Ulysse in Act 2 sc.13:

Eh bien le sort en est jeté Ulysse! Va pour la guerre! A mesure que j'ai plus de haine pour elle, il me vient d'ailleurs un désir plus incoercible de tuer. (7)

with the epigraph to Adorable Clio:

Pardonne -moi, O guerre, de t'avoir toutes les fois où je l'ai pu, caressé. (8)

The 'ailleurs' in Hector's remark above, is further evidence of man's **inner** desire for war.

It is common for writers writing about war to tell the story of the return of the warrior and the difficulty which he finds in attempting to re-adjust to peace-time society, or to tell the story of a war itself and point out the horrors of it, but Giraudoux concerns himself with the hours which immediately precede war, so that he can examine all the forces which contribute to the final catastrophe.

The first force to be noticed is the feeling of the inevitability of war. This is achieved by the introduction of Cassandre *.

The suggestion that there will be incalculable consequences if the tiger is awoken. This atmosphere is increased almost every time that Cassandre speaks. For example in Act 1 sc.1, referring to war:

C'était la dernière. La suivante l'attend. (9)

The inevitability is realised in the third scene by Hector, who says:

Si toutes les mères coupent l'index droit de leurs fils, les armées de l'univers se feront la guerre sans index... Et si elles lui coupent la jambe droite, les armées seront unijambistes... Et si elles lui ~~arrèvent~~ arrèvent les yeux, les armées seront aveugles, mais il y aura des armées. (10)

In the meeting between Hector and Ulysse (Act 2 sc.13) ⁺ it is never really felt that war can be avoided.

(7) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.511

(8) La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu, U.L.P.edition, introduction, by H.J.G.Godin, P.28

(9) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.453 (10) Ibid. P.456

* see chapter 'The Supernatural' P.24 ⁺ see P.27

The whole war/peace situation is shown to be balanced on a very fine wire. The reason given by Ulysse for his departure is trivial (Andromaque a le même battement de cils que Pénélope), and is matched in triviality by the reason for which war eventually breaks out just when it looks as though it has been averted. Demokos shouts out that it was Oiax, the Greek, who killed him, when, in fact, it was Hector, who, in a last desperate effort to avoid war committed an action which led to war.

One of the forces opposed to war is the couple Hector/Andromaque. More will be said in the next chapter of their role, contrasting them with Paris/Eélène. It has been seen how Hector became a man of peace. Andromaque also denies the usual virtues of courage and heroism. In Act 1 sc.6 she says:

Les soldats qui défilent sous les arcs de triomphe sont ceux qui ont déserté la mort. (11)

and in answer to Demokos' remark about war in the same scene:

elle est la seule prime du courage... Tuer un homme, c'est mériter une femme.

she says:

elle aime les lâches, les libertins. (12)

Hector, in his brilliant 'Oration to the Dead' in Act 2 sc.5 says:

Je ne sais si dans la foule des morts on distingue les morts vainqueurs par une cocarde. Les vivants, vainqueurs ou non, ont la vraie cocarde. Elle est double. Ce sont leurs yeux. (13)

This whole speech is a very powerful anti-war protest, but is too long to quote in full here. Instead of praising the heroism of the dead, he reminds them that they who are alive are able to enjoy so many things, even, perhaps the wives of those who are dead. He goes on to make an appeal to the beautiful things in life, saying:

La guerre me paraît la recette la plus sordide et la plus hypocrite pour égaliser les humains.

and also says like Andromaque that:

ces déserteurs que sont les survivants

enjoy two wonderful blessings:

La chaleur et le ciel. (13)

(11) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P. 469

(12) Ibid. P.467

(13) Ibid. P.490

In slightly more light-hearted mood, Polyxène asks Act 2 sc.4:

A quoi ressemble-t-elle, la guerre, maman?

Hécube: A ta tante Héléne.

Polyx : Elle est bien jolie. (14)

and in scene 5 when Hécube has said that the face of war is like a :

cul de singe.

Demokos replies:

Avec celui d'Héléne, cela lui en fait deux. (15)

The role of Héléne is, indeed, very important, because she is a symbol of man's self-deception and of some of the evils in man's nature which contribute to war. The second feature to be noticed in these hours preceding war is the distortion of man's values and the way in which he deceives himself. Andromaque expresses it in Act 2 sc.8:

Aux approches de la guerre, tous les êtres secrètent une nouvelle sueur, tous les événements revêtent un nouveau vernis, qui est le mensonge. (16)

It is as if everyone were under the influence of a drug. Patriotism is encouraged and pacifists are regarded as traitors. This attitude of falsehood is fostered by stimulating unconscious urges, as Demokos says in Act 2 sc.4:

L'ivresse physique, que leurs chefs obtiendront à l'instant de l'assaut par un vin à la résine vigoureusement placé, restera vis-à-vis les Grecs inefficente, si elle ne se double de l'ivresse morale que nous, les poètes, allons leur verser. (17)

Demokos reflects man's desire for war. He is wanting to compose poems about heroes and their deeds. He illustrates the fact that man has been brought up to venerate such heroic deeds. Poets rarely write about the horrors of war, they tend to foster man's aggressive instincts. On the one hand the poets are helping to make man'drunk' with the idea of war, and on the other, Héléne is intoxicating the inhabitants of Troy. The intoxication of the old men of Troy is shown in Act 1 sc.5, in a highly comic scene. This scene only points out strongly the difference in Hector's attitude towards her, because he is not intoxicated with her

(14) Théâtre op. cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.484

(15) Ibid. P.492

(16) Ibid. P.495

(17) Ibid.P.482

beauty. When asked what he sees (remember that this is his first glimpse of H  l  ne), he replies:

Je vois une femme qui rajuste sa sandale. (18)

and later:

Deux fesses charmantes. (18)

He no longer permits any illusions to distort his vision, but he is told by the mathematician in Act 1 sc.6, that the citizens no longer use the accepted means of measurement, because all their values are shaped in terms of H  l  ne:

Il n'y a que le pas d'H  l  ne, la coud  e d'H  l  ne, la port  e du regard ou de la voix d'H  l  ne, et l'air de son passage est la m  sure des vents. Elle est notre barom  tre, notre an  mom  tre! (19)

In the same scene Priam says:

Mon cher fils regarde seulement cette foule, et tu comprendras ce qu'est H  l  ne. Elle est une esp  ce d'absolution. Elle prouve    tous ces vieillards que tu vois l   au guet et qui ont mis des cheveux au fronton de la ville,    celui-l   qui a vol  ,    celui-l   qui trafiquait des femmes,    celui-l   qui manqua sa vie, qu'ils avaient au fond d'eux-m  mes une revendication secr  te, qui   tait la beaut  . Si la beaut   avait   t   pr  s d'eux, aussi pr  s qu'H  l  ne l'est aujourd'hui, ils n'auraient pas d  valis   leurs amis, ni vendu leurs filles, ni bu leur h  ritage. H  l  ne est leur pardon, et leur revanche, et leur avenir. (20)

It can immediately be seen that the beauty referred to here is mere illusion, whereas the beauty referred to by Hector in his 'Oration to the Dead' is the true beauty, the beauty of life.

The pessimistic mood of this play is emphasised by the symbol, at the end, of Troilus kissing H  l  ne. This is the image of youth in the arms of illusion. Inexperience seeking its fulfilment in the mirror of self-deceptions. For every Hector, who has comprehended falsehood, there are many Troiluses. New generations will forget and inexperience will be born again, seeking its purpose and its loyalties in the mirror which reflects the most flattering image.

(18) Th  atre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.464

(19) Ibid. P.465

(20) Ibid. Pp.465,466

War, however, is not born solely of self-deception, but of man's desire for war. Although Hector is disenchanted by it, others are irresistibly attracted to it. Give man an excuse and he will fight. Or, as it is expressed in the play, disturb the order (by abducting Héléne) and you will arouse the tiger. Therefore two features can be seen to emerge as being representative of the way in which Giraudoux treats the theme of war. Firstly, war is a fundamental element in human nature, and secondly, for dramatic effect, this element is exteriorised and portrayed as a malevolent force, against which man would appear to be powerless. Although no other play deals as specifically with the theme of war, it can be seen to be a theme which recurs in the other plays.

In Amphitryon 38 Act 1 sc.2 Sosie refers to peace as:

l'intervalle entre deux guerres! (21)

which again suggests that war is a fundamental part of human life and human nature. Later in the same scene Sosie makes a statement which recalls Hector's appeal to 'la chaleur' and 'le ciel' in his 'Oration to the Dead', when she says:

Ecoute! De la campagne, de la mer résonne partout ce murmure que les vieillards appellent l'écho de la paix.

The warrior says:

C'est dans ces moments-là qu'éclate la guerre! (22)

It is again suggested that war fits in with the plans of nature, when the warrior says in the same scene:

Vous savez qu'après les guerres un mystère veut qu'il naisse plus de garçons que de filles, excepté chez les Amazones. (23)

He then continues his speech, encouraging the men to get up and prepare for war, saying:

Car qui oserait préférer à la gloire d'aller pour la patrie souffrir de la faim, souffrir de la soif, s'enliser dans les boues, mourir, la perspective de rester loin du combat, dans la nourriture et la tranquillité... (23)

(21) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P. 109

(22) Ibid. P.111

(23) Ibid. P.112

Later in the same scene is to be found an example of the self-deception and false values which have already been mentioned:

ce dont est persuadé chaque soldat au départ pour la guerre : que, par un concours divin de circonstances, il n'y aura pas un mort et que tous les blessés le seront au bras gauche, excepté les gauchers. Formez vos compagnies!... C'est là le grand mérite des patries, en réunissant les êtres éparpillés, d'avoir remplacé le duel par la guerre. Ah! que la paix se sent honteuse, elle qui accepte pour la mort les vieillards, les malades, les infirmes, de voir que la guerre n'entend livrer au trépas que des hommes vigoureux, et parvenus au point de santé le plus haut où puissent parvenir des hommes... (24)

This speech has a similar ring to some of the speeches of Demokos, and shows the stupidity of extolling the virtues and glories of war. It demonstrates clearly the stupidity of those elements in war which man so often praises. One also discovers in this play that the moments before departure for war are charged with the intensity of life. In Act 1 sc.2 the warrior says:

Ah! qu'il est bon à la langue le restant de pâté de lièvre arrosé de vin blanc, entre l'épouse en larmes et les enfants qui sortent du lit un par un, par ordre d'âge, comme ils sont sortis du néant! Guerre:salut! (25)

The senses are heightened as if by a drug, which again recalls the intoxication talked of by Demokos when discussing the role of the poet.* The presence of a malevolent force is not strongly felt, although it is stated that it is at moments of apparently great peace that war is likely to break out. Giraudoux does, however, introduce the feeling of it in a dramatic way in his staging of the scene just discussed. As Sôsie is encouraging the people to sleep and take their rest:

surgit et grandit un guerrier géant, en armes. (26)

This is a visual representation of the fact that it is at just such moments that war is likely to break out.

In this play it is clear that Jupiter brings about war for his own ends, so that Amphitryon will go away to fight and leave him to try to seduce Alcène. This shows once again the immorality of the Gods as

(24) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.113

(25) Ibid. P.113

(26) Ibid. P.110

* see P.42

well as their selfishness. Giraudoux makes it quite clear that there is no benevolent being in the universe who is always considering man's welfare.

In Act 1 sc.5 Alcmène is worried about her husband's faithfulness and when she discovers that it is to fight that he is going away, she almost welcomes war as a friend. This illustrates the fact that faithfulness is the central theme of this play. It is in this play also that one most strongly feels that Giraudoux is proposing the power of love as man's best weapon against war. Love is shown to be the one thing capable of overcoming falsehood and self-deception: (Act 2 sc.2) talking of Jupiter:

Qu'il n'a rien fait! Que nous plonger dans un terrible assemblage de stupeurs et d'illusions, où nous devons nous tirer seuls d'affaires, moi et mon cher mari. (27)

and similarly in Act 3 sc.4:

Jupiter : Tu tiens à engager la bataille avec moi?
Amphitryon : S'il le faut, oui.
Jupiter : Je pense que tu es un général suffisamment intelligent pour ne t'y hasarder qu'avec des armes égales aux miennes. C'est l'a b c de la tactique.
Amphitryon : J'ai ces armes.
Jupiter : Quelles armes?
Amphitryon : J'ai Alcmène. (28)

It should also be noted that the war did end straight away without loss of life, and the horses were wounded only in the left leg! This would suggest that, symbolically, the triumph of Amphitryon and Alcmène's love brought the war to an end.

In Electre there exists a similarly atmosphere as in La Guerre de Troie, that there will be terrible consequences if the tiger is woken, of in Electre, if someone, like Electre, makes a sign to the Gods. Egisthe is the Hector type, he is realistic and practical, making a good job of running the country. He is the one who loves life. Electre, as has already been seen,* is the 'femme à histoires'. The difference

(27) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P. 133

(28) Ibid. P. 169

* see chapter 2 P.22

between them is well illustrated in Act 2 sc.8:

- Electre : Quand vous voyez un immense visage emplir l'horizon et vous regarder bien en face, d'yeux intrépides et purs, c'est cela un peuple.
- Egiste : Tu parles en jeune fille, non en roi. C'est un immense corps à nourrir et à régir.
- Electre : Je parle en femme. C'est un regard étincelant, à filtrer, à dorer. Mais il n'a qu'un phosphore, la vérité. C'est ce qu'il y a de si beau, quand vous pensez aux vrais peuples du monde, ces énormes prunelles de vérité. (29)

In the same way that in La Guerre de Troie the end result is known, so also is it in Electre. The same atmosphere is created by the Beggar as was created by Cassandre, and the feeling of pessimism increases all the time. Giraudoux does not, in either play deal with the historical reason for war. In La Guerre de Troie the abduction of Héléne appears to have disturbed the tiger, but this is shown to be an issue which can easily be settled, and Hector has little difficulty in overcoming it. What he is really fighting against is man's desire for war. In Electre Egiste must pacify the Atrides by marrying Clytemnestre, and repel the Corinthians who are at the gates wanting to attack. This he can do, and he begs Electre to let him. Logical reasoning is on his side, but Electre must defend her absolute value, truth. In Act 2 sc.8:

Si tu mens et laisse mentir, tu auras une patrie prospère. Si tu caches les crimes ta patrie sera victorieuse? Quelle est cette pauvre patrie que vous glissez tout à coup entre la vérité et nous? (30)

Whether or not she is right to pursue this absolute value is not answered by Giraudoux. She remains true to her nature, and is unable to forgive the crime:

Mais quand un crime porte atteinte à la dignité humaine, infeste un peuple, pourrit sa loyauté, il n'est pas de pardon. (31)

Another similarity worth noting between these two plays is to be found in Egiste's remark in Act 1 sc.3:

(29) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.588

(30) Ibid. P.587

(31) Ibid. P.588

La guerre se déchaîne quand un peuple dégénère et s'avilit, mais elle dévore les derniers justes, les derniers courageux, et sauve les plus lâches. (32)

This is an echo of Andromaque in La Guerre de Troie Act 1 sc.6, when she says that those who are returning through the triumphal arches are those who have deserted death, * and when she says what she means by cowardice:

Où est la pire lâcheté? Paraître lâche vis-à-vis des autres et assurer la paix? Ou être lâche vis-à-vis de soi-même et provoquer la guerre? (33)

However, where La Guerre de Troie was seen to end on a note of pessimism with the symbol of Hélène kissing Troilus, Electre ends with some small glimmer of optimism: (Act 2 sc.10)

Femme Narsès: Comment cela s'appelle-t-il, quand le jour se lève, comme aujourd'hui, et que tout est gâché, que tout est saccagé, et que l'air pourtant se respire, et qu'on a tout perdu, que la ville brûle, que les innocents s'entretuent, mais que les coupables agonisent, dans un coin du jour qui se lève?.....

Mendiant : Cela a un très beau nom, femme Narsès. Cela s'appelle l'aurore. (34)

In Judith there is also an atmosphere of inevitability, of external forces against which Judith is powerless. Perhaps the priests are only used in order to exteriorise certain elements in Judith's character. It would appear that Judith betrays her own inner convictions in order to do what the priests require and she becomes a saint. In fact she is only succumbing to her own inner desire to achieve sainthood.

There are also in this play traces of Giraudoux's own personal contact with war, as in the realistic description given by Jean; (Act 1 sc.6)

Tous les dix ou quinze pas, tu heurteras des sacs étendus, froids ou encore tièdes, muets ou vagissants, mais tous pleins. Ne t'inquiète pas. Le champ de bataille appelle, rêve tout haut, pleure; et il remue aussi imperceptiblement. (35)

The other plays do not treat the subject of war at all, except in passing references, some of which are worth noting.

(32) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.530

(33) Ibid. La Guerre de Troie P.469

(34) Ibid. Electre P.598 (35) Ibid. Judith P.200

* see P.41 above

In Sodome et Gomorrhe war is referred to in Act 2 sc.2 as:

le jour où l'âme humaine se donne à sa nature. (36)

and in Act 2 sc.7:

les hommes ont inventé la guerre pour y être sans nous (femmes)
et entre hommes. (37)

The theme of this play is love and the power which the human couple may have, to end troubles such as wars. This has already been seen to be the theme of Amphitryon 38, and even in La Guerre de Troie it is suggested.

In Intermezzo, it is suggested that the healthy kind of view of nature taught by Isabelle to her pupils may leave them with a vision of the real possibility of peace. This vision the Inspector is unable to share. Act 1 sc.6:

Inspecteur: Toi, qu'est-ce qui règne entre la France et l'Allemagne?
Irène: L'amitié éternelle. La paix.
Inspecteur: C'est trop peu dire. (38)

In Ondine, Hans says to Auguste in Act 1 sc.2:

Moi, j'aime bien la guerre. Je ne suis pas méchant. Je ne veux pas de mal à personne. Mais j'aime bien la guerre.....Moi j'aime parler. Je suis bavard de nature. A la guerre vous avez toujours quelqu'un avec qui faire la conversation. Si les vôtres sont de mauvaise humeur, vous faites un prisonnier, un aumônier, ce sont les plus bavards. (39)

This view of war is by no means sinister, and is expressed with humour.

Two things are worth noting. Firstly, war is for him a way of having contact with his fellow man - a means of communication. This accords with the second example given above from Sodome et Gomorrhe. Secondly, and more significantly, he is talkative by nature, If he enjoys war because it affords him the opportunity to talk, then one can infer that war is in his nature.

Two further references to war in Ondine serve to sum up the ideas expressed.

(36) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 Sodome et Gomorrhe P.230

(37) Ibid. P.242. (38) Ibid. Vol.1 Intermezzo P.274

(39) Ibid. Vol.2 Ondine P.119

Firstly, in Act 1 sc.7, Auguste says:

Tout ce qu'il y a de venin et de poison dans les fleurs et les reptiles,
à l'approche de l'homme, s'enfuit vers l'ombre ou se dénonce par
sa couleur même. Mais s'il a déplu une fois à la nature, il est
perdu! (40)

In other words, as has been seen so often elsewhere, man is playing with
fire if he disturbs the order.

Secondly, in Act 1 sc.9, when Ondine is talking to Hans about the love
life of sea horses, which are bound together permanently. She says that
their love could be like this. Hans asks what would happen in the case
of war. Ondine replies:

Justement. Je serai à la guerre avec toi. Nous serions le chevalier
à deux visages. L'ennemi fuirait. Nous serions célèbres. (41)

So that the one hope for mankind in overcoming his warring nature lies
in love, especially in the love of the couple. This is the theme of the
next chapter.

(40) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 Ondine P.132

(41) Ibid. P.139

Chapter 4

LOVE & WOMEN

It has just been mentioned that love offers hope. It is necessary to study first the role of the couple, and to ask what it is that Giraudoux hopes for from the couple and why. Then it will be possible to examine the special type of woman who is required for such a relationship, and to see how each female character relates to this. To see what their attitude to love is, and what sort of love they are able to offer.

In Amphitryon 38 Jupiter is impotent against the power of a loving couple. Alcène does not like the word 'amant', but prefers the word 'époux', as she says to Jupiter in Act 1 sc.6 when he comes to her as her lover:

Je n'ouvrirai pas ma porte à un amant.... Parce que l'amant est toujours plus près de l'amour que de l'aimée. Parce que je ne supporte ma joie que sans limites, mon plaisir que sans réticence, mon abandon que sans bornes. Parce que je ne veux pas d'esclave et que je ne veux pas de maître. Parce qu'il est mal élevé de tromper son mari, fût-ce avec lui-même. Parce que j'aime les fenêtres ouvertes et les draps frais. (1)

Her love for Amphitryon is symbolised by 'fenêtres ouvertes' and 'draps frais'. It is simple and innocent. Above all it is a faithful love, and it is made quite clear that it is faithfulness which gives it its power. In Act 1 sc.6 Alcène says to Jupiter (thinking that Jupiter is Amphitryon):

Je jure d'être fidèle à Amphitryon, mon mari, ou de mourir. (2)

And in Act 2 sc.7 she says to Amphitryon:

Ruses des hommes, désirs des dieux, ne tiennent pas contre la volonté et l'amour d'une femme fidèle.... Qu'ai-je à redouter des dieux et des hommes, moi qui suis loyale et sûre, rien, n'est-ce pas, rien, rien? (3)

In Act 1 scenes 5 and 6, Jupiter says much about love and faithfulness. He points out the difference between fidelity of body and infidelity of

(1) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.P.124,125

(2) Ibid. P.126

(3) Ibid. P.158

of heart, and says that faithful wives deceive with everything except men and that, in fact, fidelity is contrary to love itself because:

l'amour d'une épouse ressemble au devoir. Le devoir à la contrainte.
La contrainte tue le désir. (4)

Too much should not be read into this statement, because it has already been seen that the Gods are immoral, but it does raise the possibility that, although technically faithful, perhaps Alcmène is unfaithful in that she is so much in love with the idea of her faithfulness.

Faithfulness is shown to be a state of mind. In Pour Lucrèce, Lucile was not actually unfaithful, but because she accepted the possibility that she had been raped, she was in her own eyes guilty.* In Ondine, Ondine insists that she was not unfaithful to Hans with Bertram, because, as she kissed Bertram all she thought of was Hans. She expresses the paradox of the situation in Act 3 sc.5:

Mais ne juge pas les sentiments des hommes avec nos mesures d'ondins.
Souvent les hommes qui trompent aiment leurs femmes. Souvent ceux
qui trompent sont les plus fidèles. (5)

The optimism which colours Giraudoux's writings about the human couple is best shown by quoting two extracts from Amphitryon 38, which also demonstrate his effective dramatic technique. The first is the last speech of the play and it expresses the couple's victory. Jupiter tells all the extra-human powers to leave and the spectators too: (Act 3 sc.6)

Qu'une suprême fois Alcmène et son mari apparaissent seuls dans un
cercle de lumière, où mon bras ne figurera plus que comme un bras
indicateur pour indiquer le sens du bonheur; et sur ce couple, que
l'adultère n'effleura et n'effleurera jamais, auquel ne sera jamais
connue la saveur du baiser illégitime pour clore de velours cette
clairière de fidélité, vous là-haut, rideaux de la nuit qui vous
contenez depuis une heure, retombez. (6)

The second is at the end of the second act and was quoted above.⁺ After Alcmène has asserted that neither Gods nor men can do anything against the love of a faithful wife, the passage ends:

Qu'ai-je à redouter des dieux et des hommes, moi qui suis loyale et sûre,
rien, n'est-ce pas, rien, rien?
Echo: Tout! Tout!
Alcmène: Tu dis?
Echo: Rien! Rien! (3)

(4) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.124

(5) Ibid. Vol.2 Ondine P.191 (6) Ibid. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.177

* see Tragedy & Debate P.3 + see P.51

Although Intermezzo was written later than Amphitryon 38, Mercier-Campiche makes a valid point in her book*, when she says that it is interesting to think of Amphitryon as the sequel to Intermezzo where Isabelle, now Greek and married, denies her Ghost in the person of Jupiter. Certainly one may be allowed to think that in Intermezzo Giraudoux is examining the way in which a character might develop into such a state of refinement and integration as that of Alcène. Firstly it is the sounds of everyday which bring Isabelle back to consciousness after the Ghost's embrace, which reminds one of Alcène's gratitude to the qualities of constancy, gentleness and devotion which make her daily life worth living. Secondly, Isabelle also has an idealised picture of the rôle of the couple. In Act 1 sc.8 she is talking of the dead and of their need for an emperor or a messiah!

Ne croyez-vous pas que tout serait merveilleusement changé pour vous et pour nous, s'il surgissait un jeune mort, une jeune morte - ou un couple, ce serait si beau - qui leur fasse aimer leur état et comprendre qu'ils sont immortels? (7)

She is tempted to become that girl, but she eventually realises that happiness is to be found in the simple things of life, and in the couple that she can form with an ordinary civil servant as partner. The Contrôleur sums up his rôle in Act 3 sc.4:

Si j'ai une certitude, c'est celle de faire, quand mon tour sera venu, une ombre parfaite de contrôleur... j'aurai dans la plus minime mesure adouci... la malignité du destin... j'aurai droit à la mort. (8)

So the couple has power against destiny, and the couple in loving simple things can show the way to human happiness. When Isabelle awakens from her trance in Act 3 sc.6 and asks for the hand of the Contrôleur, thus forming a couple with him, the Inspector says:

Elle est perdue

whereas the Druggist says:

elle est sauvée. (9)

(7) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Intermezzo P.280

(8) Ibid. P.318

(9) Ibid. P.324

* M. Mercier-Campiche. Le Théâtre de Jean Giraudoux et la Condition Humaine, Éditions Domat, 1954. P.244

So far, Alcène and Amphitryon form the ideal couple. Isabelle is looking for something beyond the everyday, she is seeking to understand the universe. In Ondine, Hans is looking for some unattainable, ideal relationship, which is shown to be unworkable.

To begin with their relationship is sensual. Ondine says in Act 1 sc.3:

Prends-moi!.....Emporte-moi! (10)

and in Act 1 sc.6:

Mange-moi!.....Achève-moi! (11)

The same scene illustrates the gap that exists between them. Ondine says:

Je serai tes souliers, mon mari, je serai ton souffle. Je serai
le pommeau de ta selle. Je serai ce que tu pleures, ce que tu rêves...
..ce que tu manges là, c'est moi.

Hans, eating his ham, says:

C'est salé à point. C'est excellent. (12)

His feet are firmly planted on the ground, and he is unable to follow Ondine into her fanciful kingdom. The love of which she is capable is that of the 'chien de mer' of which she speaks in Act 1 sc.9. Once joined they remain in contact and never leave each other in spite of very strong currents and the fact that the male might like cold waters and the female hot. As stated above,* the enemy would flee in the face of such a couple. It is an ideal kind of relationship which not many couples are capable of achieving. Nothing in Hans' character indicates that he would be capable of such love. He says in Act 3 sc.6:

J'étais né pour vivre entre mon écurie et ma meute... Non. J'ai été pris
entre toute la nature et toute la destinée comme un rat. (13)

He realises too late, however, when he has returned to the imperfect Bertha, that he can not live without Ondine. He needs her in order to be able to **live**. He has to order himself to see, to hear and to breathe, because if he is not careful he might forget to do so.

In Supplément au voyage de Cook, Outourou, the native chief says

(10) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 Ondine P.122

(11) Ibid. P.128 (12) Ibid. P.128 (13) Ibid. P.193

* see chapter, War P.50

in scene 7:

Oh, Mrs. Banks! Ce n'est pas la question des couples qui compte en ce bas monde, mais celle des couples heureux. (14)

In this play the natives are seen to have a very free attitude towards sex, and place much more emphasis on love and on the couple, than on the laws of marriage. In scene 4, Mr. Banks, the missionary, asks Outourou if he has heard of the first man and the first woman. Outourou replies that he has heard of the first couple. According to their history there was a first couple, not a first man and woman.

Sodome et Gomorrhe is probably the most important play to study from the point of view of finding out about the couple. The whole subject of the play is marriage and its disintegration, which takes place because, instead of working together to achieve an harmonious ideal, Jean and Lia and all the other couples, are in constant disagreement. If one loving couple can be found, then the two cities will be saved from divine destruction. Once again, one finds that the outcome is known from the start. Everyone knows that the two cities were indeed destroyed. The paradox present in this play is that on the one hand the human couple has this power to save the world, but on the other hand man is precluded from doing this because of his own irremediable imperviousness, which prevents him ever fully knowing and possessing another person. Lia expresses this in Act 1 sc.4:

Ce sont les habitants de la terre qu'une vitre terrible sépare.
Croyez-vous que je ne me serais pas satisfait d'un seul homme? Que je l'atteigne, que je le touche, c'est tout ce que je demandais, et Dieu sait si j'ai frotté la vitre, et tapé à la vitre, et gratté la vitre de Jean! Elle est intacte.... Ne m'en veuillez pas si je n'ai de chair et de toucher que pour le ciel. (15)

Much of the pessimism lies in the fact that the couple Lia/Jean are basically inactive, although Lia hints at some plan in Act 1 sc.1, without ever saying what it is:

(14) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 Supplément au voyage de Cook P.35

(15) Ibid. Sodome et Gomorrhe P.226

Ruth: Alors! Nous les abandonnons? Nous les tuons?

Lia: Il y a aussi la troisième solution. (16)

This third solution may be to love them, or it may be the most pessimistic of all solutions. It may be the solution which Giraudoux uses in his final, unfinished play, Pour Lucrèce - namely, suicide.

The Archangel explains in Act 1 sc.1 that God could accept all the evils for which humans have been responsible without wanting to destroy the species, so long as they remained in couples:

Dans Sodome et Gomorrhe, l'offense du mal, l'infamie du mal vient de ce que chaque sexe le fait pour son propre compte. Jusqu'ici, dans leurs méfaits ou leur ignominie, hommes et femmes respectaient du moins la seule base que Dieu ait glissée sous leur vie, celle de leur union, celle du couple. C'est en jumeaux du moins qu'ils ont valu jusqu'ici au ciel ses colères et ses scucis.... Et tous les grands noms des crimes de l'humanité contre Dieu, de la pomme au déluge, sont les annales du couple.... Et Dieu sévissait contre eux durement, mais jamais mortellement, car ce jumelage et cette ligue contre lui-même étaient aussi une fidélité et une promesse. Comprends-tu maintenant? (17)

At the end, in Act 2 sc.9, Lia wants them to remain apart so that God will understand:

Si Dieu voit d'un côté toutes les femmes s'enlaçant dans la mort, de l'autre tous les hommes, il comprendra. In n'a pas compris au Déluge, parce qu'il a vu flotter les cadavres de couples enlacés. (18)

In Act 1 sc.2, the angel sums up the human couple as it appears in this play:

O Dieu, voici le couple humain : un homme qui est l'époux de toutes les femmes d'autrui, une femme qui est l'épouse de tous les hommes des autres couples. (19)

The tragedy is that these couples are held erect, frozen at a certain moment in time which neither they nor God can understand: (Act 2 sc.5)

Lia: Il (God) est comme nous. Il ne comprend pas. Pourquoi cette lézarde a craqué soudain dans notre bonheur. Pourquoi je me brouille avec le seul homme qui me donne l'entente, je hais le seul homme que j'aime, je fuis le seul pour lequel je n'ai pas d'aversion. (20)

The point is expressed in familiarly paradoxical terms.

(16) Théâtre Vol.2 Sodome et Gomorrhe P.211

(17) Ibid. P.203

(18) Ibid. P.251

(19) Ibid. P.218

(20) Ibid. P.239

It is also interesting to note that in this play Lia tries to seduce the angel (Act 1 sc.4), remembering that Isabelle was infatuated by a Ghost and Hans by a mermaid. All of these turned out to be impossible relationships.

There are two final quotations which illustrate the total, unrelenting pessimism of this play. Firstly in Act 2 sc.10:

Jean: tout était perdu à son premier mot.
Lia: Mon premier mot était : Je t'aime. (21)

and at the end when they are finally separated:

Jean: Nous sommes tranquilles.
Lia: Ici nous sommes heureuses. (22)

More pessimism is seen in some of the minor works. In the one act play Cantique des Cantiques scene 6, when Florence is going to get married, the President tells her as she prepares to enter:

dans le domaine où il n'est plus de volonté, de liberté.

to keep the diamonds which he has given her because:

les femmes n'ont aucun espoir de gagner qui veulent lutter nues avec les hommes.... Vous avez ces quelques moyens de lui échapper, de sauver votre indifférence, de ne pas souffrir, qui sont vos bijoux. Ne me les rendez pas. (23)

In the film La Duchesse de Langeais, which Giraudoux adapted from Balzac in 1941/42, Montriveau says from his terrassé in Act 4 sc.3:

O Antoinette, quand nous sommes ainsi l'un à côté de l'autre... ne sentez-vous pas quel couple parfait nous formons?... Il y a si peu de vrais mariages en ce monde. Le nôtre serait vrai... Dès que nous arrivons sur ces faites, le moindre vent, le moindre soleil donne à notre couple sa forme et sa patine éternelles. (24)

But the Duchess is aware that they have to live down below amongst men. Rather in the same way as Holopherne offered Judith a place of peace and beauty in his tent, Montriveau wants to take her up and away from ordinary life. But, in the same way that Isabelle had to come back to

(21) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 Sodome et Gomorrhe P.253

(22) Ibid. P. 253

(23) Ibid. P.102 Cantique des Cantiques

(24) Ibid. P.543 La Duchesse de Langeais.

life and reality, the duchess says that they cannot abandon the world because:

si notre couple est parfait, ce n'est pas pour fuir notre monde, pour le trahir. (25)

She ends up in a convent after complex misunderstandings, although their love remains intact, and she says in the end: (Act 4 sc.6)

Nous avons eu l'amour, et pas le bonheur. Nous avons eu l'entente suprême et pas la vie. O Armand ce n'est pas si mal. (26)

Valid points can be made from such works as this if they obviously reflect themes in common with the plays which Giraudoux conceived and wrote himself. It can be argued that he chose to adapt certain works because their themes appealed to him and fitted in with his own philosophy.

The angel in Sodome et Gomorrhe Act 2 sc.7:

Il n'y a jamais eu de créature. Il n'y a jamais eu que le couple. Dieu n'a pas créé l'homme et la femme l'un après l'autre, ni l'un de l'autre. Il a créé deux corps jumeaux unis par des lanières de chair qu'il a tranchées depuis, dans un accès de confiance, le jour où il a créé la tendresse. Et, le jour où il a créé l'harmonie, il a fait de chacun de ces corps identiques la dissemblance et l'accord mêmes. Et enfin, le jour où Dieu a eu son seul accès de joie, il a voulu se donner à soi-même une louange, il a créé la liberté et a délégué au couple humain le pouvoir de fonder en ce bas monde les deux récompenses, les deux prix de Dieu, la constance et l'intimité humaines. (27)

Lia says that the couple is sterile, to which the angel replies:

Lia, de là-haut, nous voyons surtout le désert, qui tient les trois quarts du monde, et il reste le désert si c'est un homme seul ou une femme seule qui s'y risque, Mais le couple qui y chemine le change en oasis et en campagne. (28)

The couple, therefore, has great power. It has already been seen that real love may be the answer to man's problems in La Guerre de Troie.*

In this play there are three couples.

Firstly, there is the couple Troilus/Helene, who have already been shown to*

(25) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 La Duchesse de Langeais P.543

(26) Ibid. P.592 (27) Ibid. Sodome et Gomorrhe. P.243

(28) Ibid. P.244

* see chapter 'War' PP.41,43

symbolise foolishness and false values, and the fact that man will continue to deceive himself. They display the opposite of the type of couple under discussion. Their love, if they have any at all, is purely sensual. They only appear twice in the play. Once in Act 2 sc.1 when Hélène tries to make Troilus kiss her and once at the very end of the play when, again, they are seen to kiss.

Secondly there is the couple Paris/Hélène. Their love is also sensual, as demonstrated by the account of their actions given by the sailor.(Act 2 sc.2) and by Hector's remark in Act 1 sc.9, saying that he has heard:

que vous aimez surtout froter les hommes contre vous comme de grands savons. (29)

This is also seen in Paris's attitude. Act 1 sc.4:

L'amour comporte des moments vraiment exaltants, ce sont les ruptures...(30)
Andromaque condemns them for risking the destruction of Troy through the selfishness of their sensual love. She says to Hélène in Act 2 sc.8:

Et que nos idées et que notre avenir soient fondés sur l'histoire d'une femme et d'un homme qui s'aimaient, ce n'est pas si mal. Mais il ne voit pas que vous n'êtes qu'un couple officiel!.. Penser que nous allons souffrir, mourir, pour un couple officiel, que la splendeur ou le malheur des âges, que les habitudes des cerveaux et des siècles vont se fonder sur l'aventure de deux êtres qui ne s'aimaient pas, c'est là l'horreur. (31)

and:

Et la vie de mon fils, et la vie d'Hector vont se jouer sur l'hypocrisie et le simulacre, c'est épouvantable!.... Alors je vous en supplie, Hélène.... Aimez Paris! Ou dites-moi que je ne trompe! Dites-moi que vous vous tuerez s'il mourait! Que vous accepterez qu'on vous défigure pour qu'il vive!... Alors la guerre ne sera plus qu'un fléau, pas une injustice. J'essaierai de la supporter. (31)

It can be assumed that Andromaque would have allowed these things to happen to her, because of her love for Hector. It is here that the difference lies. The other two couples have been unable to relate and to attach to each other, but the third couple, Hector/Andromaque, point

(29) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.474

(30) Ibid. P.461

(31) Ibid. P.495

out the contrast. Hector has become a man of peace, and all Andromaque wants to do is live a life of peace and a normal family life. In Act 1 sc.3 she says that she would rather kill the child to whom she is about to give birth, than think that he would inevitably become a warrior. As seen above, she firmly believes in the power of the human couple. She expresses it very clearly in the same scene with H el ene:

Peut- tre, si vous vous aimez. l'amour appellerait-il   son secours l'un de ses  gaux, la g n rosit , l'intelligence..... Personne, m me le destin, ne s'attaque d'un co ur l ger   la passion.

And at the end of the same scene, H el ene throws the challenge back at her:

S'il suffit d'un couple parfait pour vous faire admettre la guerre, il y a toujours le v tre, Andromaque. (32)

In Judith, Judith sees in Holopherne the ideal partner. She is prevented from joining with him to form an ideal couple by her pride. As the Archangel says in Sodome et Gomorrhe Act 2 sc.7:

C'est un peu fragile d' tre Judith. Il ne faut pour cela que de l'orgueil. (33)

She kills Holopherne because, having lived on the summit she is not prepared like Antoinette in La Duchesse de Langeais to return to earth. She wants to capture that moment of freedom and love, and is determined not to let Holopherne betray her. She looks at him in Act 3 sc.6:

tellement peu prot g , par sa mort  ph m re, contre les menaces du jour qui vient. (34)

She can not face everyday life and should, perhaps, have committed suicide in order to join him. Her pride takes over and, although she initially wants to tell the true reason why she killed him, she erases the witness to her night of love (the guard, who is symbolic of her conscience), because to be the heroine is preferable to dying for love. Neither is she prepared to settle for a humdrum existence with Jean. He believes in the power of the couple: (Act 1 sc.5)

(32) Th  tre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.495

(33) Ibid. Vol.2 Sodome et Gomorrhe P.242

(34) Ibid. Vol.1 Judith P.239

O Judith, ne pensons pas à ce que serait l'humanité, si les vrais mariages avaient eu lieu. (35)

The kind of love after which one must strive is the love which makes one change one's life and one's whole outlook on life. It is the love that makes one mad. What is meant by 'mad' is explained by the King of the Ondines when he is talking of Hans' encounter with love in Act 3 sc.5:

Il erre dans le chateau. il se parle à lui-même. il divague. C'est la façon qu'ont les hommes de s'en tirer, quand ils ont heurté une vérité, une simplicité, un trésor.... Ils deviennent ce qu'ils appellent fous. Ils sont soudain logiques, ils n'abdiquent plus, ils n'épousent pas celles qu'ils n'aiment pas, ils ont le raisonnement des plantes, des eaux, de Dieu : ils sont fous... Il est fou... il t'aime. (36)

This madness which is love is the madness of La Folle de Chaillot. In this play only the mad are sane. It is their love of life and of each other which preserves the joys and beauty of life from the ruthless exploiters and financiers who have lost the madness of love in their greed. The President says in Act 1:

Notre pouvoir expire là où subsiste la pauvreté joyeuse, la domesticité méprisante et frondeuse, la folie respectée et adulée. (37)

Reminding one of the way in which Isabelle was brought back to consciousness in Intermezzo by the sounds of everyday, there is a scene, after the earth has swallowed up the scoundrels, in which the pigeons are flying again, like the dove after the flood, and the beauty of everyday is seen once again. La Folle could be said, in fact, to be a development of the character of Isabelle, and can be thought of as Isabelle aged 60 and abandoned by her Contrôleur. La Folle was indeed abandoned by her lover, Adolphe Bertaut. She still has the memory of this love and it is this that makes her what she is. At the end of the play she begs young Irma and Pierre:

Embrassez-vous, et vite, sinon ce sera trop tard..... Embrasse-le, Irma. Si deux êtres qui s'aiment laissent une seule minute se loger entre eux, elle devient des mois, des années, des siècles. Forcez-les à s'embrasser, vous autres, sinon dans une heure elle sera la Folle de l'Alma... (38)

(35) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Judith P.197

(36) Ibid. Vol.2 Ondine P.192

(37) Ibid. La Folle de Chaillot P.302 (38) Ibid. P.360

La Folle de Chaillot was Giraudoux's last completed play, and it is interesting now to go right back and examine the role of the 'couple' in his first play, Siegfried. It will then be possible to see how this important idea changes and develops.

In Siegfried is portrayed the triumph of human love, emerging victorious from the chaos and destruction around it. Her, once again, what summons Siegfried back to life in France are the ordinary everyday things: (Act 3 sc.5) - Geneviève:

Ta lampe t'attend, les initiales de ton papier à lettres t'attendent, et les arbres de ton boulevard, et ton breuvage, et les costumes démodés que je préservais...c'est là la vraie patrie, c'est là ce que tu réclames...Je l'ai vu depuis que je suis ici. Je comprends ton perpétuel malaise. Il y a entre les moineaux, les guêpes, les fleurs de ce pays et ceux du tien une différence de nature imperceptible, mais inacceptable pour toi. C'est seulement quand tu retrouveras tes animaux, tes insectes, tes plantes, ces odeurs qui diffèrent pour la même fleur dans chaque pays, que tu pourras vivre heureux. (39)

The element in the final version of the play which distinguishes it from all other versions, is the greater importance given to the couple, Siegfried/Geneviève, and particularly to the role of Geneviève. Instead of a rather dull account of a political struggle and the pessimism which must necessarily result from a dramatisation of the political struggle between France and Germany, one is presented with a play which holds up as being valid only one value, that of the love between two people. In 1928 this is Giraudoux's chief hope for man's future happiness. In 1934 in Fin de Siegfried, an alternative, pessimistic ending is given to the story. It ends with the death of Siegfried just as he is about to bridge the gap between the two countries. Since Giraudoux's writings span the years of the second world war and the tensions and conflicts which preceded it, it would seem to be useful to consider the theme as it develops chronologically, by way of a summary.

Siegfried shows that even in the tensions of French/German relationships, love can find a place, and love can triumph. This was followed in

1929 by the supreme example of Giraudoux's faith in the power of the couple, Amphitryon 38. Judith, in 1931, does not reflect the same optimism, although it is suggested that Judith could find fulfilment in a relationship with Holopherne. The difference lies in the fact that the possibility of finding love is not realised. The hero and heroine are a prey to their pride and to the aggressions and ambitions of their two countries. The ideal of love is destroyed by human imperfection and by the interference of religion and politics. The ideal returns in Intermezzo (1933), which encourages the return to nature and to all the simple, innocent things of life. However, the ideal balance of all the conflicting forces is to be found in the next play, La Guerre de Troie (1935). Here, the loving couple, Hector and Andromaque, are confronted with the warrior instinct in man, his sexual promiscuity and his willingness to fall prey to illusion. The ideal of love is shattered by the emergence of the baser instincts in man. In Electre (1937), it can be seen that the background to the prevailing atmosphere of gloom, is a history of broken couples. Clytemnestre had killed Agamemnon - once again it is worth noting the triviality of the reason she gives for her hatred. In Act 2 sc.9, she says that she hated the way he bent his little finger, no matter what he was doing. Agathe is unfaithful to the President. Clytemnestre, though, does hint at the power of love in Act 2 sc.5:

Nous sommes femmes, Electre, nous avons le droit d'aimer. (40)

Electre had no love, she had only her truth. The clear indication is that had her passion for truth and justice been tempered with love, then the destruction which followed might have been avoided. Ondine (1939), suggests the possibilities for love, but ends with the disenchantment of Hans and his death. Sodome et Gomorrhe (1943), coincided with the death of Giraudoux's mother and with the middle of the war. The gloom is

(40) Théâtre op. cit. Vol.1 Electre P.571

unrelenting and the pessimism with regard to the power of love is total. It is quite evident that Giraudoux still believes in the potential of love and especially in the potential of the 'couple', the pessimism lies in the fact that there appears to be no way in which this potential can be realised. The optimism returns to some extent in La Folle de Chaillot (1945), but never again does he seem to recapture the glorious vision of the earlier plays.

It is necessary now, in order to complete this study, to look more closely at each of the female characters to see which of them would be capable of enjoying the sort of relationship discussed above. Specifically to see, a) what their attitude towards love is.

b) what they expect from love.

c) what kind of love they themselves are able to offer

It should be remembered that nearly all the characters who can be called 'elect' are female characters*. It will also be seen that there are two types of woman. One who has found herself can be referred to as a 'femme' and one who is still searching as a 'jeune fille'. It is, perhaps, convenient to think of the 'jeune fille' as a virgin and the 'femme' as a woman.

Alcmène is a 'femme'. It is clear that she is proud to be a woman and that she is very happy in her marriage. For her, life consists of living in this:

terrible assemblage de stupeurs et d'illusions. (41)

Her greatness lies in the fact that she chooses to live there in spite of the offers of immortality. She realises that she will have to die, but in Act 3 sc.5 expresses her contentment with this situation:

Je sais ce qu'est un avenir heureux. Mon mari aimé vivra et mourra.
Mon fils chéri naîtra, vivra et mourra. Je vivrai et mourrai. (42)

(41) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.133

(42) Ibid. P.175

* see chapter 'The Supernatural' P.21ff.

It should be noted that, although she is not yet a mother, she knows that:

il est humain de désirer un fils immortel. (43)

although, for her, death is a reward not a limitation:

Je ne crains pas la mort. C'est l'enjeu de la vie. (44)

This is clearly illustrated in Act 2 sc.2, where she shows that Jupiter's promise of immortality means nothing to her:

Jupiter: Tu n'as jamais désiré être déesse, ou presque déesse?

Alcmène: Certes non. Pourquoi faire?

Jupiter: Pour être honorée et réverée de tous.

Alcmène: Je le suis comme simple femme, c'est plus méritoire.

Jupiter: Pour être d'une chair plus légère, pour marcher sur les airs, sur les eaux.

Alcmène: C'est ce que fait toute épouse, alourdie d'un bon mari. (45)

In Act 2 sc.3 the qualities common to Gods and man are courage, love and passion, which are opposed by the human qualities of constancy, gentleness and devotion. The first three are heroic qualities, whereas the other three belong to daily life, and it is these three which for Alcmène make daily life worth living: Jupiter says:

mais il y a justement en elle (Alcmène) quelque chose d'inattaquable et de borne qui doit être l'infini humain. Sa vie est un prisme où le patrimoine commun aux dieux et aux hommes, courage, amour, passion, se mue en qualités proprement humaines, constance, douceur, dévouement, sur lesquelles meurt notre pouvoir. Elle est la seule femme que je supporterais habillée, voilée; dont l'absence égale exactement la présence; dont les occupations me paraissent aussi attirantes que les plaisirs. Déjeuner en face d'elle, je parle même du petit déjeuner, lui tendre le sel, le miel, les épices, dont son sang et sa chaleur s'alimentent, heurter sa main! fût-ce de sa cuiller ou de son assiette, voilà à quoi je pense maintenant! Je l'aime, en un mot, et je peux bien te le dire, Mercure, son fils sera mon fils préféré. (46)

In a word her innocence is symbolised by the 'fenêtres ouvertes' and the 'draps frais' mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.*

To answer the three questions posed above, it can be said that her attitude towards love is simple and straightforward. She is prepared to be completely faithful to the one man whom she loves. Love is the most important thing in her life. From love she expects to find her strength to fight against

(43) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.135

(44) Ibid. P.134

(45) Ibid. P.134

(46) Ibid. P.138

* See P.51 above.

this 'terrible assemblage de stupeurs et d'illusions'. This is the type of love that she is herself prepared to offer - complete, total, integrated love. It has already been pointed out that Amphitryon thought that he had, in Alcène, a weapon capable of defeating the Gods.* The most important thing of all about the love which Alcène can offer, is that it is the kind of love which is needed in order to form the 'couple', and it is in the 'couple' that Giraudoux places his hope for the future. As Alcène says to Amphitryon in Act 3 sc.3:

Prends-moi dans tes bras! Etreins-moi! Embrasse-moi en pleine lumière pour qu'il(Jupiter) voie quel être unique forment deux époux. (47)

Another whose love is symbolised by the everyday things of life is Isabelle in Intermezzo. In this case it is particularly interesting, because she is seen to change from 'jeune fille' to 'femme'. The transition is violent. The similarity between Isabelle and Alcène has been observed already.⁺ The protagonists are the same in both cases, Humanity v Destiny - in the form of a supraterrrestrial being. Alcène is not so easy to understand, unless one imagines that she developed in the same way as Isabelle, because she has already come to terms with life and death. Isabelle eventually does so, and learns to live within the confines of her human estate.

She teaches her pupils to love nature and to put nature in perspective. In Act 1 sc.6 her pupils illustrate this point:

Gilberte: L'arbre est le frère non mobile des hommes. Dans son langage, les assassins s'appellent les bûcherons, les croque-morts les charbonniers, les puces les pieverts.

Irène: Par ses branches, les saisons nous font des signes toujours exacts. Par ses racines les morts soufflent jusqu'à son faite leurs désirs, leurs rêves. (48)

She uses her imagination, and teaches others to make use of theirs. As 'jeune fille' she desires to understand the universe and all its mysteries, until she is abruptly and violently transformed into womanhood

(47) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.164

(48) Ibid. Vol.1 Intermezzo P.272

* see chapter 'War' P.46 + see P.53 above

and aligns herself with the Contrôleur, who says: (Act 3 sc.4)

Un secret inexplicable tient souvent en vous une place plus noble
et plus aérée que son explication.

and

nous nous dirigeons avec sûreté dans la vie en vertu de nos ignorances
et non de nos révélations. (49)

In the same scene the Ghost says that when man comes into a young girl's
life, then all is finished. The Contrôleur replies indignantly:

C'est fini? Si vous faites allusion au mariage, vous voulez
dire que tout commence?

Spectre: Et le plaisir des nuits, et l'habitude du plaisir commence.
Et la gourmandise commence. Et la jalousie...Et la vengeance.
Et l'indifférence commence. (50)

The Contrôleur has shown many times how, even in a routine job like his,
he has plenty of scope for using his imagination, and that the secret
of a happy life is to use one's imagination. The play points out the
difference between the two points of view by using the Inspector as a
contrast. For him, everything must be scientifically and factually
explained.

Her attitude towards love is that she is looking for the ultimate,
she is looking to be able to understand. From love she expects perfection.
As she says in Act 1 sc.8:

Ne croyez-vous pas que tout serait merveilleusement changé, pour vous
et pour nous s'il surgissait un jeune mort, une jeune morte - ou un
couple, ce serait si beau - qui leur fasse aimer leur état et comprendre
qu'ils sont immortels? (51)

She is tempted to become that young girl. She is able eventually to accept
the love offered by the Contrôleur. Her moment of self-declaration
comes in the arms of the Ghost, and when she awakes surrounded by the
sounds of everyday life, it can be seen that it is this life alone that
can save her.

The love which she is able to offer will certainly be true and faithful.
This can be deduced from her attitude towards nature and from the values
which she teaches to her pupils. She is one of the most interesting

(49) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Intermezzo 317

(50) Ibid. P.319

(51) Ibid. P.280

of Giraudoux's female creations because the central theme of the play is her search for herself. Other women who resemble her, Alcène, Andromaque and, perhaps, Geneviève, are discovered already in this state of harmony with themselves.

Not a great deal, therefore, needs to be said about Andromaque. She is interesting mainly as a contrast to the other female characters, Hélène and Cassandre. Her attitude towards love is that of the perfect wife and mother to be. In Act 1 sc.3 she says that she would kill her about to be born son rather than think that he would become a warrior. She appears to be idealistic about love, as has been seen in her scene with Hélène (Act 2 sc.8), where she says that war would be bearable if it were in the cause of some great passion, and that even destiny is wary of attacking passion.* She can offer the same kind of complete and faithful love in which it has been seen that Giraudoux finds hope for the future.

The contrast introduced by Cassandre is that of a woman who does not know love. She is a representative of the forces of destiny. Andromaque says in Act 1 sc.1 that destiny:

s'agite dans les filles qui n'ont pas de mari. (52)

She introduces destiny as the destroyer of human happiness. Dramatically she is important because of her mythological background.⁺ In her prophecy she combines lucidity and instinct. Act 1 sc.10:

Moi, je ne vois rien, coloré ou terne. Mais chaque être pèse sur moi par son approche même. A l'angoisse de mes veines, je sens son destin. (53)

She has much more feeling than Hélène, and given a more prominent place could have been a tragic figure. She is prevented by her lucidity from taking refuge in the illusions which for other people make human

(52) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.454

(53) Ibid. P.477

* see chapter 'The Supernatural' P.26 + see 'The Supernatural' P.24

life tolerable.

Hélène is not the selfish character one might at first be tempted to believe she is. One must avoid thinking that she refuses to leave Paris and therefore sacrifices Troy for her own selfish ends. She has a passive role and she accepts the concept of an immutable destiny. She has a stoic acceptance of what is.

When she first appears, she behaves like the traditional 'dumb blonde' and merely repeats everything that is said to her like an automaton. However, as the play progresses one observes that she possesses a tranquility which the other characters lack. She contains something of the supernatural in her character (she was the daughter of Leda by Jupiter). She sees pictures. She is not always rational. She comprehends 'la forme accélérée du temps' by sensing it. Although she has this passive role, (Act 1 sc.8):

Je laisse l'univers penser à ma place. Cela, il le fait mieux que moi. (54)

she is, in a way, also a positive character, because she retains a refreshing quality of innocence. She is not prepared to use her free will in opposition to her inner necessity, and thus she does remain true to herself. Unlike the old men, who are corrupt and self-interested, she does not change her views to suit herself or to delude herself. She is not a victim of the 'mensonge' which is a characteristic of the time shortly before a war. Andromaque's accusation that her apparent lack of feeling springs from an ignorance of human suffering is shown to be wrong, when Hélène talks in Act 2 sc.8 of the suffering which she saw during her childhood, amongst the birds.

In her view of the world, man can give himself dignity by using his imagination. In Act 2 sc.8 she says:

(54) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.473

Chère Andromaque, tout cela n'est pas si simple. Je ne passe point mes nuits, je l'avoue, à réfléchir sur le sort des humains, mais il m'a toujours semblé qu'ils se partageaient en deux sortes. Ceux qui sont, si vous voulez, la chair de la vie humaine. Et ceux qui en sont l'ordonnance, l'allure. Les premiers ont le rire, les pleurs, et tout ce que vous voudrez en sécrétions. Les autres ont le geste, la tenue, le regard. Si vous les obligez à ne faire qu'une race, cela ne va plus aller du tout. L'humanité doit autant à ses vedettes qu'à ses martyrs. (55)

Hélène's attitude towards love is one of sensuality. When Hector tells her in Act 1 sc.8 that she does not love Paris but men, she replies:

Je ne les déteste pas. C'est agréable de les froter contre soi comme de grands savons. On en est toute pure... (56)

This aspect is also seen in Act 2 sc.1 when she tries to make Troilus kiss her, and in the account given by the sailors in Act 2 sc.12 of her love-making on the boat from Greece with Paris.

What she expects from love and the love which she is able to offer is explained to Andromaque in Act 2 sc.8:

Il me plaît à moi.

and:

L'aimantation, c'est aussi un amour. (57)

Her love is not the sentimental kind, it is a magnetic attraction, which she is able to enjoy for what it is:

Je suis aussi à l'aise dans cet amour qu'une étoile dans sa constellation. J'y grave, j'y scintille, c'est ma façon à moi de respirer et d'êtreindre. On voit très bien les fils qu'il peut produire, cet amour, de grands êtres clairs, bien distincts, avec des doigts annelés et un nez court. Qu'est-ce qu'il va devenir, si j'y verse la jalousie, la tendresse et l'inquiétude! (58)

Another whose love is sensual is Ondine. She was born in an atmosphere of sensuality, according to Auguste in Act 1 sc.7:

Comment était la grève autour du berceau où nous avons trouvé Ondine! Marquée partout de ces creux que laissent deux amoureux étendus dans le sable. Mais il y en avait cent, mille... Comme si mille couples s'étaient enlacés au bord du lac, et qu'Ondine en était la fille... (59)

Other examples of her sensuality have been mentioned above.*

(55) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.496

(56) Ibid. P.474 (57) Ibid. P.496 (58) Ibid. P.496

(59) Ibid. Vol.2 Ondine P.133

* see above P.54

She differs from the other female characters in that she is the representative of destiny. She is the destiny which Hans seeks. Indeed, perhaps she only exists in Hans' mind. He dreams of her as that for which he longs. She is his nagging dissatisfaction with Bertha. One is constantly made aware that she belongs to another world. Auguste says in Act 1 sc.7:

il y a de grandes forces autour d'Ondine! (60)

And she says in Act 2 sc.11:

Je suis née depuis des siècles et je ne mourrai jamais. (61)

The love which she offers is total. Hans says in Act 3 sc.4:

J'accuse cette femme de trembler d'amour pour moi, de n'avoir que moi pour pensée, pour nourriture, pour Dieu. Je suis le dieu de cette femme, entendez-vous! (62)

It is, therefore, suggested in Ondine that perhaps humans are not capable of receiving this kind of love, that Isabelle could never have had any sort of relationship with the Ghost, nor Lia with the Angel, nor Alcène with Jupiter.

In the same way that Cassandre is a tragic figure because she does not have love, so La Folle de Chaillot is tragic because she has turned away the chance of love. Her love has made her La Folle de Chaillot, but the qualities which she would have brought to her marriage are still present in her, hence her love of nature and things of beauty, and her urgent desire at the end of the play that Irma and Pierre should find their love before it is too late for them too. She stands for eternal qualities, for the use of the imagination, against the materialistic tycoons, in the same way that Isabelle stood against the Inspector.

Tessa is an adaptation of the English story The Constant Nymph by Margaret Kennedy and Basil Dean, and does not, therefore, reveal a great deal to the student of Giraudoux's theatre. It is, however, interesting in the present context, because of the very fact that Giraudoux chose

(60) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 Ondine P.132

(61) Ibid, P.153 (62) Ibid. P.185

to make an adaptation of a story about such a character. The complete transparency, serenity and innocence of Tessa are very moving, and if she is compared with some of the female creations already studied, one can see why Giraudoux admired her so.

She is capable of loving with her all without expecting anything in return. In Act 3 sc.4 she says to Lewis:

Je n'ai jamais eu qu'une façon de penser à moi, c'est de penser à toi. (63)

Love of these devouring proportions must lead to disaster, and Tessa dies, but not without saying in Act 3 sc.4:

J'ai une drôle d'impression, Lewis. J'ai l'impression d'avoir fini ma carrière, Ce que ma mère a fait avec Sanger, en quarante ans, j'ai le sentiment que je l'ai fait avec toi et j'ai dix-sept ans. Comme si ma carrière avait été de t'aimer tant que tu ne saurais pas que tu m'aimes. (64)

Lia in Sodome et Gomorrhe, is the victim of her environment.

Instead of living in an imperfect world, she rebels, like Electre, and the result is that the machinery becomes jammed and the world is destroyed. She defines herself in Act 1 sc.4:

Je m'appelle femme. Je m'appelle amour. (65)

In contrast to Alcène, who rejects Jupiter, and who can accept her life, Lia is more like Isabelle, who seeks love with the Ghost. However, Isabelle also comes to accept life in the end, but Lia, who tries to seduce the Angel, never reaches this point of acceptance. As the Contrôleur was at one time too ordinary and conventional for Isabelle, so Jean is for her: (Act 1 sc.3)

O mon Dieu, voilà bien le vice suprême des hommes! Continuer les gestes de l'automate que tu as remonté dans Adam. (66)

The importance with which Giraudoux views the role of woman is shown in Act 1 sc.2: God did not give to man:

ces facettes...prodigués à l'abeille, de cette oreille à cloisons...
..donné à la pigeonne, de cet instinct du loup et des orages dont

(63) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Tessa P.445

(64) Ibid. P.445

(65) Ibid. Vol.2 Sodome et Gomorrhe P.225 (66) Ibid. P.223

dispose le moindre mouton...Tu as placé la délégation de ta prévision et de ta force sur son compagnon faible et indécis, sur la femme. (67)

Judith is another woman searching for her archetype. She discovers herself after a night of love with Holopherne. Her virginity, symbol of her purity, which history has praised, is treated in this play with much cynicism. In Act 1 sc.2 Joachim says:

Elle monte à cheval, et en garçon...Aujourd'hui je m'en félicite, car dans ses imperfections la main de Dieu ve trouver les poignées pour la prendre. (68)

In Act 1 sc.5, Jean:

Tu n'es pas la vierge de l'Écriture, Judith. Tu le sais. (69)

As has already been seen, she feels herself to be let down by God and she finds freedom and happiness with Holopherne. He is able to offer her the freedom of which Hans spoke in Ondine Act 3 sc.3:

Je réclame le droit pour les hommes d'être un peu seuls sur cette terre. Ce n'est pourtant pas grand ce que Dieu leur a accordé, cette surface avec deux mètres de haut, entre ciel et enfer!...Ce n'est pourtant pas tellement attrayant, la vie humaine, avec ces mains qu'il faut laver, ces rhumes qu'il faut moucher, ces cheveux qui vous quittent!...Ce que je demande, c'est vivre sans sentir grouiller autour de nous, comme elles s'y acharnent, ces vies extra-humaines...
... Au matin de mon mariage, je demande à être, dans un monde vide de leurs visites, de leurs humeurs et de leurs accouplements, seul avec ma fiancée, enfin seul. (70)

Judith, then, does not offer love, and she is incapable of living with the love which she experiences with Holopherne. She is, if anything, in love with the idea of her purity. She certainly changes in the way that Isabelle also changes, from a 'jeune fille' to a 'femme', but she does not possess the basic qualities necessary to being a 'femme', because of her upbringing and the restrictive and stifling influence of God and his priests.

Much has already been said elsewhere about Electre. She is the supreme example of the 'Femme à histoires'. As the President says: (Act 1 sc.2)

A voir Electre, je sens agiter en moi les fautes que j'ai commises au berceau. (71)

(67) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 Sodome et Gomorrhe P.217

(68) Ibid. Vol.1 Judith P.187 (69) Ibid. P.196

(70) Ibid. Vol.2 Ondine P.180

(71) Ibid. Vol.1 Electre P.526

In the same scene, after talking of Electre as the 'type de la femme
à histoires', he says:

Admettons qu'elle soit ce que tu dis, la justice, la générosité,
le devoir. Mais c'est avec la justice, la générosité, le devoir,
et non avec l'égoïsme et la facilité, que l'on ruine l'état, l'individu
et les meilleures familles. (72)

And he expresses her real power and danger when asked what the family
of the Atrides had to fear:

Rien, Rien que je sache. Mais elle est comme toute famille heureuse,
comme tout couple puissant, comme tout individu satisfait. Elle a à
craindre l'ennemi le plus redoutable du monde, qui ne laissera rien
d'elle, qui la rongera jusqu'aux os, l'alliée d'Electre : la justice
intégrale. (73)

She threatens to disturb the Gods. Her most powerful attribute is her
hatred. In Act 1 sc.8:

Ce n'est pas que je déteste les femmes, c'est que je déteste ma mère..
..Et ce n'est pas que je déteste les hommes, je déteste Egisthe.

and:

Imaginons une minute, pour notre bonheur, que nous ayons été enfantés
sans mère.

and:

C'est justement ce que je ne peux supporter d'elle, qu'elle m'ait
mise au monde. C'est là ma honte. (74)

This hatred has taken the place of love in her life. She says to Oreste:

Et toute cette haine que j'ai en moi, elle te rit, elle t'accueille,
elle est mon amour pour toi. (75)

The Beggar sums her up in his soliloquy, Act 1 sc.13:

elle est la vérité sans résidu, la lampe sans mazout, la lumière
sans mèche.

and:

dussent mille innocents mourir la mort des innocents pour laisser le
coupable arriver à sa vie de coupable. (76)

When Clytemnestre says to her that they are both women and therefore have
the right to love, she replies: (Act 2 sc.5)

(72) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.525

(73) Ibid. P.527 (74) Ibid. P.548

(75) Ibid., P.549 (76) Ibid. P.556

Je sais qu'on a beaucoup de droits dans la confrérie des femmes. Si vous payez le droit d'entrée, qui est lourd, qui est d'admettre que les femmes sont faibles, menteuses, basses, vous avez le droit général de faiblesse, de mensonge, de bassesse. Le malheur est que les femmes sont fortes, loyales, nobles. (77)

Electre is what she is because she is still a virgin, that is to say, she has not formed a couple, she has not known love. In Act 2 sc.5:

Electre : Je n'attends plus rien, mais dix ans j'ai attendu mon père. Le seul bonheur que j'ai connu en ce monde est l'attente.

Clytemnestre: C'est un bonheur pour vierges. C'est un bonheur solitaire. (78)

Her justice is absolute because: (Act 2 sc.8)

quand le crime porte atteinte à la dignité humaine, infeste un peuple, pourrit sa loyauté, il n'est pas de pardon. (79)

In Act 2 sc.10, when the city is burning, one of the furies says:

C'est la lueur qui manquait à Electre. Avec le jour et la vérité, l'incendie lui en fait trois.

and later - Voila où t'a mené l'orgueil, Electre! Tu n'es plus rien! Tu n'as plus rien!

Electre : J'ai ma conscience, j'ai Oreste, j'ai la justice, j'ai tout. It is pointed out to her that she is guilty, so she replies:

J'ai Oreste, j'ai la justice, j'ai tout.

It is then pointed out that she will never see Oreste again, that he will kill himself and die cursing her, so she replies:

J'ai la justice, j'ai tout. (80)

That sums up Electre. Her justice was ultimately all that she had.

Most significant is the fact that Egisthe tries to marry her to the Gardener, because he feels that this will stop her acting. This implies that if she had been able to form a human couple, then the destruction would have been avoided.

To sum up, therefore, it can be seen that the message never varies in its essential truth, In every play the power which the human couple possess is made explicit. On the one hand marriage is seen by Jupiter and by the Ghost as a series of compromises leading to spiritual debasement, and on the other, true passion is seen as the one thing which might avoid war (La Guerre de Troie), as the only hope for the world (Sodome et Gomorrhe) (La Folle de Chaillot), as the only means

(77) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.571

(78) Ibid. P.572 (79) Ibid. P.588 (80) Ibid. P.597

of helping man to discover his true identity (Siegfried) (Intermezzo) (Ondine), and as capable of rendering impotent the Gods (Amphitryon 38) (Holopherne's tent in Judith) (by implication in Electre).

Many of Giraudoux's women are 'elect', such characters possess a great power and force, whether for love or for hatred. They are the 'femmes à histoires', But the women also split another way into 'jeune filles' and 'femmes'. A 'femme' is someone who has experienced the relationship of the human couple, she offers hope for the world. The women who stand alone, Judith with her pride and her rejection of the chance for love which she was given, and Electre with her hatred, offer no such hope. Sometimes we are able to see the transition from 'jeune fille' to 'femme' on stage, sometimes we just have to accept the beauty of a 'femme' like Alcène, who was able to say: (Act 2 sc.2)

De tous ceux que je connais, je suis en effet celle qui approuve
et aime le mieux son destin. (81)

and who summed up how the human couple should feel about each other in Act 2 sc.5:

Mon mari peut être pour moi Jupiter. Jupiter ne peut être mon mari. (82)

Giraudoux's basic belief in the power of love never varies. All that varies is the degree of optimism with which he expresses this belief. It varies from the heights of optimism in Amphitryon 38 to the depths of pessimism in Sodome et Gomorrhe. That the former was written in 1929 and the latter in 1943 is not insignificant.

(81) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.135

(82) Ibid. P.148

Chapter 5

AURORA

Dawn seems to be an important theme in the plays of Jean Giraudoux. It is surprising to find the word 'Aurore' or 'L'aube' occurring as one reads through the various plays. It seems to be worthwhile, therefore, before considering Giraudoux's style and technique, to spend some time trying to discover what significance the idea of dawn has, and why Giraudoux should make such frequent use of it.

It is most strikingly used in Electre. According to the Beggar in Act 2 sc.1, it is truth:

La vérité des hommes colle trop à leurs habitudes, elle part n'importe comment, de 9 heures du matin quand les ouvriers déclarent leur grève, de 6 heures du soir quand la femme avoue, et caetera: ce sont de mauvais départs, c'est toujours mal éclairé. Moi je suis habitué aux animaux. Ceux-là savent partir. Le premier bond du lapin dans la bruyère, à la seconde où surgit le soleil, le premier saut sur son échasse de la sarcelle, le premier galop de l'ourson hors de son rocher, cela, je te l'assure, c'est un départ vers la vérité. S'ils n'arrivent pas, c'est vraiment qu'ils n'ont pas à arriver. Un rien les distrait, un goujon, une abeille. Mais fais comme eux, Electre, pars de l'aurore. (1)

The significant points in this passage are that, firstly, it is a question of lighting. He uses the expression that these departures were 'mal-éclairé'. Secondly, dawn has close links with the animal world. Thirdly it is linked with the idea of 'se déclarer'. It is indeed at dawn that Electre does 'se déclare' in the arms of Oreste, when she at last becomes aware of her role which it has taken her 7 years to discover.

All of Act 2 is played in the light of dawn. It is also at this time of day that Egisthe 'se déclare' on a hill outside Argos, in the early morning sunshine. He explains it in sc.7:

Pour toujours j'ai reçu ce matin ma ville comme une mère son enfant. Et je me demandais avec angoisse si le don n'était pas plus large, si l'on ne m'avait pas donné beaucoup plus qu'Argos. Dieu au matin ne mesure pas ses cadeaux: il pouvait aussi bien m'avoir donné le monde.

and:

Voilà ce qu'on m'a donné ce matin, à moi le jouisseur, le parasite, le fourbe: un pays où je me sens pur, fort, parfait, une patrie;

(1) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.562

et cette patrie dont j'étais prêt à fournir désormais l'esclave,
dont tout à coup me voilà roi, je jure de vivre, de mourir, - entends-tu,
juge, - mais de la sauver. (2)

In Judith it is the moment after she has killed Holopherne. In Act 3
sc.2:

Cette tente...seul signe de bonté dans ce monde implacable...Ce ciel
plein de pus et d'or, l'homme et l'épée de rouille et de menace,
Judith d'opprobre et de bonheur...L'aurore, comme ils disent. (3)

So that, although Judith did not make use of her moment of self
declaration in Holopherne's tent, dawn is again seen to be connected
with this experience. In Act 3 sc.4:

Oui, pour la première fois je me suis éveillée à l'aube pres d'un
autre humain... Quelle chose épouvantable. (4)

In Siegfried it is also linked with truth. Zeltén is encouraging
Eva to keep close to Siegfried so as to prevent him from discovering
himself, and he says to her in Act 1 sc.2:

Au lieu de promener Siegfried dans les cités modèles, amène-le
seulement là-bas, sur les premiers contreforts de nos alpes. Va surprendre
l'aube avec lui..... Tu y verras le paysage même de notre Allemagne
d'autrefois, de conjuration et de travail, de pillage et de sainteté,
si chargé à la fois de poésie et de vérité. (5)

In Siegfried also, the whole of Act 4 is played in the light of dawn
on a frontier railway station. It is, therefore, in the symbolic light
of dawn that Siegfried becomes Forestier again, that he discovers his
true self. Dawn is traditionally the symbol of life and of renewal.
It has already been seen how Electre ends with the words 'C'est l'aurore'
in reply to the question what the light is.* Sodome et Gomorrhe also
ends in the light of dawn.

Jean: Pardon, ciel! Quelle nuit!
Lia: Merci, ciel! Quelle aurore! (6)

The very last words of the play are spoken by the Angel:

La mort n'a pas suffi, la scène continue. (6)

(2) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.580

(3) Ibid. Vol.1 Judith P.235 (4) Ibid. P.238

(5) Ibid. Vol.1 Siegfried P.14 (6) Ibid. Vol.2 Sodome et Gomorrhe P.254

* see chapter 'War' P.48

The idea of nothing being resolved at the end of the play, or that the situation will continue to exist, springs out of this symbol of dawn. Although other plays do not necessarily end at dawn, the same idea is still present.

It has already been seen how the image of Hélène kissing Troilus at the end of La Guerre de Troie is a symbol of the fact that this situation will arise again.* How Amphitryon 38 ends with Amphitryon and Alcmène standing in a circle of light, 'pour indiquer le sens du bonheur'.⁺

The last words of Intermezzo contain the same idea:

L'épisode Isabelle est clos. L'épisode Luce ne surviendra que dans trois ou quatre ans. (7)

The end of Ondine shows that the circle will continue. When Ondine is taken back to her own kingdom and she sees Hans lying dead, her words:

Quel est ce beau jeune homme? (8)

compare almost exactly with her first words when she sees him at the beginning of the play:

Comme vous êtes beau! (9)

She says right at the end:

Roi des Ondins : Qu'il me plait!...On ne peut pas lui rendre la vie?
Ondine : Impossible!
Ondine : Comme c'est dommage! Comme je l'aurais aimé! (8)

Dawn is also a special light. It was seen in chapter 1 how Giraudoux consciously used different lightings and how the spectator had to accept the simultaneity of two lightings.^x How the angel in Sodome et Gomorrhe said 'c'est une question d'éclairage'. Lia says in the same play, Act 1 sc.2:

On secoue le kaléidoscope là-haut. Ces quatre pauvres des couleurs que nous sommes sous leur aurore ou leur lune. (10)

(7) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Intermezzo P.325

(8) Ibid. Vol.2 Ondine P.196 (9) Ibid. P.121

(10) Ibid. Vol.2 Sodome et Gomorrhe P. 218

* see chapter 'War' P.43 ⁺ see chapter 'Love & Women' P.52

^x see chapter 'Tragedy & Debate' P.6

In Amphitryon 38 at the start of Act 2 Mercury has the sun try all its different lights until he finds the one which he, Mercury, considers suitable for this particular dawn. Since the plays are often atmospheric, the light of dawn is a light which can contribute to this atmosphere.

Dawn is also very closely linked with nature, as can be seen in quotation (1) above from Electre. Dawn is an awakening, and Isabelle in Intermezzo is awakened by earthly, everyday sounds. The Druggist says in Act 3 sc.6:

Le seul massage, la seule circulation artificielle que nous puissions pratiquer dans ce cas, c'est de rapprocher d'aussi près que possible de sa conscience endormie le bruit de sa vie habituelle. (11)

He has previously said, in Act 1 sc.7:

Il y a trois bruits qui sont le diapason de notre pays, le ratissage des allées dans le sommeil de l'aube, le coup de feu d'après vèpres, et les clairons au crépuscule... (12)

The appeal of the earth is also illustrated in Hector's Oration to the Dead in La Guerre de Troie where he makes appeal to the joys of life especially to 'la chaleur' and 'le ciel'.

In Amphitryon 38 Jupiter talks to Alcèmène in Act 2 sc.2 of the:
vibrations diverses de l'éther.

and the:

mille réseaux différents de son ou de couleur, perceptibles ou non...
..aux organes humains. (13)

In the same scene Alcèmène says:

Je suis sûre que je suis la seule humaine qui voie à leur vraie taille les fruits, les araignées, et goûte les joies à leur vrai goût. Et il en est de même de mon intelligence. Je ne sens pas en elle cette part de jeu ou d'erreur, qui provoque, sous l'effet du vin, de l'amour, ou d'un beau voyage, le désir de l'éternité. (14)

In Sodome et Gomorrhe, the last red rose of the Gardener, which he is allowed to keep when all his other plants are going to die, becomes

(11) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Intermezzo P.321

(12) Ibid. P.278

(13) Ibid. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.133 (14) Ibid. P.135

a symbol of humanity (Act 2 sc.1), and he throws it at the end of the play to Lia. Amidst all the gloom it is, like dawn, a symbol of hope, a sign that there is still, perhaps, some hope for humanity, because, although it is the end of the world, 'la scène continue'.

Finally, in Judith, her awakening after the murder of Holopherne is described by the Guard in Act 3 sc.7:

Et, quand, lui mort, tu attendis enfantivement la mort sans bouger, comme l'abeille après sa piqûre, nous avons rendu à nouveau le monde sonore, et tu as entendu l'araignée bricolant dans sa toile, et dans le sol du camp la sape de la taupe, et derrière le lit le mulot contre son grain d'avoine et enfin la voix de Suzanne. (15)

If her sleep after murdering Holopherne is compared to the sleep of Isabelle after the embrace of the Ghost, it can be seen that there are two similarities. Firstly, they were the times when the characters came face to face with themselves, and secondly, they were both aroused by the sounds of nature.

Dawn has been seen to be, truth, to be a question of lighting, to be closely linked with nature and the animal world, and to be involved in the experience of 'se déclarer'. All these are included in the definition of the word 'se déclarer' given by the Beggar in Electre Act 1 sc.3:

Il ne signifie rien, mon mot se déclarer? Qu'est-ce que vous comprenez, alors, dans la vie! Le vingt-neuf de mai, quand vous voyez tout à coup les guérets grouillant de milliers de petites boules jaunes, rouges et vertes, qui voltigent, qui piaillent, qui se disputent chaque ouate de chardon et qui ne se trompent pas, et qui ne volent pas après la bourre du pissenlit, il ne se déclare pas, le chardonneret? Et le quatorze de juin quand, dans les coudes de rivière, vous voyez sans vent et sans courant deux roseaux remuer, toujours les mêmes, remuer sans arrêt jusqu'au quinze de juin, - et sans bulle, comme pour la tanche et la carpe -, il ne se déclare pas, le brochet? Et ils ne se déclarent pas, les juges comme vous, le jour de leur premier condamnation à mort, au moment où le condamné sort, la tête distraite, quand ils sentent passer le goût du sang sur leurs lèvres. Tout se déclare dans la nature! (16)

(15) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Judith P.249

(16) Ibid. Vol.1 Electre P.534

The link with nature is important, because, as has already been seen on several occasions, the natural order must not be disturbed, otherwise the Gods are disturbed, the tiger is roused, and the consequences are liable to be ghastly.

The idea of dawn has all these links, and it is also linked with another feature which is common in Giraudoux's work, that of continuation. Dawn is a symbol that all things will be born afresh, that life will go on. This has been seen to be true even in the most pessimistic play, Sodome et Gomorrhe, and it has been seen to apply also to most of the other plays.

Chapter 6

STYLE & TECHNIQUE

It would seem to be most suitable to begin this chapter with a study of L'Impromptu de Paris. This one act play is based upon the idea of Molière's L'Impromptu de Versailles, and expresses through the company, supposedly at rehearsal of a Giraudoux play, the author's views on the theatre.

It opens with an attack on the critics who do not do enough to destroy bad theatre, and continues with a discussion about whether the public wants to be entertained or whether they should expect something more from the theatre. This leads on to a discussion of literary theatre. Jouvét does not like the term. Boverio agrees with him:

Si dans votre oeuvre vos personnages évitent cet aveulissement du mot et du style, s'ils n'ont pas trop pour expliquer leur pensée, de toutes les nuances de notre grammaire et de notre langage, si dans leur bouche il y a des subjonctifs, des futurs conditionnels, des temps, des genres, c'est-à-dire en somme s'ils ont de la courtoisie, de la volonté, de la délicatesse, s'ils utilisent le monologue, le récit, le prosopopée, l'invocation, c'est-à-dire s'ils sont inspirés, s'ils voient, s'ils croient, vous vous entendez dire aussitôt, avec politesse, mais avec quel mépris, que vous êtes non un homme de théâtre, mais un littérateur! (1)

If one wishes to accuse Giraudoux of being too literary, one must realise that the literary style is used to appeal to the senses of the spectator, not to his intellect, and that it can enable him to sense a reality, previously unperceived, which ordinary words cannot express. This links with the question of what the theatre provides and what is meant by 'understanding' a play. The answer is that the public does not understand, it feels. The illustration given is that in Tosca twelve guards take aim at Tosca's lover, giving the spectator ample opportunity to understand that he is being shot, but the spectator must also feel what is happening. It is furthermore argued that one does not go to Music Hall in order to understand anything. One's reflexes are automatically

(1) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 L'Impromptu de Paris P.64

attracted to the clowning, and one laughs. Why should the same rights not be permitted to all one's senses? Another illustration given is that of the child who enjoys the patterns in a kaleidoscope, and who by dismantling it in order to try to understand it, succeeds in ruining what attracted him in the first place. As Jouvét says:

Le mot comprendre n'existe pas au théâtre

and Renoir:

le bonheur est que le vrai public ne comprend pas, il ressent.

and Bogar:

Le théâtre n'est pas un théorème, mais un spectacle; pas une leçon, mais un filtre. C'est qu'il a moins à entrer dans votre esprit que dans votre imagination et dans vos sens... (2)

Giraudoux's theatre cannot be fully understood because he, himself, did not intend it to be. As Jouvét continues to say:

Et quand je vois aux fauteuils un spectateur...qui essaie de trouver un sens à chacun de nos gestes, de nos intonations, de nos lumières, de nos airs de scène, j'ai envie de venir à la rampe et de lui crier: Ne vous donnez donc pas ce mal, cher Monsieur. vous n'avez qu'à attendre vous le saurez demain! (2)

and:

Parfois de l'autobus, j'aperçois dans la rue un vieux monsieur rondet au bras d'une jeune fille, dont la démarche est légère, la marche aimantée, le visage radieux mais tourné vers eux-mêmes; je suis sûr qu'ils ont vu la veille une bonne pièce. Ils ne l'ont peut-être pas comprise. Mais à part la pièce, ils comprennent tout aujourd'hui, le beau temps, la vie, les feuilles des platanes, les oreilles des chevaux...une pièce bien écrite, évidemment. Le style a passé sur les âmes froissées par la semaine comme le fer sur le linge; elles sont toutes lisses. (3)

This, then, is what the theatre provides. Its function is firstly to act like an iron on the creases caused by life. It has a character of its own, but this character is created by the people. Jouvét says of it:

Plein, c'est un génie. Vide, c'est un monstre. (4)

Then the players discuss the differences between the different types of audience. Jouvét now makes quite explicit what he considers

(2) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 L'Impromptu de Paris P.66

(3) Ibid. P.67 (4) Ibid. P.71

the role of the theatre to be. Talking to the state, he says:

Tu amènes le soir, à mes guichets un peuple énérvé, usé par ses luttes de la journée, méfiant, irrité et surtout contre toi...Et nous en échange, que faisons-nous de lui? Nous l'apaisons, nous l'égayons. Nous donnons à cet esclave éculé la toute-puissance sur les couleurs, les sons et les airs. Nous donnons à cet automate un coeur de chair avec tous ses compartiments bien revus, avec la générosité, avec la tendresse, avec l'espoir. Nous le rendons sensible, beau, omnipotent. Nous lui donnons la guerre où il n'est pas tué, la mort dont il ressuscite. Nous lui donnons l'égalité, la vraie, celle devant les larmes et devant le rire. Nous te le rendons à minuit sans rides au front, sans rides à l'âme, maître du soleil et de la lune, marchant ou volant, apte à tout, prêt à tout. (5)

He also accuses the state of having its priorities wrong and of underestimating the importance of the role which the theatre is capable of playing:

C'est très bien d'illuminer la Tour Eiffel, mais ne crois-tu pas que c'est encore mieux d'illuminer les cerveaux. (5)

Of the people he says:

Un peuple n'a une vie réelle grande que s'il a une vie irréelle puissante. Que la force d'un peuple est son imagination. (5)

It could form the basis for an entire piece of research to justify precisely this conclusion, but upon reflexion it can be seen that throughout history a period of great economic and military power in a nation has generally coincided with a fruitful period in the creative arts. Writing this play in 1937, Giraudoux must have been aware of the danger for France in neglecting the power of the theatre. Juvet expresses the point powerfully, when he says that Molière, as a dramatist, had influence upon other aspects of life. He refers to him as:

Celui auquel, à l'époque de Descartes, la France doit la clarté, à l'époque de Colbert la justice, à l'époque de Bossuet la vérité. (6)

Juvet says that he sees the role of the theatre as to influence the public in two ways. Firstly, that the scoundrels, rogues and blackmailers should be forced to say that all would be alright with them if it were not for the theatre, and secondly, that other people, when feeling

(5) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 L'Impromptu de Paris P.77

(6) Ibid. P.78

depressed, should be able to say:

tout irait mal mais il y a le théâtre. (7)

Finally Jouvett expresses the point in typically paradoxical terms:

Dans ce pays qui a tant de journalistes et pas de presse, qui a la liberté et si peu d'hommes libres, où la justice appartient chaque jour un peu moins aux juges et un peu plus aux avocats, quelle autre voix te reste le nôtre? (7)

More general remarks on the nature and role of the theatre are to be found in Littérature. In the chapter entitled 'Racine', he writes:

Le grand théâtre est celui qui convainc des esprits déjà convaincus, qui émeut des âmes ébranlées, éblouit des yeux déjà illuminés, et qui laisse à son terme les spectateurs avec l'impression d'une preuve, la preuve de leur sensibilité et de leur époque. (8)

In this respect it can be seen that in five of his plays he treats themes the outcome of which is known to the audience in advance. It is known that Hercules is born from the union of Jupiter and Alcène, that Judith kills Holopherne, that the Trojan War takes place, that Electre has her justice and that Sodome and Gomorrhe will be destroyed. Giraudoux's skill lies in being able to use known themes and still being able to maintain tension and interest. He achieves this by concentrating on the issues involved, on what have been referred to as the Debates.* By freezing the action at a point in time when a character or characters can be seen to be poised between two equally balanced courses of action.

Also in Littérature, in the chapter 'Discours sur le Théâtre', which is the text of a speech which Giraudoux made at the banquet of the Parisian association of the old boys of his lycée at Châteauroux on 19 November 1951, he recalls his own first visit to the theatre. It was when he was in the 6th form at Châteauroux, and he went to see Silvain play Horace. The curtains did not work properly and so they were held up by local firemen in uniform. This, apparently, did not

(7) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 L'Impromptu de Paris P.79

(8) Littérature op.cit. Racine P.34

* see chapter 1 'Tragedy & Debate'

break the theatrical illusion for him. In this speech he also says:

Le spectacle est la seule forme d'éducation morale ou artistique d'une nation. Il est le seul cours de soir valable pour adultes et vieillards, le seul moyen par lequel le public le plus humble et le moins lettré peut être mis en contact personnel avec les plus hauts conflits, et se créer une religion laïque, une liturgie et ses saints, des sentiments et des passions. Il y a des peuples qui rêvent, mais pour ceux qui ne rêvent pas, il reste le théâtre. (9)

It has already been seen above in the examples quoted from L'Impromptu de Paris, that the theatre is a filter, that the audience is not reached by explanation or brilliant reasoning, nor by a torrent of passions and emotions, but by a subtle arousal which eventually causes them to replay the dramatic event and its implications in their own minds. This 'rapport' between actors and audience is vital to Giraudoux's theatre. It is this which makes his theatre a 'religion laïque'. In order fully to appreciate his plays one must be a believer, if not, one will see in much of his work only intellectualism and preciousness - it has already been seen how he justifies his use of elegant grammar and subjunctives *- . The audience must allow Giraudoux the right to choose and to create his own truth.

The analogy of religious communication can profitably be continued. The theatre is, for Giraudoux, something like a church. They are both buildings which are, in essence, a gathering of vertical and horizontal space where all is harmony and peace, and where the rightness or wrongness of the dogma is of no real importance. This is not to say that his theatre is 'Art for Art's sake', because, like the church, it does not neglect the human condition. Here, the analogy can be continued even further. Ever present in Giraudoux's work is the agony of the realisation of the nature of human existence, just as in a church there are constant reminders of the supreme moment of human agony - the death of Christ.

(9) Littérature op.cit. Discours sur le Théâtre P.199

* see P.83 above

In the chapter 'Le Metteur en Scène' in Littérature, which is the text of a public lecture given at a theatre congress on 4 March 1951, he first expresses his gratitude to Jouvet and shows his admiration for him both as a director and as an actor, more of which will be said later. Then he compares the French and German theatre:

Le Français n'aime pas dépenser tous ses sens à la fois. (10)

He says that the French theatre has no great stage effects:

Le vrai coup de théâtre n'est pas pour lui la clameur de deux cents figurants, mais la nuance ironique, le subjonctif imparfait ou la litote qu'assume une phrase du héros ou de l'héroïne. (10)

He also draws these distinctions in 'Bellac et la Tragédie' * , where he goes on to point out that even in the most frivolous comedies, Frenchmen see actors whom they have known in tragic parts and see only a thin veil thrown over the tragic voices. The Frenchman does not love the theatre because he is able to go there and see his own fate magnified and played out by superior forces, but because he is secure in life and likes to see the price paid by Philoctète, Samson or Agamemnon to ensure his peace, played out before his eyes.

Le Français peut aimer le spectacle, même si son fauteuil au théâtre est inconfortable, mais non si son siège dans la vie est incommode. (11)

Having established in general terms what Giraudoux's attitude towards the theatre and its role was, it is now necessary to study more specifically his style and his manner of presentation.

Firstly, there is the role of language. Jacques Guicharnaud in Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Becket,⁺ points out that one of the great merits of the plays is the ability of the language to express the spectator's own conflicts, doubts and fears, in words which will never come to him. For example, lovers of peace should hear Hector.

(10) Littérature op.cit. Le Metteur en Scène P.41

(11) Ibid. Bellac et la Tragédie P.247

* see chapter 'Tragedy & Debate' P.12

+ Jacques Guicharnaud. Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Becket.

Anyone in a job like that of a minor civil servant who is unsuccessful in persuading a young girl to marry him should listen to the Contrôleur in Intermezzo. Anyone who is unable to explain why their husband irritates them and why and how they have been unfaithful to him should hear Agathe and Clytemnestre in Electre. The list can be added to - frustration with religious restrictions expressed by Holopherne in Judith, the feelings of a loving and faithful wife towards her husband by Alcmène in Amphitryon 38.

Language continues independent of the men who use it, just as for a believer the soul survives the body, and just as it continues at the end of Sodome et Gomorrhe. The world is destroyed but language, talking, is still heard.

One interesting feature of the language, which will already have been observed, is the almost comical contrast between the apparent insignificance of details and the importance of their function. Ulysse decides to leave because the eyes of Andromaque have the same kind of flicker as those of his own wife. In Stiefried, Zelten is unable to bring about a counter-revolution, partly for lack of arms, but especially for want of glue to stick up his manifestos. (Act 3 sc.2). Clytemnestre says that her hatred for Agamemnon really stemmed from the way in which he always held his little finger in the air.

Secondly, there are symbols. It has already been seen how the characters themselves are symbols of the great conflict or debate of humanity and destiny, which forms the whole basis of Giraudoux's theatre. There are also numerous lesser symbols and metaphors in the plays. They all help to contribute to the creation of Giraudoux's universe. In La Guerre de Troie a few can be isolated.

Hélène talks of rubbing herself against men like cakes of soap, in order to purify herself. (12). She is likened to a rat when Hector

(12) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie p.474

describes the old men peering to catch a glimpse of her:

Comme les cigognes quand passe un rat. (13)

There is the major symbol of Destiny as a tiger waiting to spring. There is the symbol of the gates of war, and there is the symbol of Hélène kissing Troilus at the end of the play.

In Intermezzo the Ghost describes man: (Act 3 sc.4)

Il se tient debout sur ses pattes de derrière, pour recevoir moins de pluie et accrocher des médailles sur sa poitrine. (14)

symbolising that man's pride is part of the leash which holds him erect and so leads to tragedy.*

In Ondine is the symbol of Ondine as the trout which Hans is eating.⁺

There is also the whole symbol of dawn discussed in the previous chapter.

In Electre, however, there is a particularly large number of symbols.

There is the visual symbol of the Euménides, symbols of remorseless fate or ripening doom who not only increase physically in size, but who can also be felt to be doing so. (This same technique of having a character increase in physical size is also used with the Warrior in Act 1 of Amphitryon 38). There is the symbol of the vulture which hovers over Egisthe when Creste appears at first and which descends as he humanely, but injudiciously releases Creste. All these symbols are very clear in their meaning and therefore contribute much to the dramatic effect, but there are many symbols and images taken from nature which are not always clear. These images occur especially in Intermezzo, where they are acceptable, since the play is based upon fanciful imagery, and in Electre. In the case of the latter play, they cannot always be said to contribute much to the effect. To take just one example, there is the symbol of the hedgehog in Act 1 sc.3. Not only is it obscure, it is also overworked, since it intrudes into the dialogue constantly throughout

(13) Théâtre op.cit Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.462

(14) Ibid. Vol.1 P.319

+ see chapter 'Love & Women' P.54

* see chapter 'Tragedy & Debate' P.4

the scene. It seems that the explanation lies in the fact that the Beggar thinks that hedgehogs lie crushed in the road through trying to reach the other side in order to find a mate. In this case it would be a fit image in keeping with the formation of a couple, which was seen to be so important in the chapter 'Love & Women':

L'amour pour les hérissons consiste d'abord à franchir une route. (15)
Though why it should be so hazardous to form a couple is not clear.

Thirdly, there are the minor characters. They are mostly rather stylistic characters, or ornaments. Little girls who are too intelligent for their ages, café waiters who are poets, précieux gardeners and soldiers, and intellectual beggars. Each character is, in fact, no more or less than what he says. If he speaks in clichés, then he is a cliché. Each character carries his own universe about with him and is, therefore, like a metaphor of humanity, unlike the confidants of classical tragedy or the 'sensible characters' of Molière's comedy. An example of the use of unexpected or unnatural turn of phrase is to be found in Electre Act 2 sc.7, where Egisthe, an efficient, businesslike king, who has so far shown no trace of poetry in his personality, says:

Ma soif n'était pas de celles qui s'étanchent aux fleuves tièdes et géants coulant dans le désert entre des lèvres vertes, mais, j'en fis l'épreuve aussitôt, à la goutte unique d'une source de glace. (16)

In this case the poetic language coincides with Egisthe's moment of self discovery, and the language is used to create the atmosphere and to heighten the effect.

Other examples can be found in the 'tirades'. These are monologues such as the Gardener's lament between Acts 1 and 2 of Electre, which begins:

Moi, je ne suis plus dans le jeu. C'est pour cela que je suis libre de venir vous dire ce que la pièce ne pourra vous dire. Dans de

(15) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.531

(16) Ibid. P.581

pareilles histoires, ils ne vont pas s'interrompre de se tuer et de se mordre pour venir vous raconter que la vie n'a qu'un but, aimer. (17)

Or at the beginning of Act 2 of Amphitryon 38, where Mercury stands alone on the stage and sums up the situation for the audience and reflects upon it. Or in Hector's 'Oration to the Dead' in La Guerre de Troie Act 2 sc.5. Or the Contrôleur in Act 3 sc.3 of Intermezzo, who describes the joys of a civil servant's life. He tells Isabelle how his life does leave room for the use of the imagination:

Chaque soir, quand le soleil se couche et que je reviens de ma tournée, il me suffit d'habiller le paysage avec le vocabulaire des contrôleurs du moyen âge, de compter soudain les routes en lieues, les arbres en pieds, les prés en arpents, jusqu'aux vers luisants en pouces, pour que les fumées et les brouillards montant des tours et des maisons fassent de notre ville une de ces bourgades que l'on pillait sous les guerres de religion, et que je me sente l'âme d'un réître ou d'un lansquenet. (18)

He talks of the joy of being able to choose between two contrasting towns each time that he is given the opportunity to move.

There is also the monologue of Judith in Act 2 sc.8, where she is in fact talking to the deaf and dumb Daria. She gets off her chest the anger which she feels at the way in which God has treated her.

Jacques Guicharnaud says that these 'tirades' were used by Corneille as a justification through reasoning, or a justification a posteriori, by Racine as a narrative leading up to an actual situation in order to emphasise the inevitability of that situation, and by the Romantics as a poetic or pseudo-philosophical digression around a situation. * But Giraudoux's 'tirade' is a pause at the height of the drama to give the protagonist a chance to clarify the terms of the conflict. It is neither a digression nor a slackening off, nor a step ahead, but a quick glimpse, sketched in beautiful language, of all the tensions of a particular moment. On the other hand, this is contrasted effectively with more dramatic

(17) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre F.557

(18) Ibid. Vol.1 Intermezzo F.313

* Jacques Guicharnaud. Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Becket op.cit.

In Intermezzo Act 1 sc.6, there is the 'Marseillaise des Petites Filles':

Le pays des petites filles,
c'est d'avoir plus tard un mari,
Qu'il ait nom Paul, John ou Dimitri,
Fourvu qu'il sache aimer et que bien il s'habille.

Refrain

A Marseille, à Marseille,
La patrie, c'est le soleil!
Le vrai quatorze juillet
C'est Marseille ensoleillé! (25) (note here again the emphasis on marriage and on the sunshine).

The young girls use verse again in Act 2 sc.1 and there is also the 'Chanson du Bourreau Coquet' in Act 2 sc.4

Sometimes he uses the play on words. In Siegfried Act 4 sc.5:

Waldorf: C'est votre dernier mot, Excellence?
Siegfried: C'est mon dernier mot d'Excellence. (26)

Other examples have already been quoted in earlier chapters:

Judith Act 2 sc.2:

Sarah: Appelle ton Dieu!
Judith: Holopherne! Holopherne! *

Sodome et Gomorrhe Act 2 sc.10

Jean: Tout était perdu à son premier mot.
Lia: Son premier mot était je t'aime. +

La Guerre de Troie Act 2 sc.4:

Polyxène: A quoi ressemble-t-elle, la guerre, maman?
Hécube: A ta tante Hélène.
Polyxène: Elle est bien jolie. x

The last two examples also illustrate the use made of irony, as does the end of the Gardener's lament in the Entr'acte of Electre:

je vous conjure, Dieu, comme preuve de votre affection, de votre voix, de vos cris, de faire un silence, une seconde de votre silence...
..C'est tellement plus probant. Ecoutez... Merci. (27)

Ciraudoux also makes great use of paradox, as was mentioned in the chapter 'Tragedy & Debate' (I.6), because, here again, he can make use of a literary device to increase the effect of the point which he

(25) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Intermezzo P.275

(26) Ibid. Vol.1 Siegfried P.69 (27) Ibid. Vol.1 Electre P.559

* see chapter 'The Supernatural' P.15. + see 'Love & Women' P.57

x see chapter 'War' P.42

is trying to make. In this instance it is to emphasise the position in which man finds himself, frozen between two poles, held erect between two equally valid courses of action. It is a paradoxical situation, and therefore paradox expresses it aptly.

Some examples of paradox can be seen in the examples of repetition and opposition given above. It is worth noting a few more.

In the Gardener's lament in Electre, he says:

Mais assis comme moi dans ce jardin où tout divague un peu la nuit, où la lune s'occupe au cadran solaire, où la chouette aveuglée, au lieu de boire au ruisseau, boit à l'allée de ciment, vous auriez compris ce que j'ai compris, à savoir : la vérité. Vous auriez compris le jour où vos parents mouraient, que vos parents naissaient, le jour où vous étiez ruiné, que vous étiez riche; où votre enfant était ingrat, qu'il était la reconnaissance même; où vous étiez abandonné, que le monde entier se précipitait sur vous, dans l'élan et la tendresse. C'est justement ce qui m'arrivait dans ce faubourg vide et muet. (25)

In Sodome et Gomorrhe Act 2 sc.5, Jean says:

Je ne comprends pas. Tu es ce que j'admire le plus au monde. Lia, et il n'en naît en moi que le découragement. Tu es ce que je crois, ce que je sais, la vérité, la générosité, et elles m'agissent sur moi que comme agiraient la fausseté et l'égoïsme. Tu es ce que j'aime plus que tout et ton amour m'inspire seulement ce que m'inspirerait le dégoût d'une autre. (26)

In La Guerre de Troie Act 1 sc9, Hector says to Hélène:

Écoute-la, Cassandre! Écoute ce bloc de négations qui dit oui! Tous m'ont cédé. Paris m'a cédé, Priam m'a cédé, Hélène me cède. Et je sens qu'au contraire dans chacune de ces victoires apparentes, j'ai perdu. (27)

In Amphitryon 38 Act 2 sc.3, Jupiter tells Mercury that he desires the same things as a man:

Mille désirs contraires. Qu'Alcmène reste fidèle à son mari et qu'elle se donne à moi avec ravissement. Qu'elle soit chaste sous mes caresses et que des désirs interdits la brûlent à ma seule vue... Qu'elle ignore toute cette intrigue, et qu'elle l'approuve entièrement. (28)

or when he says in Act 1 sc.5, when he is taking on Amphitryon's appearance:

je me sens soudain plus beau qu'Apollon, plus brave et plus capable d'exploits amoureux que Mars, et pour la première fois, je me crois, je me vois, je me sens vraiment maître des dieux.

Mercur: Alors vous voilà vraiment homme!... Allez-y! (29)

(25) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Electre P.558

(26) Ibid. Vol.2 Sodome et Gomorrhe P.239

(27) Ibid. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.477

(28) Ibid. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.140 (28) Ibid. P.123

Note the choice of words, also in Amphitryon 38, Act 1 sc.2:

Sôsie: Des siècles de paix nous menacent! (29)

The paradoxical situation in which man finds himself is expressed in

Ondine Act 3 sc.3: Hans describes life as:

cette surface avec deux mètres de haut, entre ciel et enfer! (30)

and in Intermezzo Act 2 sc.3, by the Contrôleur talking about life:

Sa grandeur est d'être brève et pleine entre deux abîmes. Son miracle est d'être colorée, saine, ferme entre des infinis et des vides. (31)

and when the Contrôleur is talking to Isabelle about the joy he gets out of being able to choose between two contrasting towns every three years. His whole life is a balance, made up of a series of opposites.

Act 3 sc.3:

Isabelle : J'ignorais tout cela. C'est merveilleux! Et à Gap, vous aurez ainsi trois ans à attendre entre deux autres villes?

Contrôleur: Oui, entre Vitry-le-François et Domfront...

Isabelle : Entre la plaine et la colline...

Contrôleur: Entre le champagne nature et le cidre bouché...

Isabelle : Entre la cathédrale Louis XIV et le donjon...

Contrôleur: Et ainsi de suite, par une série de balancements....
...j'arriverai un beau jour au sommet de la pyramide. (32)

The same truth is also expressed by the Ghost talking to Isabelle in

Act 3 sc.4:

Adieu, Isabelle. Ton Contrôleur a raison. Ce qu'aiment les hommes, ce que tu aimes, ce n'est pas connaître, ce n'est pas savoir, c'est osciller entre deux vérités ou deux mensonges, entre Gap et Bressuire. (33)

The most striking feature of Giraudoux's style is its beauty. It is a fundamental element of his universe and not just a commercial appendage. For example, the tragedy of Hans is that Ondine is absolutely beautiful, and the song of the lesser Ondines is beautiful too. In La Guerre de Troie and in Judith when the ugliness of war is described, the language is still beautiful. Even in Sodome et Gomorrhe, it is the beauty of Giraudoux's poetic imagery (such as the Gardener's last rose)

(29) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.111

(30) Ibid. Vol.2 Ondine P.180 (31) Ibid. Vol.1 Intermezzo P.293

(32) Ibid. P.314,315 (33) Ibid. P.319

and the language, which make the exceptionally bitter theme palatable.

The mention of Giraudoux's universe leads naturally to a discussion of his theatricality, and of the way in which his plays are staged.

Dasté says in L'Impromptu de Paris of 'le théâtre libre'

C'était jolie, le théâtre libre! On disait il est cinq heures, et il y avait une vraie pendule qui sonnait cinq heures. La liberté d'une pendule, ça n'est pas quand même ça!

Raymone replies:

Si la pendule sonne 102 heures, ça commence à être du théâtre. (34)

Realism is destroyed in two ways. Firstly, there is fantasy. In Amphitryon 38 there are Gods. In Judith, there is also God. In Intermezzo there is the Ghost. In La Guerre de Troie there are Goddesses and the visions of Hélène and Cassandre. In Electre the Euménides. In Ondine the romantic fantasy of the Ondines. In Sodome et Gomorrhe, the Angel and the Archangel.

Secondly, the theatrical illusion is shattered. One is reminded that one is in a theatre watching a play. As, for instance, when the Gardener comes out between acts in Electre and starts to talk to the audience.* Or when, in Ondine Act 2 sc.12, the Chamberlain calls for an intermission. Most striking of all is the tension created at the end of La Guerre de Troie, when the curtain begins to fall at Hector's words:

La guerre n'aura pas lieu, Andromaque! (35)

only to rise again.

The close link between the language and the stageworthiness must be realised. It is to misunderstand Giraudoux, and to lose a great deal of his force, merely to read his plays or to stage them without a proper awareness of them. If Giraudoux is sometimes considered to be a literary writer, it is probably due to this very misunderstanding. It appears that few directors since Jouvet have been able to stage the plays in order to obtain the best effect. The point is well made by Wallace Fowlie.⁺

(34) Théâtre op.cit Vol.2 L'Impromptu de Paris P.51

(35) Ibid. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.513

* see FP.91,95 above

+ Tulane Drama Review op.cit. 'Giraudoux's approach to Tragedy' P.15

He writes:

Amphitryon 38 was Giraudoux's second play, and the first he wrote specifically for Louis Jouvet. It was performed November 8, 1928, at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, with Jouvet in the role of Mercure, Pierre Renoir as Jupiter, Valentine Tessier as Alcène and Lucienne Bogaert as Léda. It was a marked success. Valentine Tessier, especially, scored a personal triumph in what is perhaps the most erotic role ever written for a woman to perform on the stage.

In the same theatre in February 1957, thirty years later, Amphitryon 38 was revived with Philippe Nicaud as Mercure and Jean-Pierre Aumont as Jupiter. A comparison of the two productions does not favor the second. ...The manner of reciting Giraudoux is all important. Jouvet knew how to articulate and have articulated the abundant fluid prose of the playwright. He knew how to break up the seemingly uninterrupted flow of speech and convert it into a dialogue between himself and Pierre Renoir, for example. Giraudoux was always something of a magician and a trickster. To perform him adequately today, so that the old charm will again work, a very skillful and subtle dramatic art has to be marshalled. Preciosity, when badly recited, will sound insipid. The very refinement of Giraudoux's style will inevitably appear, in certain periods of history, a weakness, a lack of vitality.

The London production of Christopher Fry's translation of La Guerre de Troie (Tiger at the Gates) at the Apollo theatre must have been a bad one also, for the 'Times' critic wrote: (Friday June 3 1955)

Mr. Harold Clurman, the producer, has appreciated that the play's need is for speaking rather than acting actors, and Mr. Michael Redgrave and the fine company that he leads are sparing of gesture, and trust to their voices to convey the author's precise and penetrating intellectualism and to give effect to his trick of making a turn of phrase do the work of a situation.

It is true that he does make a turn of phrase do the work of a situation.

(see P.93 above re.the end of Siegfried). However, it is clear that the language must have acting actors, because it is only half of the coin.

The gestures and movements are equally as important as the words themselves.

It will be seen below, that the actors and actresses who played the parts in the first productions of the plays were among the greatest actors of their generation. Such actors and actresses are required because, for example, Clytemnestre's speech in Electre Act 2 sc.8 about Agamemnon's little finger and curly beard, must be heard, while her dress, the tension of her body, the pillar she leans against, the grouping of the other characters, and Electre's isolation must be seen.

In Intermezzo, the Ghost only becomes real when he is seen standing on stage behind Isabelle. The reaction of the old men to Helene in La Guerre de Troie, must equally be seen. There are plainly three requirements which are essential to make a play live. The written text (this includes the quality of the language), the performance on stage, and the spectator. It has already been seen that his language is elegant and beautiful, that the role of the spectator is important since his theatre is like a temple for believers, a sort of religious communication. It is now necessary to consider the performance on stage.

So many examples of theatricality have already been seen, it is necessary now only to illustrate the point with one or two more.

In Amphitryon 38 at the beginning of Act 2, Mercury has just explained that Amphitryon is riding to the palace in the early morning light to see Alcène:

Montre-moi donc tes rayons, que je choisisse celui qui embrassera ces ténèbres..... (Le soleil échantillonne un à un ses rayons.)
Pas celui-là! Rien de sinistre comme la lumière verte sur les amants qui s'éveillent. Chacun croit tenir un noyé en ses bras.
Pas celui-là! Le violet et le pourpre sont les couleurs qui irritent les sens. Gardons-les pour ce soir. Voilà, voilà le bon, le safran! Rien ne relève comme lui la fadeur de la peau humaine...
... Vas-y, soleil! (36)

In La Guerre de Troie Act 2 sc.3, there is the amusing image of Demokos taking a photograph of Hélène. This introduces a touch of modernity which is slightly anachronistic. There are other examples of this. As in Electre Act 2 sc.1 where the Beggar talks about workers going on strike.* And in Act 1 sc.3, where Egisthe talks of an atom.

There can be no doubt that Giraudoux created parts for the particular talents of the players he had in mind - particularly for Jouvet, Valentine Tessier and Madeleine Ozeray. This is illustrated by what

(36) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 Amphitryon 38 P.129

he writes in Visitations:

L'acteur n'est pas seulement un interprète, il est un inspirateur; il est le mannequin vivant par lequel bien des auteurs personnifient tout naturellement une vision encore vague; et le grand acteur: un grand inspirateur. (37)

He goes on to say that it is useful for an author to know the colour of hair and the size of the person he is describing. He admits that he created Alcmène while thinking of Valentine Tessier, and Judith by thinking of Elizabeth Bergner. Above all he confesses his debt to Jouvét:

Vous ne serez donc pas surpris si je vous dis que c'est très fréquemment qu'un de ces fantômes, encore suant d'inexistence et de mutisme, prétend prendre immédiatement la forme désinvolte et volubile de Louis Jouvét. Mon intimité avec lui est si grande, notre attelage dramatique si bien nouée, que l'apparition larvaire en une minute a pris déjà sa bouche, son oeil narquois, et sa prononciation. (38)

Further proof of the importance of this lies in the circumstances relating to the relative success and failure of his plays. The cast which had helped him to create Siegfried also played Amphitryon 38, which was a dazzling success, and which is still in the repertoire of the Comédie Française. Judith, however, two years later was produced in a different theatre with not one actor in the cast who had previously appeared in a Giraudoux play. The characterisation here is sketchy, particularly in the smaller parts, and the play, although possessing much literary merit, was not a success. The third of the three essential elements was missing, the actors. Thirteen months later the original cast reassembled in the original theatre (Comédie des Champs-Élysées) for Intermezzo, in which all the charm and magic are seen to re-appear. After the performance of his new leading lady, Madeleine Ozeray, in Tessa, it was only a matter of time before Giraudoux found the formula for one of his most imaginative plays, Ondine. There can be no doubt that the parts of Hans and Ondine were conceived with Jouvét and Madeleine Ozeray in mind.

(37) Jean Giraudoux. Visitations. Grasset, Paris 1952 P.23

(38) Ibid. PP.24,25.

The plays written after the partnership with Jouvet was interrupted by the war have never proved as successful, with the possible exception of La Folle de Chaillot, in the case of which even, Jouvet did still produce, but from the manuscript and not in direct collaboration with the author.

Added to his qualities as a novelist, he now has at his disposal as a playwright, inflections of voice, poses, gestures, costume, scenery etc. Above all he had the influence of Jouvet. It had already been seen how much Giraudoux appreciated his abilities. He also writes in

Littérature-'Le Metteur en Scène':

en fait, l'auteur dramatique a maintenant deux muses, l'une avant l'écriture, qui est Thalie, et l'autre après, qui est pour moi Jouvet. (39)

Høst shows that Jouvet also acknowledges his debt to Giraudoux.

He quotes from Jouvet's book, Réflexions du Comédien:

pour nous tous qui avons joué ses oeuvres, cela a été une révélation et une surprise de voir et de sentir pour la première fois le public dans un état d'attention aisée, constante et émue, et d'éprouver pour notre compte le silence charmé d'une salle ravie par la magie d'incantation que donne, seul, le poète... N'aurais-je d'autre titre de gloire, dans l'exercice de mon métier et de ma carrière, que d'avoir joué ses oeuvres, celui-là me suffirait. (40)

(39) Littérature op.cit. Le Metteur en Scène P.47

(40) Gunnar Høst . L'oeuvre de Jean Giraudoux. H.Åschehoug. Oslo 1942 P.213.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

The writing of a conclusion provides an opportunity to see what Giraudoux has achieved in terms of modern French theatre, and to summarise the main trends which have emerged during this study.

Conclusion about his philosophy can only be arbitrary, because he provided no answers. It has been seen that the essence of his theatre is to freeze the action between two equivalent poles, hence the existence of numerous paradoxes. The only way to understand a paradox is to accept both poles simultaneously, so that one can maintain a balanced course. Giraudoux himself has to steer between two equally valid courses. There are two results of this kind of theatre. Firstly it precludes philosophising and propaganda, because it prevents the unilateral transmission of ideas, since the correctness of any single idea is discounted. Secondly it becomes valid for an audience, because a basic paradox is present in the members of any audience who differ from one another.

The conflicts or debates which form Giraudoux's theatre are the same as those which have concerned writers who followed him. The great difference being that for Giraudoux they are what we have chosen to call 'debates'. That is to say that for the reasons given above, they are not propaganda, nor are they philosophies. The great conflict is that between humanity and destiny, or 'La Condition Humaine'. In its essence this conflict has formed the basis for all drama throughout all ages. As was seen in the first chapter, the Greeks answered the problems which they saw by using the concept of 'Fate', an exterior power which controlled man's life. It has been seen that man has power to create and control his fate, although he never becomes aware of this fact. It is, therefore, only by educating men to have faith in themselves and in particular in the relationship which they can have with women, that the world can be saved.

Giraudoux portrayed the conflict in as many different ways as he was able, showing all its facets. The essential difference between him and writers who have followed him is that he is not what is called an 'engaged' writer. His work deals with universal truths and with ultimate truths. As was said on pages 33,34, he did not want to become caught in the trap of the immediate, whereas Sartre, Malraux and others did not want to become caught in the trap of the ultimate.

There was, in fact, a dialogue between Giraudoux and Sartre which is worth considering briefly. Oreste F. Pucciani has made a study of it which is published in the Tulane Drama Revue (1). It started in 1940, when Giraudoux was at the height of his fame and Sartre was virtually unknown. Sartre published an article in 'La Nouvelle Revue Française' entitled 'M. Jean Giraudoux et la philosophie d'Aristote.' It reached its full expression in 1948 in Sartre's indictment of pure literature, 'Qu'est-ce que la littérature?'

The question is, in the world as we know it, what positive value resides in the literary enterprise? Sartre considered that pure art could not maintain itself amidst the tensions and conflicts of the modern world, so that writing has to become social and political as well as aesthetic. It must lead positively towards some ideal. Out of this situation arises the 'engaged' writer. Giraudoux was attacked for not being 'engaged'. Sartre admitted that Giraudoux's profoundness was real, but said that it was valid only for his world not for ours.

Art is illusion not imitation, and the mirror which the artist holds up to nature is that of his own individual mind and is, therefore, as unlike other mirrors as his fingerprints are unlike those of other men. For Giraudoux art is not merely a mirror, it is a deep, unknowable prism which decomposes the perceptual world into its essential components so that it becomes apprehensible to man. The reality which the audience sees is not reality, but the reality of the author, actor and producer, a synthesis of creativity which is the starting point of the spectator's

(1) Tulane Drama Revue op.cit. Vol.3 no.4 'The infernal dialogue of Giraudoux and Sartre'

reality. This interrelationship of creativity has already been seen to be important with regard to Giraudoux's work. A good play has many levels of meaning, and thus becomes universal. Giraudoux, no doubt, as much as any other believed that art unrelated to any profoundly human experience is not art but craft, and is to life what prostitution is to true love.

Mr. Pucciani makes a very interesting point^{*}, that whether it is intentional or not (the dialogue with Sartre had not yet begun), the scene in La Guerre de Troie between Hector and Ulysse (Act 2 sc.13) summarises the differences between the two points of view. One can imagine Giraudoux speaking the role of Ulysse and Sartre that of Hector.

For example:

Hector: Si c'est un combat de paroles, mes chances sont faibles.

Ulysse: Non. Je crois que cela sera plutôt une pesée...le poids parlera.
(2)

and later:

Hector: Je pèse tout un peuple de paysans débonnaires, d'artisans laborieux, de milliers de charrues, de métiers à tisser, de forges et d'enclumes...Oh! pourquoi, devant vous, tous ces poids me paraissent-ils tout à coup si légers!

Ulysse: Je pèse ce que pèse cet air incorruptible et impitoyable sur la côte et sur l'Archipel. (3)

Hector realises that the things that he has been putting in the scales are immediate human values which are generally associated with peace. Now he realises that human aspirations have always been thwarted by the march of events. As was seen earlier⁺, history is a form of Fate. This is precisely why Giraudoux did not want to become caught in the trap of the immediate, of socio-political problems. Later in the same scene, Ulysse (Giraudoux) says:

Comprenez-moi, Hector!... Ne m'en veuillez pas d'interpréter le sort. J'ai voulu seulement lire dans ces grandes lignes qui sont sur l'univers, les voies des caravanes, les chemins des navires, le tracé des grues volantes et des races. (4)

(2) Théâtre op.cit, Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie P.507

(3) Ibid. P.508 (4) Ibid. P.511

* Tulane Drama Revue op.cit. 'The Infernal Dialogue of Giraudoux and Sartre'

+ see chapter 'The Supernatural' P.28ff.

Giraudoux does indeed deal with the problem of the twentieth century, namely man's search for his place in the universe, for his archetype, but he deals with the problem on a broad canvass. Instead of particularising the conflict he universalises it. He poses no answers but allows rays of hope or of pessimism to filter into the spectator's imagination by means of imagery and style. It is only necessary for the spectator to be responsive.

At the end of La Guerre de Troie man is left very lonely, with the image of himself in the arms of self-deception. At the end of Sodome et Gomorrhe, he is not defeated. He has lost this chance to find the solution, but language is still heard even after the end of the world - 'la scène continue'. Other plays hold out the message of hope through love. Whether or not it is possible for anyone to achieve this level of love is doubtful. It is an ideal. Alcmène is obviously a quite exceptional creation. Intermezzo, although in style a very fanciful play, in fact portrays the most human level of life in the attitude of the Contrôleur. The symbol of dawn is the symbol of man's hope. The Gods are demonstrated to be useless. There is nothing outside man, therefore, which can help him. He has only himself. He, like dawn, is self-perpetuating.

In his work Giraudoux is taking a look at the world as if from afar, as if from some balcony. This image of taking a moment to pause and look at the situation is also found to occur in the plays.

Troy itself is frozen in that lull between peace and war. Judith has a moment in Holopherne's tent. Electre in the arms of Oreste, and Egisthe on the hill outside Argos. It has been seen how in La Duchesse de Langeais Montriveau wants to stay up above life.* In Cantique des Cantiques, the President says:

Je viens ici parce que j'ai besoin aujourd'hui d'une heure supraterrrestre, d'un balcon de sérénité, d'une terrasse d'euphorie. (5)

(5) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.2 Cantique des Cantiques P.85

* see chapter 'Love & Women' P.57

Other writers have publicly acknowledged their debt to Giraudoux, notably Jean Anouilh. There is a tribute from him to Giraudoux the text of which is published in English in the Tulane Drama Review. He acknowledges his debt primarily to Siegfried. He regrets the fact that he never told Giraudoux how much he owed him but says that he did once speak to him after a dinner for only five minutes and helped him on with his coat. He then talks of the effect Ondine had upon him:

When Jouvett - detested (I was his secretary) and then suddenly pardoned for so much nobleness of spirit - lay down in his black armor upon that long grey stone, a despair rent me which I shall never forget.

It was not only too beautiful, it not only made ridiculous everything I had wanted to do, it was tender, solemn, and definitive like a farewell. I had a very certain feeling about it: the farewell of Hans to Ondine took on the meaning of another farewell which wrenched my heart. It was the time of the phoney war and we dreamt about lives in danger. I believed, naively, that this mysterious farewell concerned me.

Dear Giraudoux, it was you whom I was leaving, owing you so much without ever having told you, having known you so little and so well. I am happy, at least, that at the end of that dinner, last winter, where for the first time I was with you for more than five minutes, and where I still said nothing to you, I took hold of your overcoat and helped you on with it. This is something I never do, and I surprised myself in doing it and in fixing your coat collar so that you would be warmer. Then, this familiarity coming from I know not where suddenly bothered me and I left you...

But now I am happy that I served you, at least once, as the schoolboys used to serve their masters, in exchange for that evening of Siegfried.

(6)

Cohen in his book*, sees Giraudoux as the forerunner of the 'absurd', which is described by Camus as the divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints. It does not seem possible to compare Giraudoux's theatre with that of Camus, and certainly not with the later 'absurdist'. The similarity, in fact, lies in the basic philosophy which lies behind both Giraudoux and the 'absurdist'. Both Camus's 'absurd' and Giraudoux's 'tragedy' are born of the conflict between ideals and action, desire and accomplishment. This is what Giraudoux means when he talks of tragedy as the affirmation of a horrible bond

(6) Tulane Drama Review op.cit. Vol.3 no.4 'To Jean Giraudoux' by Jean Anouilh, translated by Arthur Evans. P.5

* R. Cohen 'Three Faces of Destiny' op.cit.

between humanity and a greater than human destiny.* No where is Giraudoux so pessimistic as the 'absurdists', but he did show that fantasy is a viable form for dramatising the human condition. This was used to a much greater extent by the absurdists who followed him.

From the point of view of style and elegance and beauty of language, it is possible to call Giraudoux the Racine of the twentieth century. He would treat his themes rather differently though. As Mercier-Campiche points out in her book:

Si Giraudoux avait mis en scène Titus et Bérénice, il aurait fait mentir l'histoire en dépeignant la félicité des Romains sous le règne d'un couple aimant. (7)

she also says:

L'amour des personnages de Giraudoux surprendrait un Cid ou un Horace, car, loin de s'opposer au devoir, il se confondrait plutôt avec lui. (7)

That Giraudoux can be in any way compared with Racine as a possible successor, and with the 'absurdists' as a forerunner, demonstrates the breadth of his palate as well as his importance as a dramatist.

It would be possible to quote endlessly what critics have said about him, but Inskip probably expresses as clearly as any:

Faced with the apparent incoherence and injustice of the world around us, we may react by anger, resignation, or the resolve to introduce order by physical or moral means into a universe whose first principles escape us. The introduction or discovery of such an order has ever been the task of statesmen, moralists, metaphysicians and poets. Each creates the order he can, for himself and, it may be, for his fellows. With Giraudoux one has to deal with a man of exceptional lucidity and mental agility as well as with an artist of unusual sensitivity and imaginative gifts. So typically French a combination leads to his immediate classification by his fellow countrymen as one in whom they recognise in superlative form the most characteristic manifestations of the French spirit. The famous 'Enivrez-vous' of Baudelaire could not be for Giraudoux the road to reconciliation of the real with the ideal. For him the path must be the creation of a world of the spirit, in which the true nature of man and his true relation to the universe should appear. (8)

Finally, it can be said that Giraudoux shows in his work a mixture of great faith in humanity, but also of great pessimism, because of man's

(7) M. Mercier-Campiche. Le Théâtre de Giraudoux op.cit. P.298

(8) D.Inskip The makings of a dramatist. London O.U.P. 1958 P.34

* see chapter 'Tragedy & Debate' P.4

basic moral cowardice and desire for comfort.

The cause of man's misfortunes is in man, not outside. Man does not go back sufficiently to nature. Love, even if it cannot conquer this completely, gives a meaning to life. Intelligence permits man not to stop or alter the course of history, but to understand something of the meaning of existence. As Ulysse says to Hector in Act 2 sc.13:

Ainsi nous sommes tous deux maintenant....Nos peuples autour de l'entretien se taisent et s'écartent, mais ce n'est pas qu'ils attendent de nous une victoire sur l'inéluctable. C'est seulement qu'ils nous ont donné pleins pouvoirs, qu'ils nous ont isolés, pour que nous goûtions mieux, au-dessus de la catastrophe, notre fraternité d'ennemis. Goûtons-la. C'est un plat de riches. Savourons-la...Mais c'est tout. Le privilège des grands, c'est de voir les catastrophes d'une terrasse.
(9)

Perhaps in some instinctive way, Giraudoux found himself on that terrasse, and he tries to take us there too.

Art and the theatre is not, for Giraudoux, an ornament, it is the last recourse of mankind:

tout irait mal, mais il y a le théâtre. (10)

If some theatre company who understood how to stage Giraudoux's plays were to start to revive some of them, so that they can once again iron out the creases of life from our souls, then it might be true to say: 'La mort de Giraudoux n'aura pas lieu'.

(9) Théâtre op.cit. Vol.1 La Guerre de Troie PP.508,509

(10)Ibid. L'Impromptu de Paris (Vol.2) P. 79. see also chapter 'Style & Technique' P.86

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 John Gassner, *At War with Electra*, P. 42
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The Introductions to the following editions of Giraudoux's works have also been used:

- Siegfried, Harrap, 1967, Introduction by Gerald V. Banks
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Also:

- Studies in French Literature* 19, Edward Arnold, 1971, *La Guerre de Troie*, Roy Lewis.
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The Contemporary French Theatre, London, Rockliff, 1958, Joseph Chiari, Chapter on Giraudoux